President Trump Acts to Speed Oil and Gas Infrastructure Construction

By H. Sterling Burnett

President Donald Trump signed two executive orders to speed approval of multistate pipelines, liquefied natural gas terminals, and cross-border infrastructure projects, to remove key obstacles to interstate commerce.

Trump says the executive orders are in response to actions by various state governments to prevent or slow the construction of new oil and gas pipelines and other energy infrastructure the president says is critical to U.S. economic performance and his stated goal of American energy dominance.

By H. Sterling Burnett

The U.S. Senate voted to reject the much-publicized Green New Deal (GND) resolution, authored by Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (D-NY) and Sen. Ed Markey (D-MA), which would have aimed for the imposition of 100 percent renewable energy nationwide and a long wish list of other socialist policies in multiple areas of life.

More than 100 Democrat or Independent members of the U.S. House and Senate cosponsored or publicly embraced the GND, including Sens. Cory Booker (D-NJ), Kristen Gillibrand (R-NY), Kamala Harris (D-CA), Amy Klobuchar (D-MN), Bernie Sanders (I-VT), and Elizabeth Warren (D-MA)—almost every senator currently

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President Trump Signs EMP Order to Protect Critical Infrastructure

By H. Sterling Burnett

President Donald Trump issued an Executive Order (EO) directing federal agencies to identify and develop responses to the threat electromagnetic pulses (EMP) could pose to critical infrastructure.

An EMP is an intense surge of energy that can interrupt, damage, or destroy all electronic devices on and above the Earth or a region of it. EMPS can result from natural factors, such as intense solar flares or solar superstorms, or can be caused by intentional human acts of sabotage, including state-sponsored terrorist attacks or cyberattacks.

A large-scale EMP could disrupt entire economies, resulting in the failure of the electric grid and the collapse of emergency, medical, transportation, and food production and delivery systems, potentially causing massive numbers of deaths.

Developing a Cross-Agency Response

Trump’s EO directs the Departments of Commerce, Defense, Energy, and Homeland Security and the Office of the Director of National Intelligence to identify critical infrastructure, such as the electric grid, that could be affected by an EMP.

In particular, the directive tasks the Homeland Security Secretary with developing a list of national critical systems that, if disrupted, would cause harm to public safety or national security, and gives the secretary a year to identify critical infrastructure vulnerable to damage by various types of EMPS.

The Secretary of Homeland Security is charged with overseeing the order’s implementation and coordinating actions across all departments and agencies to make critical infrastructure impervious to or at least resilient to EMPS, whether of natural or human origin.

The White House indicated the order was a response to longstanding concerns raised by the scientific community concerning the vulnerability of critical infrastructure to EMP events.

“Today’s executive order—the first ever to establish a comprehensive policy to improve resilience to EMPS—is one more example of how the administration is keeping its promise to always be vigilant against present dangers and future threats,” White House Press Secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders said in a statement.

‘Keeping Americans Safe’

Trump’s March 26 EO shows how dangerous the threat from an EMP attack is, said Kirstjen Nielsen, who was Secretary of Homeland Security when Trump issued the order.

“EMPs pose a potential threat to our nation’s critical infrastructure, and this executive order will advance our national goal of increased resilience across all infrastructure sectors,” said Nielsen in a Homeland Security Department press release. “DHS is grateful for the president’s leadership on this critical issue and continued commitment to protecting our country and keeping Americans safe.”

Although the threat of an EMP attack is real, the media has largely ignored it, says Thomas Popik, president of the Foundation for Resilient Societies.

“Nearly all of the media ignored the fact that on September 3, 2017, coincident with a hydrogen bomb test, North Korea declared a ‘super-powerful EMP attack’ capability to be a ‘strategic goal,’” said Popik. “The U.S. military has spent billions protecting strategic forces against a nuclear electromagnetic pulse, but the media and other ill-informed parties have routinely discounted the threat to civilian infrastructure.

“President Trump’s executive order should go a long way in showing the public that the EMP threat is real and immediate,” Popik said.

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

The Book that Set the Trump EPA’s Agenda

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) claims that outdoor air kills hundreds of thousands of Americans every year. EPA has used this claim to: wreck the coal industry; justify expensive and job-killing air quality and climate rules; and to scare Americans about the air they breathe. Milloy not only debunks the outrageous EPA’s claims and exposes them as rank scientific fraud in no uncertain terms, but offers a roadmap for fixing the rogue and out-of-control EPA.

