Trump Vows Changes in Nation’s Energy, Climate Policies

By H. Sterling Burnett, Ph.D.

In the months leading up to Donald Trump’s victory in the November presidential election, his public statements highlighted many differences with President Barack Obama on energy and climate policy.

In a fact sheet released by the White House on September 21, 2016, Obama called climate change “an urgent and growing threat to our national security.” To reduce the threat of climate change, Obama approved the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency’s (EPA) Clean Power Plan, requiring states to reduce greenhouse-gas emissions from power plants 32 percent below 2005 levels by 2030. He also

Radical Group Exposed

Environmental writer Ron Arnold exposes the Environmental Working Group. Arnold says it’s a well-funded, unjustifiably influential organization that publishes shoddy research.

Fracking Myths Debunked

Heartland Research Fellow Isaac Orr narrates a series of eight short videos on the myths and facts of using hydraulic fracturing.

CA Regulates Cow Flatulence

A new California law forces the state’s dairy farmers and livestock producers to limit methane emissions from manure and livestock.

Violent Protesters Arrested

Police arrested 141 environmental activists who resorted to violence while blocking work on an oil pipeline in North Dakota.

Enviro Issues Prominent on State Ballots

By H. Sterling Burnett, Ph.D.

Ranging from constitutional amendments guaranteeing the right to hunt and fish, to ballot initiatives proposing statewide plastic bag bans and imposing a carbon tax, environmental issues featured prominently on several states’ ballots during the November elections.

Questions about wildlife management were on the ballots in Indiana, Kansas, and Montana.

Affirmed Right to Hunt, Fish

Despite opposition from animal rights organizations, such as People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals and the Humane Society of the United States,
Freedom Rising

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California County Bans Fracking Despite Study Showing No Air Pollution Risk

By Kenneth Artz

Voters in Monterey County, California passed a ballot measure banning hydraulic fracturing, commonly called “fracking,” on November 8.

In addition to banning fracking, the measure also prohibits the creation of new oil and gas wells of other kinds in the county.

Fracking is a technique used in oil and gas drilling in which water, sand, and chemicals are injected into a wellbore to break up rock formations thousands of feet below the surface and open pathways to release oil and gas trapped in pockets within the rock. Combined with directional drilling and advanced underground imaging technology, fracking has made the United States the world’s leader in natural gas production.

Proponents of the ban say it will help protect the environment, but a recent study examining fracking in Texas indicates the Monterey County fracking ban is unnecessary if preventing air pollution from fracking operations is the purpose of the ban.

A study published in the August edition of Science of the Total Environment found temporary spikes in air pollution around oil and gas wells in the Eagle Ford shale in southwest Texas are the result of operational inefficiencies and not inherent to fracking.

Deemed Environmentally Safe

Daniel Simmons, vice president for policy at the Institute for Energy Research, says the only emissions released into the air as a result of fracking are from the internal combustion engines in the trucks and equipment onsite pumping fluids at high pressure.

Simmons says the study is another in a long line of studies showing hydraulic fracturing is not causing pollution problems.

“The simple truth is study after study, including this Texas study, finds hydraulic fracturing is environmentally safe,” Simmons said.

“Environmentalists are demonizing one of the key technologies that made the United States the largest combined natural gas and oil producer in the world,” said Simmons. “Unfortunately, it seems their scare tactics have succeeded in shutting down fracking in Monterey County.”

Same as Conventional Process

It’s important to differentiate between the actual fracking procedure used to drill many new wells and ongoing field operations after the wells go into production, says Gary L. Stone, vice president of engineering at Five States Energy Capital.

During production, there is no difference in emissions between the oil and gas production from the pad of a hydraulically fractured well or a non-fracked well, Stone says.

“Either can have lax procedures and leaky equipment or up-to-date, regulatory compliant equipment and operations,” Stone said. “As our oldest massively fracked wells are about 15 years old—and many far less than that—the surface production equipment used is generally first class, and field personnel are well-trained in procedures and upkeep.

“The study confirms this, showing emissions levels well below federal guidelines,” said Stone. “The Texas Commission on Environmental Quality has monitored Texas oilfields consistently since 2010, finding, for the most part, Texas operations are compliant and emissions are well below mandated levels.”

Nearby Residents Are Safe

Isaac Orr, a research fellow for energy and environment policy at The Heartland Institute, which publishes Environment & Climate News, says the most important finding of the study is its conclusion ambient levels of benzene, toluene, ethyl benzene, and xylene compounds near fracking drilling sites are well within federal safety standards.

“This is great news,” said Orr. “For emissions of each of these pollutants to be 4,000 percent to 10,000 percent below the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health air quality standards is very significant.

“It’s significant in particular because if emissions are below the limits for Occupational Safety and Health Administration and National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health standards for workers who have a higher exposure to these sorts of chemicals because they actually work in and around the source, often for long periods, then people on neighboring properties or even properties more distant from well sites are very unlikely to be exposed to dangerous pollution from the drilling,” Orr said.

“To the extent concerns about air pollution around fracking sites motivated Monterey County’s fracking ban, this study indicates those worries were unjustified.”

Kenneth Artz (kartz@heartland.org) writes from Dallas, Texas.
Trump Vows Changes in Nation’s Energy, Climate Policies

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approved the Paris Agreement, which requires the United States to cut its greenhouse-gas emissions 28 percent below 2005 levels by 2025.

Cancelling Climate Commitments, Regs

In a September 21, 2015, appearance on Hugh Hewitt’s radio show, Trump said, “I’m not a believer in manmade global warming. I mean, Obama thinks it’s the number-one problem of the world today, and I think it’s very low on the list. … We have much bigger problems.”

Trump has vowed to “cancel” U.S. participation in the Paris climate accord. Trump has also committed to scrapping EPA’s Clean Power Plan and reviewing and possibly reversing EPA’s determination carbon dioxide is a pollutant endangering public and environmental health, commonly called the “endangerment finding.”

Reversing the endangerment finding would remove the legal justification for most climate regulations.

Before the election, Trump said he would reverse Obama administration rules imposing undue burdens on businesses. In particular, Trump said he would cut EPA’s budget dramatically and review all EPA regulations, eliminating many because, as he stated in his response to a survey of presidential candidates by the American Energy Alliance in April 2016, “Over-regulation presents one of the greatest barriers to entry into markets and one of the greatest costs to businesses that are trying to stay competitive.”

In Trump’s Contract with the American Voter, he pledges to “lift the restrictions on the production of $50 trillion dollars’ worth of job-producing American energy reserves, including shale, oil, natural gas, and clean coal, lift the Obama-Clinton roadblocks and allow vital energy infrastructure projects, such as the Keystone [XL] Pipeline, to move forward, cancel billions in payments to U.N. climate change programs, and use the money to fix America’s water and environmental infrastructure.”

‘Very Much Pro-Energy’

Dan Simmons, vice president for policy at the Institute for Energy Research, says a Trump presidency will likely be good for energy consumers.

“President-elect Trump has been very clear he is very much pro-energy. During a Trump administration, we will see federal lands and waters opened for energy production and a quick end to the coal-lease moratorium on federal lands.”

DAN SIMMONS, VICE PRESIDENT FOR POLICY, INSTITUTE FOR ENERGY RESEARCH

‘Americans Had Enough’

Paul Driessen, a senior policy analyst with the Committee For A Constructive Tomorrow, says Trump’s victory shows many among the public were tired of politicians ignoring their need and desire for affordable energy.

