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## President Trump nominates Assistant Secretary of the Interior as Congress continues confirmation process for numerous nominees

November 29, 2017

On November 13, President Donald Trump nominated Dr. Tim Petty to be Assistant Secretary of the Interior for Water and Science, with direction to oversee the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) and the Bureau of Reclamation. Dr. Petty previously served as Acting Assistant Secretary and Deputy Assistant Secretary for Water and Science at the Department of Interior (DOI) under President George W. Bush. With a Ph.D. from the School of Engineering and Mining at University of Alaska Fairbanks, Dr. Petty has worked as a geologist in the United States and Russia. Currently, Dr. Petty is the deputy legislative director for Senator James Risch (R-ID) responsible for guiding the Senator's environmental, science, and technology policies. President Trump has yet to nominate a USGS Director.

On November 2, the Senate confirmed by voice vote three previous nominees to serve at the Department of Energy: Steven Winberg as Assistant Secretary of Energy (Fossil Energy), Mark Wesley Menezes as Under Secretary of Energy, and Paul Dabbar as Under Secretary for Science.

On November 9, the Senate voted 49-47 to confirm Bill Wehrum as Assistant Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). As the second Senate-confirmed appointee at EPA, Wehrum now heads the EPA's Office of Air and Radiation. He previously practiced law and served as acting head of the EPA's air office under President George W. Bush. Andrew Wheeler, a lobbyist and former aide in the Senate Committee on Environmental and Public Works, awaits confirmation by the Senate to be Deputy Administrator of the EPA. Kathleen White was also recommended by the Senate Committee on Environmental and Public Works to be Chairwoman of the White House Council on Environmental Quality. A current senior fellow at the Texas Public Policy Foundation and former chairwoman of the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality, Ms. White disputed mainstream climate science at her confirmation hearing.

In contrast, during his confirmation hearing on November 29, Barry Myers, the nominee for Administrator of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), agreed with the recent draft of the National Climate Assessment Report that humans are the primary driver of climate change. At the hearing, the co-founder and CEO of AccuWeather explained his relationship with the private weather industry, and his approach to lead the government agency in charge of weather observations, predictions, and warnings. On November 8, the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation approved Dr. Neil Jacobs to head forecasting at NOAA as Assistant Secretary of Commerce and Representative Jim Bridenstine (R-OK-1) to be Administrator of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA).

*Sources: Department of the Interior, E&E News, Library of Congress, U.S. Senate, White House*

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