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(Public Affairs)
Green New Deal Resolution Unanimously Rejected in Senate

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prising for the 2020 Democratic presidential nomination.

Yet when Sen. Mitch McConnell (R-KY) brought GND up for a vote in the Senate on March 26, not one senator voted in favor of the bill. Even its authors and cosponsors voted “present” rather than yes.

Dire Threats, Big Plans

The GND was a comprehensive bill intended to avert a purported human-caused climate change catastrophe through a complete, forced makeover of the nation’s housing stock and energy and transportation systems.

The resolution claimed “climate change constitutes a direct threat to the national security of the United States” and demanded a “national, social, industrial, and economic mobilization on a scale not seen since World War II and the New Deal.”

GND’s “10-year national mobilization” would use entirely “clean, renewable, and zero-emission energy sources” throughout the United States. The plan also calls for upgrading “all existing buildings in the United States and building new buildings to achieve maximum energy efficiency, water efficiency, safety, affordability, comfort, and durability” and overhaul “transportation systems in the United States to remove pollution and greenhouse gas emissions from the transportation sector.”

In addition to its climate and energy provisions, the resolution set goals of “providing all people of the United States with: (i) high-quality health care; (ii) affordable, safe, and adequate housing; (iii) economic security; and (iv) clean water, clean air, healthy and affordable food, and access to nature.”

‘Environmentally Toxic Extremist Policies’

The GND is an extreme form of socialism and would be a disaster for the U.S. economy and national security, says Justin Haskins, a research fellow with The Heartland Institute, which publishes Environment & Climate News.

“The Green New Deal is such a horrendous policy proposal, not a single senator, not even its Democrat sponsors, would go on record supporting it. Despite this fact, some Republicans, wishing to prove how green they are, are pushing their own ‘Green New Deal-lite’ proposals.”

JAMES TAYLOR 
SENIOR FELLOW 
THE HEARTLAND INSTITUTE

Justin Haskins, a research fellow with The Heartland Institute, which publishes Environment & Climate News.

“GND’s economically destructive and environmentally toxic extremist policies, including the elimination of virtually all fossil fuels from U.S. electricity generation and transportation within 10 years, would be an utter disaster for our country and the American people,” Haskins said. “GND would transform gigantic sectors of the U.S. economy—energy, health care, college education, and potentially more—into huge socialist, government-run or -managed programs controlled by an army of bureaucrats in Washington.

“The Green New Deal isn’t just socialism run amok, it’s crazy, posing a direct threat to our national security and economic well-being,” Haskins said.

Sponsors Requested Hearings

When McConnell announced he would allow an up-or-down vote on GND, its sponsors took the extremely rare, if not unprecedented, step of asking their bill not be brought up for a vote. Instead, they requested McConnell schedule hearings on the bill.

Because senators often wait years for a vote on legislation they sponsor, having to introduce it in multiple sessions of Congress only to have their bills blocked by a filibuster or defeated in committee, McConnell expressed incredulity at the request and the bill itself.

“I have to say, it’s remarkable enough to see a major political party coalesce around a proposal to forcibly remake the entire country according to what’s fashionable in Brooklyn and San Francisco,” McConnell said before the vote took place. “But it is even more stunning to see my colleagues so angry and upset at the opportunity to back up their new philosophy with their votes.”

‘Political Stunt’

GND’s Democrat supporters were playing a political game with the resolution and they lost, says Marlo Lewis, a senior fellow with the Competitive Enterprise Institute.

“Senate Democrats called the vote on the Green New Deal a ‘sham,’” Lewis said. “If, instead of bringing it up for a vote, McConnell had announced he would never allow a vote on the resolution, it’s highly unlikely its backers would have cheered McConnell for saving them from their own ideological excesses; rather, they almost certainly would have denounced him for trying to keep Americans in the dark about climate change.

“While Democratic leaders and their allies in the media claimed McConnell used the vote on GND as a ‘political ploy’ to ‘divide Democrats,’ it was they who played politics first, since the resolution itself had no hope whatsoever of being enacted, but was rather nothing more than a political stunt aimed at recruiting climate activists to support their 2020 campaigns,” Lewis said.