“This election shows hardworking Americans in what the media and ruling classes dismissively refer to as ‘flyover country’ finally had enough of unelected, unaccountable Washington, DC bureaucrats dictating every aspect of our lives,” Driessen said. “The American people want President Obama’s power-grabbing, energy-strangling, economy-crushing legacy to end.”

“The Paris climate treaty will be repudiated and delusions and assertions about ‘dangerous manmade climate change’ will no longer dictate our energy, economic, and national defense decisions,” said Driessen. “America will again produce and utilize the fossil-fuel blessings that lifted billions out of poverty, disease, and early death and created jobs, prosperity, health, living standards, and lifespans unimaginable barely a century ago.”

Lord Christopher Monckton, a former advisor to Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, says the United States can easily end its participation in the Paris climate agreement.

“The quickest way for the United States to end participation in the Paris Agreement is to withdraw from the U.N. Framework Convention on Climate Change,” said Monckton. “Article 25 of the UNFCCC allows any state party to it to withdraw from the convention without further obligation of any kind upon giving one year’s notice. The Paris climate accord stipulates anyone who secedes from UNFCCC secedes ipso facto from the Paris accord,” Monckton said. “The quickest formal route for Mr. Trump to withdraw the United States from the Paris Agreement is, on his inauguration day, to formally offer the required one year’s notice of secession from the UNFCC.”

H. Sterling Burnett, Ph.D. (hsburnett@heartland.org) is a research fellow with The Heartland Institute.

FRACKING FACTS:

What Do We Know About Hydraulic Fracturing?

Isaac Orr, research fellow at The Heartland Institute, reports on the pros and cons of fracking in a series of eight short videos.

To view the videos online, visit heartland.org/ideas/hydraulic-fracturing.

To get copies of the DVD, visit store.heartland.org.

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H. Sterling Burnett, Ph.D. (hsburnett@heartland.org) is a research fellow with The Heartland Institute.
By Bonner R. Cohen

Environmental activists and members of Native American tribes have resorted to violence to block completion of an oil pipeline that will stretch from North Dakota to Illinois. Morton and Cass Counties in North Dakota have become ground zero in the dispute over the Dakota Access pipeline. Opponents of the pipeline have hurled rocks and Molotov cocktails, set tires and cars on fire, and in at least one incident even fired guns to halt construction.

The protestors’ activities prompted local law enforcement to arrest 141 protesters while removing a blockade of the pipeline on October 27, 2016. Upon completion, the Dakota Access pipeline will stretch 1,172 miles, from the energy-rich Bakken and Three Forks oil fields in western North Dakota to Patoka, Illinois, where it will link up with existing pipelines to transport crude oil to refineries in the Midwest, East Coast, Texas, and abroad. Upon completion, the $3.7 billion pipeline will have the capacity to transport as much as 470,000 barrels of oil a day.

Injunction Fails, Protests Begin

Energy Transfer Partners, the developer of the Dakota Access pipeline, obtained rights-of-way from private landowners and secured the requisite federal and state permits to construct the pipeline as a more economical and safer way to transport oil than on the thousands of rail cars currently used.

The Standing Rock Sioux tribe went to court to enjoin continued construction of the pipeline, arguing it threatened water quality and sacred burial sites on their reservation a half-mile south of the pipeline’s route.

The state’s chief archeologist found no evidence of sacred burial or cultural sites along the pipeline’s route. On September 9, 2016, U.S. District Judge James E. Boasberg decline to issue an injunction, writing the tribe “has not shown it will suffer injury that would be prevented by any injunction the Court could issue.”

Within weeks of the ruling, the protests began.

Attack on Affordable Energy

Dan Simmons, vice president for policy at the Institute for Energy Research, says the violence in North Dakota is part of a larger pattern of attacks on affordable energy.

“These activists aren’t concerned about safety; they want to end the use of oil and natural gas,” said Simmons. “The activists believe if they can make it more difficult to transport energy, then less energy will be produced, and Americans will have to pay more for energy. Their goal is to make energy more expensive.”

Craig Rucker, executive director of the Committee For A Constructive Tomorrow, points out anti-fossil fuel activists are attacking a state that has long suffered economic malaise.

“It is ironic anti-fossil fuel activists have targeted North Dakota,” said Rucker. “For decades, North Dakota suffered population decline as many people fled the state in search of a better future.

“Oil extraction in the Bakken completely turned the state around,” Rucker said. “Even with today’s low oil prices, North Dakota is infinitely better off than it was only a few years ago, and the wealth fracking created has benefited all segments of North Dakota’s economy.”

Bonner R. Cohen, Ph.D. (bcohen@nationalcenter.org) is a senior fellow at the National Center for Public Policy Research.
Environmental Issues Feature Prominently on State Ballots

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constitutional amendments guaranteeing the right to hunt and fish were passed by substantial majorities of voters in Indiana and Kansas.

Both measures guaranteed, in the words of Kansas’ amendment, “The people have the right to hunt, fish and trap ... subject to reasonable laws and regulations that promote wildlife conservation and management and that preserve the future of hunting and fishing.”

The Kansas amendment, passed with more than 81 percent of those voting, also designated hunting and fishing “a preferred means of managing and controlling wildlife.” Indiana’s amendment passed with a vote of 78 percent in favor versus 19 percent against.

Animal rights activists also failed to restrict trapping on public lands in Montana. In 2015, the state’s legislature passed a constitutional amendment adding trapping to the state’s previously enacted constitutional provision guaranteeing the right to hunt and fish in the state. Animal rights activists garnered enough signatures to put a provision on the 2016 ballot to limit trapping on state lands. Voters rejected the amendment by a vote of 63 percent against trapping limits to 37 percent in favor of the ban.

Ben Carter, executive director of the Dallas Safari Club, applauded the results, saying they upheld America’s successful traditional wildlife management regime.

“Glad to see sound management of species by state wildlife agencies is being maintained, informed by scientific wildlife management principles, as opposed to emotional decision-making encouraged by those that don’t understand how wildlife management works,” said Carter. “The North American Model of wildlife management has a proud, effective history of keeping nature and wildlife in balance.”

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BEN CARTER
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, DALLAS SAFARI CLUB

“When it came down to the question of what the greens are more afraid of, climate change or tax cuts, the answer was that they care more about government. It is an important lesson that when faced with environmental policies, conservatives should call the greens’ bluff and make it clear to the public that government, not the environment, is their true agenda.”

TODD MYERS
DIRECTOR OF THE CENTER FOR THE ENVIRONMENT, WASHINGTON POLICY CENTER

No Change to CA Bag Ban

By a narrower margin than was expected based on pre-election polling data, California voters approved Proposition 67, upholding a state bill banning single-use plastic grocery bags. Fifty-two percent of voters favored maintaining the bag ban, with 48 percent opposing.

Also on the ballot was a referendum, Proposition 65, to shift the revenue grocery stores collect, a fee of 10 cents per paper grocery bag, from groceries to fund environmental programs in the state. Based on pre-election polling, the bag fee referendum seemed to have even more popular support than the bag ban referendum, yet on Election Day, the public rejected Proposition 65.

Pamela Villarreal, a senior fellow with the National Center for Policy Analysis, whose research has found plastic bag bans neither save money nor reduce waste, was surprised by the Proposition 65 result.

