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## Senate Appropriations passes Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies spending bill

June 16, 2015

On June 16, the Senate Appropriations Committee approved a \$30 billion spending bill for Interior, Environment, and related agencies. The bill cuts spending across the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) programs but would increase the U.S. Forest Service's (USFS) overall budget, including new provisions regarding emergency wildfire spending.

The bill would provide \$7.6 billion in funding towards EPA programs, \$538.8 million below current enacted levels. Funding for air, climate, and energy research was cut \$1.5 million below fiscal year (FY) 2015, and criminal and civil enforcement programs were cut by \$7.5 million. The bill also cuts \$2.5 million from EPA's research into the effects of hydraulic fracturing on groundwater and bars further research on the subject.

Senate Democrats were especially unhappy with what Senator Barbara Mikulski (D-MD) called the bill's "poison pill" riders. Among them, the bill would prohibit federal enforcement of the Administration's Clean Power Plan, prevent the EPA from using a consistent standard for accounting for climate change, block implementation of the Waters of the U.S. rule, halt the Administration's efforts to tighten ozone standard, and eliminate the proposed requirement for businesses to make financial plans for cleaning up future hazardous water contamination.

The bill funds the Department of the Interior at \$11 billion for FY 2016. The bill's only bipartisan measure would appropriate \$1.054 billion for emergency wildfire spending and would end the USFS's detrimental "fire-borrowing" practice, wherein funds are taken from other USFS programs when wildfire emergency spending exceeds allocated levels.

Sources: E&E News, Senate Appropriations Committee

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