‘Green New Deal-Lite’

GND was so economically devastating no Democrat wished to be recorded as voting for it, says James Taylor, a senior fellow with The Heartland Institute. However, he warns some Republicans might propose their own, more moderate versions of the GND.

“The Green New Deal is such a horrendous policy proposal, not a single senator, not even its Democrat sponsors, would go on record supporting it,” Taylor said. “Despite this fact, some Republicans, wishing to prove how green they are, are pushing their own ‘Green New Deal-lite’ proposals.

“Efforts to impose costly, unnecessary, and globally inconsequential restrictions on carbon dioxide emissions on the nation, even proposals less onerous than the original GND, are a betrayal of America’s working families who would have to pay for it,” Taylor said. “Evidence from past elections shows any Republicans that back carbon dioxide restrictions will likely pay for their folly in the 2020 elections.”

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

INTERNET INFO

The very fabric of America is under attack—our freedoms, our republic, and our constitutional rights have become contested terrain. The Epoch Times, a media committed to truthful and responsible journalism, is a rare bastion of hope and stability in these testing times.
President Trump Acts to Speed Oil and Gas Infrastructure Construction

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Orders Prompt Decisions
One order Trump issued directs the federal government to make all permitting decisions concerning pipelines or other energy infrastructure projects that cross international borders within 60 days, and it gives the president the exclusive responsibility to “issue, deny, or amend” such permits.

“The president—not the bureaucracy—will have sole authority to make the final decision when we get caught up in problems,” Trump said.

Trump’s second energy executive order directs the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to review and modify what the order refers to as an “outdated” section of the Clean Water Act that requires applicants requesting federal permits for energy infrastructure projects that might affect federally protected waters to get certification from states where any potential contamination could happen. Under the order, EPA is expected to limit both the amount of time states have to consider pipeline and infrastructure permits and the reasons states can give for blocking permits.

The second order also directs the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) to update its safety regulations for facilities that store liquefied natural gas (LNG). If pipelines aren’t available to deliver LNG, DOT must allow it to be carried over long distances to those facilities in approved railroad tank cars.

Ending ‘War on American Energy’
Trump says in many cases corporate interests and environmental activists have been allowed to block critical energy infrastructure, hurting average Americans and the nation’s economy.

“Under this administration, we have ended the war on American energy like never before,” said Trump at the International Union of Operating Engineers’ International Training and Education Center in Crosby, Texas on April 10.

“Since the election, we have created more than 60,000 brand-new oil and gas pipeline construction jobs.

“But too often, badly needed energy infrastructure is being held back by special interest groups, entrenched bureaucracies, and radical activists,” Trump said. “This obstruction does not just hurt families and workers like you; it undermines our independence and national security.”

These two executive orders promote the national interest by speeding up the approval process for energy infrastructure, says Trump.

“The two executive orders that I’ll be signing in just a moment will fix this, dramatically accelerating energy infrastructure approvals,” said Trump. “My first order will speed up the process for approving vital infrastructure on our nation’s borders, such as oil pipelines, roads, and railways. It will now take no more than 60 days, … [and] the president, not the bureaucracy, will have sole authority to make the final decision when we get caught up in problems.

“My second order will modernize regulations for LNG export terminals and encourage new infrastructure financing,” Trump said. “And finally, it will stop state-level abuse of water quality certifications—they abuse you; when you’re nowhere near water, they abuse you—from blocking the construction of vital pipeline projects as we rebuild our energy infrastructure.”

‘Just What Is Needed’
Trump’s energy executive orders promote the United States’ national and economic security, says Tim Huelskamp, Ph.D., president of The Heartland Institute, which publishes Environment & Climate News.

“For years, far-left politicians have abused their authority and deprived America of much-needed energy infrastructure,” said Huelskamp in a press release. “This executive order by President Donald Trump is just what is needed to create thousands more high-paying jobs in the energy industry, protect U.S. national security, and enhance the reliability and affordability of America’s energy supply.”

Trump’s executive order will spur efficiencies and reduce the costs of energy development, says Katie Tubb, a senior policy analyst with The Heritage Foundation.