“Curiously, the progressive voters of California have agreed to let the money spent on bag fees go to big corporations, not environmental programs.” Villarreal said. “This is not what one would typically expect from such an environmentally conscious state.”

WA Voters Reject Carbon Tax

Washington State voters rejected Initiative-732 (I-732), which would have imposed a $15-per-metric-ton tax on carbon dioxide emitted by fossil fuels used in the state. Approval would have made Washington the first state in the nation to impose a so-called carbon tax.

The business community fought the initiative, saying it would raise energy prices and make it more difficult for businesses in the state to compete with out-of-state companies.

Many national environmental groups also opposed the initiative because rather than using the funds generated to support environmental causes, I-732 was characterized as revenue-neutral; it would have also reduced the state sales tax and provided up to $1,500 per year for 400,000 low-income working households.

Carbon Dioxide Politics

Todd Myers, director of the Center for the Environment at the Washington Policy Center, says the results show the political difficulties in enacting a carbon tax.

“The failure of the revenue-neutral carbon tax in Washington [State] exposes the policy and political problems of cutting carbon emissions,” Myers said. “First, even though the policy would have actually been a net tax cut, energy-intensive jobs and industries would have paid more and might, ironically, have moved overseas, where they would have increased [their] emissions.”

The debate running up to the vote on I-732 also exposed hypocrisy among the environmental community, Myers says.

“Second, the hypocrisy of the environmental community was exposed,” said Myers. “They opposed the initiative because it didn’t expand government and increase taxes.

“When it came down to the question of what the greens are more afraid of, climate change or tax cuts, the answer was that they care more about government.” Myers said. “It is an important lesson that when faced with environmental policies, conservatives should call the greens’ bluff and make it clear to the public that government, not the environment, is their true agenda.”

H. Sterling Burnett, Ph.D. (hsburnett@heartland.org) is a research fellow with The Heartland Institute.

INTERNET INFO


By Bonner R. Cohen

Pennsylvania Commonwealth Court Judge P. Kevin Brobson delivered a partial victory to a group of shale-gas drillers in Pennsylvania who sued to block implementation of new state rules governing wells developed through hydraulic fracturing, commonly called “fracking.”

On November 8, 2016, Brobson placed a temporary stay on some new rules imposed on fracking operations in the Marcellus Shale until courts consider the full merits of the case.

The stay affected some of the new rules developed by the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) and signed by Gov. Tom Wolf (D) that went into effect on October 10. The rules would force drillers to consider the impact of their operations on species not protected as threatened or endangered under the federal Endangered Species Act. Other rules would require operators to identify and plug any nearby abandoned wells and meet stricter standards governing freshwater storage ponds.

The Marcellus Shale Coalition (MSC), an industry group representing drillers that use fracking to extract natural gas, sued to delay implementation of the new regulations until its appeal can be decided. Brobson partially sided with the drillers.

‘Vague’ Rules

MSC does not object to the entire package of DEP regulations; it cites only a limited number of provisions it says are vague, contrary to Pennsylvania law, and do nothing to improve environmental protection.

Drillers say the mandate to plug nearby abandoned wells would require them to obtain access to property over which they have no control, and it imposes liability on drillers for wells they do not own and did not drill or operate. In addition, they say the storage pond regulations are not authorized under state law, and they note conventional oil and gas wells are not covered by the rules, meaning fracking operations are being treated differently without apparent justification.

“These shortcomings are immediately harmful to our industry because they affect our ability to conduct business and remain competitive,” MSC President David J. Spiegelmyer told Philly.com on October 13.

“Pennsylvania’s oil and gas industry is governed by some of the nation’s most stringent laws and regulations, and our members continue to follow all federal and Pennsylvania environmental statutes and regulations,” Spiegelmyer said in a statement. “Even with a record number of on-site inspections of unconventional oil and gas well sites, DEP’s own data illustrate that environmental compliance in the oil and gas industry has never been better.

“Certain provisions conflict with DEP’s legal authority granted by Pennsylvania’s General Assembly while other provisions are vague,” Spiegelmyer said.

Judge Finds Objections Persuasive

Brobson’s ruling indicates he found at least some of MSC’s arguments persuasive.

While Brobson allowed new rules to go forward requiring shale gas operators to survey for nearby abandoned and active wells that could possibly be affected by new fracking operations, he blocked requirements forcing companies to plug and/or remediate damage to wells owned by others or that have no known owners.

In addition, as reported by the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, Brobson enjoined rules requiring “companies to consider the impact of their operations on nearby playgrounds, common areas of a school’s property,” and species not officially listed as threatened or endangered.

Brobson also stayed rules that would require companies to close and rebuild existing holding ponds to stricter standards.

Brobson found the provisions of the new fracking rules he blocked likely exceeded DEP’s authority, while the costs of complying with the provisions until their legal standing was finally determined would cause drillers irreparable harm if the rules are later determined to be illegal.

Renaissance at Risk

In less than a decade, fracking transformed Pennsylvania into the nation’s second-largest producer of natural gas, behind only Texas. The resulting glut of gas forced prices down, and the number of drilling rigs operating in the state fell from 114 at the peak in October 2011 to just 13 in June 2016. Since June, the industry has experienced a modest recovery, with 24 wells operating statewide in early October.

Isaac Orr, a research fellow at The Heartland Institute, which publishes Environment & Climate News, says the new DEP regulations could further slow the nation’s economic recovery.

“Industry officials have said that these regulations will add $2 million to the cost of completing a well in Pennsylvania, an increase of 30 percent over current well-drilling costs. This will have a chilling effect on consumers and energy-intensive industries like manufacturing and steel production.”

“Marcellus Shale is the largest natural gas-producing field in the world,” said Orr. “At a time when the United States is experiencing the beginnings of a renaissance in manufacturing, it makes no sense to burden energy producers with regulations that will bring little environmental benefit.”

New York Example

Craig Rucker, executive director of the Committee For A Constructive Tomorrow, says Pennsylvania’s regulators should not kill the state’s golden goose.

“In my home state of New York, fracking is banned,” said Rucker. “Residents of the Southern Tier have the riches of the Marcellus Shale beneath their feet but derive no benefit from them.

“Landowners have looked with envy on their neighbors to the south in Pennsylvania, where the natural-gas boom has given people hope for the future,” Rucker said. “Pennsylvania regulators should not kill, or even wound, the goose that continues to lay golden eggs.”

Bonner R. Cohen, Ph.D. (bcohen@nationalcenter.org) is a senior fellow at the National Center for Public Policy Research.

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ISAAC ORR
RESEARCH FELLOW, THE HEARTLAND INSTITUTE
Feds Seize Management of Nearly 100 Million Acres of Alaskan Lands

By H. Sterling Burnett, Ph.D.

In a series of moves, the Obama administration seized control of nearly 100 million acres in Alaska over the past year.

The amount of land seized is comparable to the size of New Mexico.

In 1980, through the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA), President Jimmy Carter designated 157 million acres of Alaskan land as national parks, national wildlife refuges, national monuments, wild and scenic rivers, recreational areas, national forests, and conservation areas.

As part of a compromise to gain sufficient support for ANILCA’s passage, the 1906 Antiquities Act was changed to prevent a president from declaring any area of more than 5,000 acres in Alaska a national monument without ratification by Congress.

Under ANILCA, the federal government recognized the State of Alaska’s authority to manage various natural resources, including fish and wildlife, on the vast majority of the lands covered by the law.

In October 2015, the National Park Service overrode Alaska’s predator control regulations on 20 million acres of land. In July 2016, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) seized control of fish and wildlife management on an additional one million acres of land previously under the control of the State of Alaska under ANILCA.

Under new rules effective in September 2016, FWS took control of 77 million acres of national wildlife refuges in Alaska from the state. The new rules undermine Alaska’s comprehensive wildlife management plans by prohibiting previously approved hunting practices.

Violating Statehood Agreement
Former Alaska Lt. Gov. Mead Treadwell says the Obama administration’s actions violate Alaska’s statehood agreement.

“The FWS’s action is contrary to the Alaska statehood compact of 1958, which allowed Alaska authority to manage fish and game,” said Treadwell. “Congress said unilateral changes [to the compact’s terms] cannot be made.

“Congress said unilateral changes to the compact’s terms cannot be made. What the USFS is doing makes no sense legally,” Treadwell said. “Alaska should examine all the legal options.”

‘Unconstitutional’ Actions
Sarah Curry, policy director of the Platte Institute, says the Obama administration’s actions in Alaska are unconstitutional and set a dangerous precedent.

“For the feds to take away Alaska’s land is unconstitutional,” said Curry. “States have legal recourse. There has been an active effort by the states to push back against federal takeovers of lands.

“Gov. [Bill] Walker (I) should be doing something, because Alaska’s land is 62 percent owned by the federal government,” Curry said. “He is Alaska’s voice, and he should be working with the attorney general, the State Legislature, and [Alaska’s] U.S. representatives and senators to do something.

“It 100 percent sets a precedent [for other states],” said Curry. “More than 50 percent of the land west of Kansas is controlled by the feds, while less than 4 percent is controlled in the East Coast. If Gov. Walker continues his apathy on the issue, Colorado’s land could be taken, for example.”

‘Egregiously Invasive’
Heritage Foundation Policy Analyst Katie Tubb says the Obama administration’s land seizures in Alaska raise multiple constitutional questions.

“While the FWS’s actions are egregiously invasive of Alaska’s sovereignty and the courts are in the practice of giving wide deference to agencies, the problem starts and stops with Congress,” Tubb said. “Congress has delegated away authority and empowered executive agencies, which face little accountability from Alaskans.

“Alaska’s response, or lack thereof, feeds into a bigger conversation going on right now about the federal estate: How much land is enough?” said Tubb.

“The federal government currently owns 640 million acres and hundreds of millions more offshore and in the mineral estate below ground.”

Tubb says Utah’s legislators’ attempts to recover federal lands set an example for other states to follow.

“I think Utah is a good example of a state taking leadership on this issue,” said Tubb. “The legislature has taken initiative by studying the economic feasibility and legal pathway for recovering federal lands, and Utah has been very engaged at the local, state, and congressional levels regarding a potential national monument designation the Obama administration is considering.

“Western states have effectively raised the profile of the issue of federal management in state lands to the point that Washington, DC is finally paying attention,” Tubb said.

‘Up to the States’
Jennifer Fielder, CEO of the American Lands Council, says it is up to the states to fight to force the federal government to remain within the boundaries established by the Constitution.

“The federal government will undoubtedly continue efforts to amass unlawful power unto itself as long as it goes unchecked,” Fielder said. “It is up to the states and the people to become more engaged in the civil processes to limit the federal government to its constitutional boundaries so we can restore the balance and have a healthy environment, abundant outdoor recreation, and safe, vibrant communities once again.”

Treadwell says states must act in concert to fight unconstitutional federal actions.

“It is absolutely essential that public lands states work together to make sure states have more ownership of public lands regardless of who is president,” Treadwell said. “Devolution is the best way going forward.”

It matters who manages land and natural resources, Tubb says.

“What’s disheartening is too often decisions like this are made by people who feel almost none of the consequences, but people who live in and around these lands will face the consequences every day,” said Tubb.

H. Sterling Burnett, Ph.D. (hsburnett@heartland.org) is a research fellow with The Heartland Institute.
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www.FuelingFreedomProject.com

www.TexasPolicy.com
The Environmental Working Group (EWG), an activist organization, specializes in research, litigation, and lobbying about chemicals, agricultural subsidies, public lands, and corporate accountability.

Its website states EWG’s mission is “to use the power of public information to protect public health and the environment.”

Although EWG President Ken Cook claims he cofounded the organization in 1993 with Richard Wiles, it actually existed as a subsidiary or partner of the ultra-left Center for Resource Economics/Island Press, and subsequently the Tides Foundation, as early as 1989. It became incorporated as a fully separate entity in 1999.

EWG is a leader in stoking unwarranted fears of modern agriculture and some medical technology.

Show Me the Money
EWG had a good start financially, with its first 17 grants, which were provided by a variety of left-leaning foundations, topping $5 million.

EWG has continued to thrive since then. In 2013, EWG had $3.57 million in assets and an income of $7.43 million. EWG’s 2013 expenditures included $538,701 spent on lobbying, $1.15 million spent on fundraising, and $4.5 million on salaries, including President Ken Cook’s $251,595 compensation package. EWG received 43 grants from 37 foundations in 2013, totaling $5.57 million. These grants included $2 million from the Foundation for the Carolinas; $1.05 million from the David and Lucile Packard Foundation; $175,000 from the Walton Family Foundation; and $35,000 from the Tides Foundation.

In addition, EWG received two large multiyear pass-through grants in 2013 from the ClimateWorks Foundation for its Climate and Land Use Alliance project and its Disrupting the Global Commodity Business Program. The two grants combined totaled $1,350,000 for EWG to support federal government initiatives to reduce greenhouse-gas emissions and nitrogen pollution associated with agriculture in the United States through research, policy advocacy, education, and outreach.

EWG is a prime example of the revolving door between the federal government and environmental lobbying groups. Twenty-three EWG lobbyists served in congressional offices or as professional staff on congressional committees. In 2013, EWG also had seven employees on two Environmental Protection Agency committees. On the regulatory front, EWG was mentioned in 384 regulatory agency dockets and submitted comments to 26 dockets in 2013.

Use of Flawed Studies
The Capital Research Center reports EWG specializes in fomenting health scares about food, pesticides, and other products by producing non-peer-reviewed studies, which uniformly conclude exposure to many everyday items—such as baby food, cosmetics, breast milk, tap water, fruits and vegetables—pose risks to human health, especially for children.

Unfounded Sunscreen Scare
In July 2010, EWG released a “sunscreen guide” asserting retinyl palmitate, commonly found in sunscreen products, is a dangerous carcinogen.

In fact, retinyl palmitate is a common vitamin supplement used to treat vitamin A deficiency. Commenting on the study, Joe Schwarcz, director of McGill University’s Office for Science and Society, told the Montreal Gazette EWG based its report on flawed, non-peer-reviewed laboratory experiments. Schwarcz says no sunscreen lotion contains enough retinyl palmitate to cause any known health problem.

A peer-reviewed study published in 2010 also contradicts EWG’s study. “Safety of Retinyl Palmitate in Sunscreens: A Critical Analysis” was published in the Journal of the American Academy of Dermatology. It concludes, “There is no convincing evidence to support the notion that [retinyl palmitate] in sunscreens is carcinogenic.”