“These orders wisely call for good governance measures for clarity and consistency across agencies in key permitting and regulatory activities,” said Tubb. “Improving efficiencies will make project delivery less expensive, spur job creation, and help get America’s abundance of energy resources from where it’s extracted to where it’s needed.”

Ending Obstructionism
Environmentalists don’t care who their anti-fossil-fuel policies hurt, says Anthony Watts, a senior fellow with The Heartland Institute.

“Environmentalists do everything they can to prevent the shipment of oil and natural gas, from blocking pipelines to preventing their shipment by rail or trucks,” said Watts. “In short, radical environmentalists don’t seem to care if people freeze to death in the winter for lack of heating oil or because electricity is not affordable. What President Trump is doing is saying ‘enough!’ ”

For too long, environmentalists have used state agencies to block vital energy development, says Nick Loris, deputy director of the Roe Institute for Economic Policy Studies at The Heritage Foundation.

“Energy infrastructure has been a key target for the ‘keep it in the Ground’ movement, with obstructionists hampering job creation and denying American families and businesses access to affordable, reliable energy,” said Loris. “States should not have unchecked authority to abuse federal statutes, where states deny projects for whatever reason they desire.

“President Trump’s energy infrastructure executive orders are exactly the type of leadership the federal government should provide to promote energy and infrastructure investment in the United States,” Loris said.

Call to Action
Rob Bradley Jr., CEO of the Institute for Energy Research, says the energy industry should act quickly to take advantage of Trump’s actions.

“The ‘keep-it-in-the-ground movement’ has declared war on oil and gas pipelines with the avowed purpose of creating bottlenecks,” Bradley said. “In the face of such obstructionism, Trump is fighting fire with fire with his executive order.

“The oil and gas industry would be well-served to accelerate their pipeline projects in the face of future obstructionism,” said Bradley.

H. Sterling Burnett, Ph.D. (hsburnett@heartland.org) is a research fellow at The Heartland Institute.
New Mexico Enacts 100 Percent Renewable Energy Mandate

By Tim Benson

New Mexico Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham signed a law expanding the state’s renewable energy mandate, officially known as the Renewable Portfolio Standard.

The Energy Transitions Act requires 50 percent of the electricity provided by the state’s utilities to be generated by renewable sources by 2030, 80 percent by 2040, and 100 percent by 2050.

New Mexico’s renewable energy mandate, first established in 2002, originally required state utilities to generate 20 percent of their electricity from renewable sources by 2020. On March 22, New Mexico became the third state, after California and Hawaii, to enact a 100 percent renewable energy mandate.

Mandating Huge Price Increases

Studies show renewable energy mandates result in much higher electricity prices for ratepayers, fewer jobs, and reduced economic activity for the states implementing them.

Electricity prices in states with renewable energy mandates have risen twice as fast as the national average, and states with renewable mandates have electricity prices 26 percent higher than those without, according to the U.S. Energy Information Administration (EIA).

The 29 states (plus the District of Columbia) with renewable energy mandates have average retail electricity prices of 11.93 cents per kilowatt hour (cents/kwh), compared to 9.38 cents/kwh in the 21 states without renewable energy, according to EIA.

New Mexico’s current renewable mandate cost taxpayers and ratepayers more than $192 million in 2016 and increased electricity prices by 6.18 percent, a study by Natural Resource Economics, Inc. found. The mandate caused a loss in economic activity that cost New Mexico more than $405 million and 3,000 jobs in 2016, the study found.

“From the viewpoint of the New Mexico economy, …. renewable portfolio standards raise electricity costs that on balance result in a net reduction in the state’s value added and employment even after accounting for the economic stimulus that building and operating renewable energy facilities provide,” the report states.

Moving the entire country to 100 percent renewable sources would cost around $5.7 trillion, the American Action Forum reports.

‘Energy Mandates Are Disastrous’

Renewable energy mandates hurt citizens and businesses, only benefitting politically powerful special interests and the politicians they support, says Justin Haskins, a research fellow with The Heartland Institute.

“Renewable energy mandates are disastrous for businesses and families, especially those with low incomes,” Haskins said. “No matter how many times proponents of these policies promise they will benefit everyone, history repeatedly shows all renewable energy mandates do is drive up the cost of energy and reduce economic growth, all while having no meaningful impact on climate change.