The Palm Beach Post reports the Skin Cancer Foundation was worried “consumers confused about the report might stop using sunscreens,” which would be harmful because overexposure to sunlight is a well-known cause of skin cancer.

Stoking Fear of Tap Water
In 2009, EWG released a report on the quality of tap water in various localities across the country. The alarming claims contained in the study generated much attention from media outlets, which repeated EWG’s false findings.

For instance, the Pensacola News Journal reported EWG’s finding the Emerald Coast Utilities (ECUA) Authority in Florida “reported 45 impurities in the water” between 2004 and 2008. Surprised by EWG’s claims, ECUA commissioned the University of West Florida (UWF) to examine its water quality record. Contrary to EWG’s claims, the UWF study found ECUA did not violate a single federal Environmental Protection Agency water quality standard.

“According to the accepted drinking water quality regulations, the water provided by ECUA offers minimal risk and is safe for human consumption according to federal and State of Florida standards,” the study said.

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Testimony: EPA Testing Flawed, Possibly Illegal

“The way EPA uses epidemiology is deceitful, because it does not acknowledge the limits of the methods and the uncertainties.”

DR. JOHN DALE DUNN
CIVILIAN FACULTY MEMBER OF EMERGENCY MEDICINE
FORT HOOD, TEXAS

By Paul Driessen

President-elect Donald Trump says he intends to rescind U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) regulations enacted by the Obama administration that harm the economy while providing little or no environmental or health benefits.

Based on expert testimony delivered to a committee of the National Research Council (NRC) investigating possible scientific misconduct at EPA, EPA’s regulations setting stricter limits on small particles of air pollution could be in the new president’s crosshairs. NRC is part of the National Academies of Sciences.

Among the matters NRC examined is how EPA has justified its air-quality rules on particulate matter smaller than 2.5 microns (PM 2.5), about one-fourth the diameter of pollen particles. EPA claims PM 2.5 gets into people’s lungs and bloodstream and endangers human lives and health.

In a February 3, 2012, letter to U.S. Rep. Fred Upton (R-MI), chairman of the U.S. House Committee on Energy and Commerce, EPA Administrator Gina McCarthy wrote there is “no evidence of a threshold below which health effects associated with exposure to fine particles—including premature death—would not occur.”

As a result, EPA says the further reduction of emissions from power plants, factories, vehicles, and heavy equipment always yield health benefits that potentially save thousands of lives each year.

Volunteered to Testify
Dr. John Dale Dunn, a civilian faculty member of emergency medicine at Fort Hood in Texas, and Steve Milloy, who runs JunkScience.com, learned of the NRC investigation and sent requests to give in-person presentations and written testimony on the topic. They and two other researchers testified before the committee on August 24.

Part of Dunn’s testimony focused on the limits of epidemiological studies EPA uses to claim PM 2.5 causes illness and premature mortality. Dunn says epidemiological studies are corrupted by uncontrollable “confounding factors,” meaning they cannot reliably identify causes and effects or scientifically attribute deaths to particulates.

“You cannot separate PM2.5 particles emitted from burning fossil fuels for energy and emissions from factories or particulates in indoor air where people spend most of their time, much less from particles from volcanoes, forest fires, construction projects, dust storms, or from cigarettes that send hundreds of times more ultrafine particles into lungs than what EPA says is lethal if they come from regulated sources,” Dunn said. “Epidemiology is not junk science, but it cannot be used to prove causation, because it can’t control for all relevant factors.

“The way EPA uses epidemiology is deceitful, because it does not acknowledge the limits of the methods and the uncertainties,” said Dunn. “EPA’s air pollution research is built on uncontrollable observational studies, projecting non-proof small associations to create big claims of deaths in particular.”

Calls EPA Tests Illegal, Unethical

In addition to the epidemiological studies EPA uses to justify its PM 2.5 regulations, EPA also funded studies using humans as test subjects.

Milloy and Dunn testified these tests raise legal, ethical, and scientific concerns.

U.S. laws, the Nuremberg Code, Helsinki Accords, and EPA Rule 1000.17 make it unethical or illegal to conduct toxicity experiments on humans, Dunn stated in his testimony.

Milloy testified EPA-funded studies at several universities raised troubling questions about whether participants could truly give “informed consent” based on the information they were provided. Researchers, for example, failed to advise subjects EPA claimed the pollution they were to breathe was toxic, carcinogenic, and deadly. Despite test subjects being exposed to PM concentrations up to 60 times the volume of what EPA claims can be lethal, the EPA-funded scientists only told the participants they might experience minor airway irritation, wheezing, or shortness of breath.

Put Most Vulnerable at Risk
Milloy’s testimony shows many of the people recruited for the studies were those EPA claims are most at risk of harm from inhaling PM 2.5: the elderly, asthmatics, diabetics, people with heart disease, and children.

“This raises important questions,” Milloy said. “If PM2.5 is dangerous or even lethal when emitted by factories or vehicles, how can it be harmless to humans who were intentionally administered pollution many times worse and for longer periods of time than what most people would encounter outdoors?”

“If PM2.5 is lethal and there is no safe threshold, shouldn’t EPA officials and researchers have explained this to volunteers, especially in at-risk groups?” Milloy asks. “If it is lethal and there is no safe level, why did no test subjects develop lung, cardiac, or cancer problems, have seizures, or die?”

Unethical, or Lying?

Dunn says the only circumstances under which EPA’s PM 2.5 tests were ethical or legal is if EPA has misled the public about the dangers of PM 2.5.

“The committee must ask under what circumstances could these human experiments on minors be ethical or legal?” Dunn testified. “The answer, surely, is ‘none,’ unless EPA and its researchers walk back their claims that hundreds, thousands, even millions of people are dying from exposure to ambient levels of small particle air pollution.”

Paul Driessen (pdriessen@cox.net) is senior policy advisor for the Committee For A Constructive Tomorrow.

INTERNET INFO


Federal Flood Insurance Promotes Poor Building Decisions

By Kenneth Artz

Following the recent flooding in Louisiana and along the southeastern U.S. coast in the aftermath of Hurricane Matthew, federal and state disaster declarations are shining renewed light on the U.S. National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP).

NFIP holds policies for more than five million homes across the United States and currently owes the U.S. Treasury approximately $23 billion.

One reason for NFIP’s debt is it insures homes in flood-prone areas that have made repeated claims for flood damage. According to the Natural Resources Defense Council, more than 2,100 U.S. properties enrolled in the program have flooded and been rebuilt more than 10 times each since 1978, and more than 30,000 properties in the program have flooded multiple times over the years.

These homes, known as “severe repetitive loss properties,” make up just 0.6 percent of federal flood insurance policies, but they account for 10.6 percent of the program’s claims, receiving more than $5.5 billion in payments since 1978.

Subsidies Spur Risky Choices

Federal flood insurance encourages people to live in risky flood-prone places, says Chris Edwards, director of tax policy studies at the Cato Institute and editor of DownsizingGovernment.org.

“The problem stems from a basic principle: If the government subsidizes something, people do more of it,” Edwards said. “They subsidize flood insurance, and as a result, people who don’t have to bear the costs of their poor decisions are induced to live in more dangerous places.”

Edwards says federal intervention in flood insurance markets is unnecessary and counterproductive.

“There is no reason for federal intervention,” said Edwards. “A private, unsubsidized flood insurance market could develop if the government got out of the way. Insurance may not be available in the most risky locations, but this would be a good market signal warning people they shouldn’t be living in those locations.”

Edwards also recommends the federal government repeal other subsidies and programs encouraging people to live too close to flooding rivers and seacoasts, including the Army Corps of Engineers’ flood control and beach replenishment programs.

“In general, policies and programs related to water resources and flooding ought to be devolved to state governments,” Edwards said.

Calls for Privatization

Eli Lehrer, president of the R Street Institute, says NFIP encourages people to make poor siting decisions for their homes and businesses, costing taxpayers billions of dollars.

“By encouraging people to live where they shouldn’t, the NFIP costs taxpayers quite a bit of money,” Lehrer said. “In the long term, we could protect lives, property, and the environment better by transitioning it to the private sector. The single best thing we could do is end the program for most people and let the private sector take over and then focus public-sector resources on mitigation.”

Kenneth Artz (kartz@heartland.org) writes from Dallas, Texas.

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“The problem stems from a basic principle: If the government subsidizes something, people do more of it. They subsidize flood insurance, and as a result, people who don’t have to bear the costs of their poor decisions are induced to live in more dangerous places.”

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Is global warming really a crisis? Can renewable energy really replace fossil fuels?

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* William O’Keefe  
founder  
George Marshall Institute

** Joseph Bast  
president  
The Heartland Institute
New California Methane Regulations
Expected to Raise Meat and Dairy Prices

By Kenneth Artz

Low-income Californians suffer under some of the nation’s highest electricity, gasoline, and housing prices and taxes, and in the final hours of the state’s 2016 legislative session, which ended September 30, the state’s Democrat-controlled legislature approved $900 million in additional spending on environmental programs.

The bill signed by Gov. Jerry Brown (D) on September 19 included provisions forcing dairies and livestock producers to reduce methane emissions from manure 40 percent below 2013 levels by 2030. It also would force farmers to limit cow flatulence to the extent technology exists to reduce it. The bill provides $50 million to implement and enforce the agricultural methane limits and another $40 million to limit methane emissions from landfills.

Burden on Poor
Because the prices of beef, cheese, and milk are likely to rise, state Sen. Jeff Stone (R-Temecula) opposed the plan, telling Yahoo News the spending in the bill “goes to many Democrat pet projects ... pursuing long-term greenhouse gas reduction goals that will continue to harm families and jobs.”

E. Calvin Beisner, founder and national spokesman for the Cornwall Alliance, said, “This new regulation is sure to drive up costs for milk, illustrating the fact those who are on the global-warming-alarmist bandwagon simply do not take into consideration the impact their policies have upon the poor.”

“The resulting increase in dairy and energy prices from California’s existing and new climate policies is going to hurt the poorest people in California the worst,” Beisner added.

‘Stellar Example of Stupidity’
Beisner says California’s new methane-emissions law will likely hurt California farmers as well.

Beef, cheese, powdered milk, and other dairy products are sold globally, so if other states and nations do not enact similar laws, California farmers’ products will be at a competitive disadvantage compared to those produced by farmers in other states and nations, Beisner says.

“If they can’t compete in the market against dairy farmers from other states or countries lacking a similar regulatory framework, then they are going to lose sales and find themselves hard hit with diminished incomes,” Beisner said. “This is just a stellar example of stupidity on the part of politicians.”

Harvard Law Professor: Clean Power Plan Is Unconstitutional

By Michael McGrady

Harvard Law School professor Laurence Tribe, one of the professors who taught President Barack Obama while he attended law school and author of a widely used text on constitutional law, is serving on the legal team fighting to block the Obama administration’s Clean Power Plan (CPP).

The U.S. Supreme Court issued a stay of CPP on February 9, 2016, delivering a temporary victory to 27 states, multiple companies, and industry groups who sued to halt the rules by arguing they are unconstitutional and unnecessarily costly. CPP forces states to cut carbon-dioxide emissions from new and existing power plants by approximately 32 percent below 2005 levels by 2030.

In September 27, 2016, arguments before the Washington, DC Circuit Court of Appeals, Tribe, representing Peabody Energy, cited his brief on the constitutionality of CPP published in Harvard Law Today in 2015, in which he wrote CPP is not authorized by the Clean Air Act and is unconstitutional because it violates the division of authority between the states and the federal government and Fifth Amendment property rights and due process provisions.

When contacted by Environment & Climate News for comment, Tribe declined because the litigation is still pending.

Argues 10th Amendment Violation

Attorney Michael Nasi, a partner in the law firm Jackson Walker and general counsel for Balanced Energy for Texas, says CPP violates the Tenth Amendment to the Constitution, which reserves to the states or the people all powers not explicitly granted to the federal government.

“We clearly have Tenth Amendment issues here,” Nasi said. “I have never seen an environmental regulatory set of provisions that are so coercive.

“The [Clean Power Plan] is set up to force states to create enforceable plans, plans that the Environmental Protection Agency, without states’ capitulation or submission, cannot enforce itself,” said Nasi. “In my career, that has never happened in the environmental jurisprudence.”

Michael McGrady (mmcgrady@uccs.edu) writes from Colorado Springs, Colorado.

“This new regulation is sure to drive up costs for milk, illustrating the fact those who are on the global-warming-alarmist bandwagon simply do not take into consideration the impact their policies have upon the poor.”

E. CALVIN BEISNER
FOUNDER AND NATIONAL SPOKESMAN
CORNWALL ALLIANCE

Environmental Markets
A Property Rights Approach

Terry L. Anderson • Gary D. Libecap

Environmental Markets explains the prospects of using markets to improve environmental quality and resource conservation. This book compares standard approaches to these problems using governmental management, regulation, taxation, and subsidization with a market-based property rights approach. This approach is applied to land, water, wildlife, fisheries, and air and is compared to governmental solutions. It concludes by discussing tougher environmental problems such as ocean fisheries and the global atmosphere, emphasizing that neither governmental nor market solutions are a panacea.

Two of the world’s leading scholars on property rights and the environment offer a timely reminder that government is not always an effective steward of natural resources when markets fail at this task, and offer a rich review of the myriad creative ways in which market forces can be harnessed to improve environmental quality. The book’s fresh perspective on the question of how best to solve problems ranging from climate change to overfishing reminds economists and their students to “look before they leap,” with regulation as a solution.

Sheila M. Olmstead, University of Texas, Austin
By H. Sterling Burnett, Ph.D.

Burnett: Oklahoma is one of 27 states challenging the Obama administration’s Clean Power Plan in court. Do you support Oklahoma’s suit?

McBride: I fully support Attorney General Pruitt’s decision to file suit against the U.S. Environmental Protect Agency for their overreach as it relates to their rules regarding the so-called “Clean Power Plan.” It is well known American energy independence is vital to economic growth and national security. Any regulation on the production of power, be it natural gas, coal, solar, wind, or other sources, should be common sense and backed by science that balances the need for energy and the protection of the public health and safety.

Burnett: In 2015, you offered a bill to prevent municipalities from banning fracking. A similar bill ultimately became law. Why did you feel this bill was needed?

McBride: In 2015, I cosponsored Senate Bill 809 with Speaker of the House Jeff Hickman and Senate President Pro-Tempore Brian Bingman, which claimed state preemption over municipalities as it relates to oil and natural gas exploration and production. I believe having a uniform set of standards for businesses to operate under is important for keeping Oklahoma competitive by reducing the administrative burden on these businesses in researching and complying with a patchwork of regulations.