“The only winners when these policies are passed are radical environmentalists, the special-interest groups who benefit from cronyism, and the left-wing politicians they support,” Haskins said.

Renewable Inconsistency

Wind and solar provide intermittent energy, so utilities have to build excess generators (or excess batteries) to ensure a consistent supply of electric power, says Isaac Orr, a policy fellow with the Center of the American Experiment.

“Many people think replacing coal or natural gas with wind and solar power is as easy as building one unit or megawatt (mw) of wind to replace one unit or mw of retiring coal, but this isn’t the case, because wind and solar can only generate electricity if the wind is blowing or the sun is shining,” Orr said. “Because wind and solar have low capacity factors, New Mexico will have to build nearly 8,500 mw of wind or 11,650 mw of solar to replace 5,914 mw of retiring coal and natural gas.

“Based on cost estimates from EIA’s Annual Energy Outlook 2019, it would cost $13.8 billion just to build the wind and $22.9 billion for solar,” Orr said. “The truth is it will be impossible for New Mexico to meet its electric power demand under this mandate without nuclear power or a breakthrough in carbon capture and sequestration technology.”

Timothy Benson (tbenson@heartland.org) is a policy analyst with The Heartland Institute.
U.S. Will Soon Pass Saudi Arabia in Fossil Fuel Exports

By Kenneth Artz

The United States will be exporting more oil, natural gas liquids (NGLs), and gasoline than Saudi Arabia by the end of 2019, which has not occurred since Saudi Arabia began exporting oil in the 1950s, reports the research firm Rystad Energy.

Shale Boom Credited

The surge in U.S. oil production is due to the fracking boom, which has made the United States the world’s leading exporter of oil and related liquids, Rystad reports.

Oil and gas production from fracking will soon propel the United States past another milestone that has eluded it since 1953: in 2020, the United States will export more energy than it imports, Rystad predicts.

Thanks to the technological innovations that have made possible the shale revolution in North Dakota, Pennsylvania, Texas, and elsewhere, U.S. oil production has more than doubled over the past decade, reaching record highs. The United States already produces more oil than any other country, including Russia and Saudi Arabia.

Saudi Arabia currently exports about seven million barrels of crude oil and two million barrels of natural gas liquids and petroleum products per day, Rystad reports. The United States exports about three million barrels per day of crude oil and five million barrels per day of natural gas liquids and petroleum products.

Different Requirements

Because production from fracked wells declines relatively quickly, the U.S. must maintain high levels of exploration to sustain production, says Gary Stone, executive vice president of engineering for Five States and a policy advisor to The Heartland Institute, which publishes Environment & Climate News.

“The global economy is going to be powered by fossil fuels for the foreseeable future, and with the United States dominating energy markets rather than Russia or the Middle East, it is likely to be a more peaceful and prosperous world.”

MERRILL MATTHEWS, RESIDENT SCHOLAR, INSTITUTE FOR POLICY INNOVATION

‘Changes Energy Paradigm’

The United States should reform outmoded laws to reflect America’s new position as the world’s leading producer of oil and natural gas, says Merrill Matthews, Ph.D., a resident scholar at the Institute for Policy Innovation.

“This changes the entire energy paradigm that has dominated U.S. economic and national security policies for nearly 50 years,” Matthews said. “Many of the laws passed in the mid-1970s after the Arab oil embargo—for instance, CAFE standards, support for ethanol, etc.—were enacted to free the United States from dependence on foreign oil, which it largely is not anymore.

“There is a huge difference between a world where the United States had to go hat in hand to other countries hoping they will sell us the oil we need and one in which other countries must come to us,” Matthews said.

U.S. energy dominance will make the world a much better place, says Matthews.

“The global economy is going to be powered by fossil fuels for the foreseeable future, and with the United States dominating energy markets rather than Russia or the Middle East, it is likely to be a more peaceful and prosperous world,” Matthews said.

Kenneth Artz (kennethcharlesartz@gmx.com) writes from Dallas, Texas.
Courts Reject Challenges to EPA Science Advisory Boards Policy

By Bonner R. Cohen

In two separate cases, federal courts tossed out lawsuits challenging the Environmental Protection Agency’s (EPA) policy aimed at preventing conflicts of interest for people serving on the agency’s scientific advisory boards.