While I believe regulation of this industry is important, it should be done by qualified experts on a statewide basis, as opposed to municipalities. Any regulation should be done by either the state legislature or the Oklahoma Corporation Commission.

Burnett: Oklahoma is one of 15 states that sued to block the Environmental Protection Agency’s new methane rules for oil and gas operations. Do you support Oklahoma’s suit?

McBride: I support and agree with Attorney General Pruitt’s suit. Once again, the EPA has promulgated rules in excess of the authority granted to the agency by the U.S. Congress. I wholeheartedly support sensible regulations to protect the public health and safety of not only Oklahomans but all Americans. However, such regulations should be debated, authorized, and monitored by the people’s elected representatives in Congress and the White House and not be unilateral decisions made in a bureaucratic vacuum.

H. Sterling Burnett, Ph.D. (hsburnett@heartland.org) is a research fellow with The Heartland Institute.
UPenn Rejects Calls for Fossil-Fuel Divestment

By H. Sterling Burnett, Ph.D.

The University of Pennsylvania (UPenn) rejected calls from activist groups to divest all fossil-fuel holdings in its endowment.

UPenn’s Ad Hoc Advisory Committee on Divestment says the University’s fossil-fuel investments are not equivalent to moral corruption.

In a September 22, 2016, letter to Fossil Free Penn, one of the groups demanding UPenn divest its holdings, David Cohen, chairman of UPenn’s Board of Trustees, wrote the purported “moral evil” protesters attribute to fossil-fuel companies such as ExxonMobil is not “on par with apartheid or genocide.”

“While the Trustees recognize that the ‘bar’ of moral evil presents a rigorously high barrier of consideration, we are resolute in our belief that such a high barrier must be maintained so that investment decisions and the endowment are not used for the purpose of making public policy statements,” Cohen wrote.

Stanford Rejection

Stanford University preceded Penn by rejecting divestment calls in April 2016.

Stanford’s Board of Trustees established an Advisory Panel on Investment Responsibility and Licensing (APIRL), made up of faculty members, students, and alumni, to advise on whether to divest the university’s fossil-fuel investments.

With $22 billion in assets, Stanford has the third-largest university endowment in the world, so a decision in favor of divestment would have had far-reaching implications for how other universities invest. APIRL advised the school not to do so.

In its April 25 statement announcing the decision not to divest, Stanford’s Board of Trustees explained, “At the present moment oil and gas remain integral components of the global economy, essential to the daily lives of billions of people in both developed and emerging economies.”

Sustainability Concessions

“The fossil-fuel divestment campaign aims to use the university as an instrument of partisan politics, premised on the idea that turning university endowments into political billboards could nudge politicians to adopt new environmental regulations favored by the political left,” Peterson said. “I applaud the University of Pennsylvania for declining to prostrate its endowment before the engines of partisan politics, but I am disappointed the trustees, in declining to divest, attempted to placate divestment activists with a slate of new policies entrenching the university’s efforts to achieve ‘sustainability.'”

Peterson says UPenn’s embrace of the sustainability movement is a mistake.

“In the letter explaining their decision not to divest, the trustees outline a plan to ‘enhance’ sustainability training and research, and aver ‘environmental sustainability’ is ‘one of Penn’s highest priorities,’” Peterson said. “The ideology of sustainability demands needless limits on economic, political, and intellectual freedom, justified as the price that must be paid to secure the wellbeing of future generations.

“The sustainability movement’s foundation is just as shaky as that of the fossil-fuel divestment movement,” Peterson said. “I regret the University of Pennsylvania, in rejecting one political folly, has entrenched another.”

H. Sterling Burnett, Ph.D. (hsburnett@heartland.org) is a research fellow with The Heartland Institute.

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Global Climate Agreement Targets Air Conditioners, Refrigerators

By Bonner R. Cohen

With little fanfare, government negotiators from more than 170 countries agreed to an amendment to an existing international treaty that could affect air conditioning and refrigeration systems worldwide.

After seven years of on-again, off-again negotiations, representatives from more than 170 countries gathered in Kigali, Rwanda to put the final touches on an agreement to force a phase-out of the use of hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs) as a coolant in air conditioners and refrigerators, which replaced the use of chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) as required by the 1987 Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer.

Although most previous climate change pacts have primarily targeted carbon dioxide, the October 15, 2016, Kigali agreement, which would amend the Montreal Protocol, focuses on HFCs, which the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change says have between 437 and 12,000 times as much heat-trapping capacity as carbon dioxide after 20 years in the atmosphere, depending upon the particular HFC type used.

Lesser-developed countries are only now reaching the point where refrigerators—and, to a lesser extent, air conditioners—are coming into wider use. For people in developing countries, replacing HFCs with a more expensive coolant would further delay their opportunity to enjoy some aspects of modern life multiple generations of people in developed countries have long taken for granted.

Recognizing this discrepancy, negotiators in Kigali adopted a three-tiered approach. The European Union, United States, and other developed countries pledged to freeze production of HFCs by 2018 and to reduce the use of HFCs to 15 percent of 2012 levels by 2036 as existing refrigeration systems that require HFCs are retired over time.

Most of the rest of the world—including Brazil, China, and all of Africa—would freeze HFC use in new products by 2024, reducing their use to 20 percent of 2021 levels by 2045.

A smaller group of countries that regularly experience high temperatures—including India, Iran, Kuwait, Pakistan, and Saudi Arabia—would receive the most lenient treatment; they don’t have to start freezing HFC production and use until 2028, and they don’t need to meet their reduction target of 15 percent of 2025 levels until 2047.

Three-Tiered Agreement

One of the biggest sticking points in the way of finalizing an agreement was the discrepancy between developed and developing countries in the availability and use of cooling systems. Air conditioners have been in widespread use in the United States for more than half a century and refrigerators for several decades longer. As a result, U.S. manufacturers and consumers arguably could make the transition from HFCs to replacement refrigerants without major disruptions, even if the replacements are more expensive.

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Fracking Facts: Freeing Natural Gas with Hydraulic Fracturing

Editor’s Note: The following is a review of The Heartland Institute’s Fracking Facts video series.

By Mark Ramsey

Have you ever wondered just what hydraulic fracturing, commonly called “fracking,” of oil and gas wells is? Do arguments for and against this technology make sense? In a recently produced video series called Fracking Facts, Heartland Institute Research Fellow Isaac Orr answers those questions and others about the interesting and sometimes controversial world of fracking.

The series is composed of eight short video tutorials covering a variety of questions about fracking: “What is Fracking?,” “Benefits of Fracking,” “Fracking and Global Warming,” “Ban Fracking?,” “The Environmental Impact of Fracking,” “Not in My Backyard,” “Health Effects of Fracking,” and “Benefits of Frac Sand Mining.”

“What is Fracking?” explains the fracking process and provides useful graphics to help the viewer understand the health and safety concerns often cited by fracking opponents are overblown. As the video points out, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency—not generally a friend to any energy industry—has studied fracking extensively and found no evidence of systemic problems.

Orr argues that people who own the land and mineral rights, those most likely to be most directly affected by the activity, should be the ones who ultimately decide whether fracking takes place.