EPA’s various scientific advisory committees and boards review the quality and relevance of the scientific and technical information the agency uses as the basis for regulations, including reviewing EPA research programs and recommending or issuing research grants.

Preventing Conflicts of Interest

In October 2017, then-EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt issued a directive setting strict new guidelines for those serving on the agency’s advisory panels.

To prevent even the appearance of conflicts of interest, the directive prohibited scientists serving on EPA advisory committees from receiving grants from the agency. Pruitt’s successor, Andrew Wheeler, has continued the policy. As a result, several academics who had been serving on EPA’s advisory panels were removed from them after they refused to relinquish their EPA grants.

In accordance with EPA’s changed policy, Wheeler appointed new members to EPA’s Science Advisory Board and other advisory panels in mid-February of this year. Among those appointed was prominent climate skeptic John Christy, a climate scientist at the University of Alabama at Huntsville. In addition, to provide greater balance on EPA’s panels as required by federal rules, some scientists from regulated industries with specialized expertise replaced scientists from academia on the panels.

Advocacy groups, led by the activist organization Physicians for Social Responsibility, along with some scientists who had previously served on the advisory boards under the old policy allowing advisors on panels that make EPA grants also to be grant recipients, sued to overturn the policy. In Physicians for Social Responsibility Et Al. v. Andrew Wheeler, the plaintiffs argued EPA’s changed policy violated federal ethics guidelines.

Judge Trevor McFadden of the District Court for the District of Columbia rejected that claim, upholding the 2017 policy directive in a February 12 ruling.

‘Substantial Discretion’

EPA has a great deal of discretion under federal rules to determine who and under what conditions a person is qualified to serve on its advisory committees, said McFadden in his decision, and EPA’s policy forcing researchers to choose between serving as an advisor or receiving grants from the agency falls squarely within the agency’s discretion.

“(Laws and regulations at issue) do not dictate whom administrators must, or even should, appoint to federal advisory committees,” McFadden wrote in his ruling. “Agency heads retain substantial discretion to determine membership on federal advisory committees.”

When Pruitt unveiled the new policy, he said it was aimed at assuring the public the agency’s advisory boards were independent.

“We want to ensure that there’s integrity in the process, and that the scientists who are advising us are doing so with not any type of appearance of conflict,” Pruitt said in a press release. “And when you receive that much money, … there’s a question that arises about independence.”

McFadden determined EPA had adequately justified its change in policy based on the agency’s desire to remove any potential for conflicts of interest.

Court Tosses NRDC Lawsuit

In a separate action, the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of New York dismissed a similar lawsuit filed by the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC) challenging EPA’s advisory board policy change.

On March 22, the court ruled NRDC lacked standing to sue the agency, having failed to show it or its members were harmed by Pruitt’s directive. NRDC and the Union of Concerned Scientists had both filed lawsuits in early 2018 claiming they and their members would be injured by EPA’s new policy.

In rejecting NRDC’s lawsuit, the court ruled NRDC failed to demonstrate EPA’s changed policies would result in damage to the scientific integrity of its advisory panels. In addition, the court found NRDC had not shown it had been concretely injured by, for example, having some its members removed or barred from federal advisory committees as a result of the directive.

‘Deplorable Behavior and Attitudes’

There is widespread corruption of science throughout federal agencies, says attorney and medical doctor John Dale Dunn, an emergency physician and a policy advisor to The Heartland Institute, which publishes Environment & Climate News.

“I have had repeated interactions with federal advisory scientific panels over the past three decades, in which the participants exhibited deplorable behavior and attitudes on scientific issues,” said Dunn. “They pretended to be open to discussing disputed scientific issues that influence policymaking, but they were biased and closed-minded, regularly using studies based on junk science using flawed methodologies that confused correlation with causation, and accepted claims of harm based on unrealistically high assumptions about exposure levels and the dangers of exposure to miniscule amounts of chemicals.

“There is a very serious problem with the government research complex; it has been corrupted, with the scientific advisory panels not being reliable referees of either the scientific process or the government regulations they recommend or support. I am very pleased the courts have recognized the benefits of having scientific advisory panels convened with precautions taken to ensure objective and fair assessments of the scientific issues being considered.”