The “Fracking Benefits” video documents the tremendous positive effects fracking has had and continues to have on the U.S. economy. According to Orr, fracking creates, directly and indirectly, millions of jobs, including more than 30,000 in Pennsylvania and more than double that in Texas. It also reduces energy costs for millions of Americans across the country. Orr says those savings amount to an average of $675 on gasoline per year per household in the United States and up to $432 per person annually in natural gas costs, even for those who oppose fracking.

Global Warming and Public Health

The “Fracking and Global Warming” video examines the effect of the process on anthropogenic global warming. The video notes natural gas is one of the cleanest-burning fuels we have, and as it has replaced other fuels, greenhouse-gas emissions have fallen. That is a good thing if you are worried about human-caused climate change.

The video also explains so-called “green” energy sources, such as wind and solar power, can’t supply sufficient amounts of energy to maintain Americans’ high standard of living, and despite the praise these forms of energy receive from environmentalists, they cause environmental harms of their own. For instance, wind farms require massive amounts of land and kill millions of birds every year.

The “Ban Fracking?” video discusses the myths and misinformation surrounding efforts to ban fracking. As Orr explains, studies indicating fracking is harming public health are “deeply flawed.” The video also provides a great case study revealing the differing economic situations in New York, a state that has banned fracking, and neighboring Pennsylvania, which is experiencing an economic boom in areas where fracking is occurring.

The Fracking Facts video series is an informative, powerful primer for industry insiders and the general public alike.

Mark Ramsey (m15@ramseyweb.com) writes from Houston, Texas.

INTERNET INFO

Isaac Orr, Fracking Facts, The Heartland Institute, 2016: https://www.heartland.org/topics/energy/fracking-facts/index.html
Geothermal Energy Shows Promise, Though Its Cost Limits Its Potential

By Jay Lehr, Ph.D.

Geothermal energy is a renewable source of power that receives relatively little media attention, and even though it does not suffer from the intermittency problems plaguing wind and solar power and is cheaper than those sources, geothermal receives relatively little support from the government.

Even if it were to receive government support, it still wouldn’t be economically competitive compared to the electric power generated from fossil fuels—except in those regions with ample geothermal activity but a relatively limited supply of fossil fuels.

Geothermal energy is heat that has been emitted from Earth. We can recover this heat in the form of steam or hot water and use it to heat buildings or generate electricity. Heat is continuously generated inside Earth by the decay of isotopes of various radioactive elements located deep beneath the ground that keep magma in a liquid state and result in volcanic heat near Earth’s surface. Archaeological evidence shows early humans probably used geothermally heated water from natural pools and hot springs for cooking, bathing, keeping warm, and in religious ceremonies.

Earth’s Heat-Generating Power

There are two common types of geothermal power plants: dry steam plants and flash steam plants.

Dry steam plants use steam piped directly from a geothermal reservoir to turn turbines that generate electricity. Dry steam was first used in a power plant at Lardello near Tuscany, Italy in 1904. The first commercial-scale geothermal development in the United States was a small 10 megawatt (MW) dry steam plant at The Geysers in California, constructed by Pacific Gas & Electric in 1960. It remains in operation and has been expanded to include 29 separate units, which are owned by multiple companies. They have the potential to generate more than 1,500 MW of electric power (nameplate capacity), making it the largest dry steam plant in the world.

Globally, flash steam plants provide the vast majority of geothermal energy used by humans. These plants take high-pressure hot water from great depths and convert it to steam to drive turbines. When the steam cools, it condenses into water and is injected back into the ground to be used again. A hot water field is usually considered to have possible economic value if the reservoir is found at a depth of less than two kilometers, with a salt content lower than 60 grams per kilogram of water. Above the latter, the corrosiveness of the water makes mechanical operation difficult.

U.S. Is Geothermal Power Leader

Most of the geothermal development in the United States has occurred in Western states. Regions of higher-than-normal heat flow are usually associated with tectonic plate boundaries and areas of relatively recent volcanic events.

The United States leads the world in geothermal electric power generation, with more than 3,700 MW of installed capacity. Geothermal makes up less than 0.5 percent of the country’s total electric power. California is the U.S. leader in geothermal power production; it produces 80 percent of the national total. Sixteen percent is produced in Nevada, and the rest is produced, in descending order of production, in Utah, Hawaii, Oregon, Idaho, and New Mexico. Also, very small amounts of geothermal electricity are generated in Alaska and Wyoming.

In total, the world produces more than 13,000 MW of geothermal electric power in 24 countries, with the Philippines producing the second-highest amount: nearly 2,000 MW of generating capacity, almost 16 percent of the country’s electric power. With 665 MW of nameplate capacity, Iceland produces the seventh-most geothermal power, constituting 26 percent of the nation’s total electric power and making Iceland the nation most dependent on geothermal-generated electricity.

Other relatively new or experimental geothermal power systems produce less than 1 percent of global geothermal electric power.

An additional source of geothermal power and heat comes from distributed geothermal groundwater heat pumps and shallow closed-loop Earth heat pumps, which are used in individual homes and businesses. Temperatures 10 feet below Earth’s surface are nearly constant, ranging between 50 and 60 degrees Fahrenheit. Because these temperatures are normally warmer than surface temperatures in winter and cooler than surface temperatures in the summer, heat pumps can be used to exchange heat from Earth to a building in winter and from a building to Earth in summer. They provide many homes in the United States and in countries such as Iceland with a considerable amount of energy, reducing dependence on other sources of electric power and heat.

Costs Limit Geothermal Development

In locations in which geothermal resources exist but are untapped, cost is the prime limiting factor. Although geothermal power is considerably cheaper than solar and several other power sources, it is still much more expensive to produce than power from conventional fossil-fuel and nuclear power plants.

Only a small fraction of Earth’s available geothermal energy has been utilized, and only in areas where geologic conditions permit relatively easy access. The Geothermal Energy Association’s (GEA) 2016 annual report says only 6–7 percent of the world’s global geothermal electric power potential of more than 200,000 MW has been tapped.”

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“We must all hang together, or most assuredly we will all hang separately.”
—BENJAMIN FRANKLIN

Our primary energy suppliers—coal, oil, natural gas, nuclear and hydro—must band together to fight environmental extremism that threatens them all.

Otherwise, Americans will be left freezing in the dark, as costs soar and millions of jobs are lost—all for no environmental benefit!

The Clean Power Plan is the latest dangerous, activist-driven energy policy. It targets coal, our cheapest and most plentiful electricity source. Rather than taking advantage of coal’s demise, energy providers and elected officials must explain how each energy source has its role to play in ensuring America’s prosperity.
Global Satellite Temperatures

How Much Global Warming?

Each month, Environment & Climate News updates the global averaged satellite measurements of the Earth’s temperature. These numbers are important because they are real—not projections, forecasts, or guesses. Global satellite measurements are made from a series of orbiting platforms that sense the average temperature in various atmospheric layers. Here, we present the lowest level, which climate models say should be warming. The satellite measurements are considered accurate to within 0.01°C. The data used to create these graphs can be found on the Internet at http://vortex.nsstc.uah.edu/data/msu/v6.0beta/tlt/uahncdc_lt_6.0beta5.txt. All past data were revised when the methodology was updated in April 2015.

October 2016

The global average temperature for October was 0.41°C above average.

The Northern Hemisphere’s temperature was 0.42°C above average.

The Southern Hemisphere’s temperature was 0.39°C above average.

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