Considers It Common Sense

EPA’s action to prevent conflicts of interest is long overdue, say David Wojick, Ph.D., a senior policy analyst with the Committee for a Constructive Tomorrow (CFACT).

“It makes sense people getting government money to study a specific issue should not be advising the government on the importance of that issue,” Wojick said. “The conflict of interest in such situations is obvious, and it’s good EPA has finally confronted it.”

Bonner R. Cohen, Ph.D. (bcohen@nationalcenter.org) is a senior fellow at the National Center for Public Policy Research and a senior policy analyst with CFACT.
Senate Confirms Bernhardt as Interior Secretary

By H. Sterling Burnett

The U.S. Senate confirmed David Bernhardt as the 53rd Secretary of the U.S. Department of the Interior (DOI), by a vote of 56 to 41.

Three Democrats—Sens. Martin Heinrich (NM), Joe Manchin (WV), and Kyrsten Sinema (AZ)—and independent Sen. Angus King of Maine joined all voting Republican senators in approving Bernhardt as Interior Secretary in the April 11 vote.

President Donald Trump nominated Bernhardt to replace former DOI Secretary Ryan Zinke, who resigned from the post in December 2018.

Continuing Deregulatory Efforts

Bernhardt’s actions as deputy and then as acting DOI secretary indicate he will continue to carry out the agency’s responsibilities to balance the protection of federal lands and resources with their productive use and to devolve authority for natural resource management to states where appropriate.

On March 14, Bernhardt approved the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service’s (FWS) proposal to remove the gray wolf from the endangered species list, returning wolf management to states and tribes.

“He will bring responsible management to our public lands along with efficient permitting process for infrastructure and energy projects … under the National Environmental Policy Act.”

Coalition Urged Confirmation

On April 3, Heartland Institute President Tim Huelskamp, Ph.D., and Joseph L. Bast, cofounder of The Heartland Institute, joined 20 other organizations and 24 individuals in signing a letter urging the U.S. Senate to confirm Bernhardt as Interior Secretary.

Before joining the Trump administration, Bernhardt previously served as solicitor, deputy chief of staff, and counselor at DOI during George W. Bush’s presidency, the letter noted.

“She has played a key role in the Trump administration’s sound stewardship of federal lands,” the letter states. “DOI under the Trump administration and Mr. Bernhardt … has saved a total of $3.7 billion through major deregulatory actions and has taken concrete steps to expedite and streamline the permitting process for infrastructure and energy projects … under the National Environmental Policy Act.”

‘The Leader America Needs’

Bernhardt is precisely the right person to lead DOI, says George Jamerson, director of government relations at The Heartland Institute, which publishes Environment & Climate News.

“David Bernhardt is the leader America needs at the Department of the Interior,” said Jamerson in a press release. “He will bring responsible management to our public lands along with efficient and much-needed energy development. This is a huge win for energy freedom and America.”

Bernhardt brings critical experience to DOI, says former North Dakota state Rep. Bette Grande, a research fellow with The Heartland Institute.

“[Bernhardt] has extensive experience at the Interior Department, and I look forward to his clear, balanced, and prudent leadership,” Grande said in a press release.

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

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INTERNET INFO

Colorado Adopts Strict Anti-Drilling Legislation

By Linnea Lueken

Colorado Gov. Jared Polis signed into law sweeping oil and gas legislation imposing greater restrictions on new oil and gas exploration in the state than a proposition voters rejected in a 2018 election referendum.

Among other provisions, the new law, enacted from Colorado Senate Bill 19-181, removes the existing caps on drilling permit application fees, allowing the state to charge whatever it wants for oil and gas permits; requires companies to provide drilling permitting information to any town claiming to be affected by a proposed drilling location, even if the operation isn’t located within its borders; and allows localities to ask the state to impose restrictions on neighboring jurisdictions’ ability to allow energy development, restrictions that can then be used to establish stricter de facto statewide air and water quality permitting standards.

The law also halts all new oil and gas exploration and production permits until the entire legislation is implemented statewide. The bill became law on April 16 when Polis signed it.

Proposition 112, rejected by voters in 2018, would have increased the distance oil and gas wells must be set back from structures to 2,500 feet from the current 500 feet away from homes and 1,000 feet away from schools. Prop. 112 would thus have prohibited new oil and gas development on approximately 85 percent of Colorado’s nonfederal land.

More Control for Hostiles

The new law gives local governments opposed to oil and gas development the power to impose their standards on localities that support energy production, says George Jamerson, director of government relations at The Heartland Institute, which publishes Environment & Climate News.

“This new law masks itself as giving more local control over oil and gas regulations, but in reality it gives localities with the strictest regulations the ability to dictate policy statewide,” Jamerson said. “Boulder County will now be able to create regulations much stricter than the state, even going so far as to ban any oil and gas development, which the state can then impose statewide.

“By contrast, the law does not allow Weld County, where 85 percent of Colorado’s oil and gas development and extraction takes place, to loosen regulations and allow more drilling,” Jamerson said.

‘Abuse of Federalism’

Jamerson says the law is an intentional perversion of the idea of local control, in furtherance of some politicians’ goal of driving the fossil fuel industry out of Colorado.

“This is an abuse of federalism, and a shameless and spineless way for House and Senate Democrats to enact national-party policy with a slight degree of deniability as they pretend to shift authority to local governments,” Jamerson said. “When combined with the introduction of a new bill to sharply restrict greenhouse gas emissions in the state, it is undeniable Colorado Democrats’ true intention is to eliminate fossil fuels from the state.”

The pro-fracking stance Gov. Jared Polis took when he was running for Colorado’s governorship appears to have been insincere, Jamerson says.

“As a gubernatorial candidate, Jared Polis said he did not support Prop. 112, as it would ‘all but ban fracking,’” Jamerson said. “Now that he’s been elected to Colorado’s top office, he’s approved a law that imposes even harsher restrictions on the industry, showing he evidently never really cared what happened to thousands of oil and gas workers in the state. He lied to gain their votes.”

Huge Tax, Job Losses

The new law is tantamount to a ban on new drilling, says Amy Oliver Cooke, executive vice president and director of the Energy and Environmental Policy Center at the Independence Institute.

“Colorado ranks fifth in oil and sixth in natural gas production in the nation, with energy development and ancillary services supporting more than 100,000 high paying jobs that contribute a billion dollars in tax revenue to the state, $200 million to K-12 public education in Weld County alone,” Cooke said. “It’s unbelievable Boulder-controlled Democrats in Colorado’s legislature have passed a bill that will act as a de facto ban on new drilling in the state, erasing hundreds of millions of dollars in lost taxes and tens of thousands of jobs.”

‘Manmade Recession’

Cooke says the bill has already resulted in destructive, expensive consequences.

“We’ve already seen the fallout as one company, in anticipation of the bill passing, has withdrawn its application for a significant capital investment project in Weld County. This law will result in a manmade recession as property values drop, people lose their jobs, and the state is forced to cut services due to lack of revenue. Supporters love to say the [new law] is about putting Coloradans’ health and safety first, but there are few things less healthy for families than having no job and no income.”

OLIVER COOKE EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT AND DIRECTOR OF THE ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY CENTER INDEPENDENCE INSTITUTE

“Supporters love to say the [new law] is about putting Coloradans’ health and safety first, but there are few things less healthy for families than having no job and no income,” Cooke said.

Products made from oil and gas, such as plastics and fuel, save lives and raise the standard of living, says Cooke.

“It’s maddening the same people who claim to be champions of health and safety refuse to acknowledge that petroleum-based products have saved countless lives and dramatically improved our quality of life by every single measure,” Cooke said.

Linnea Lueken (linnea.heartland@gmail.com) writes from South Carolina.
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Approves Minnesota Copper Mine

By Duggan Flanakin

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers’ St. Paul District Office issued a final wetlands permit to PolyMet Mining, authorizing the company to discharge dredge and fill material into 901 acres as part of the construction and operation of the NorthMet copper mine.

PolyMet needed the Army Corps’ permit because the land in question, formerly owned by LTV Steel Mining Co, is covered by the Clean Water Act of 1972, which requires government approval for projects potentially affecting wetlands.

Reduced Project Size

To satisfy some of the Army Corps’ concerns, PolyMet scaled back its proposed mine site by approximately 500 acres. The company also purchased 1,278 credits from the Lake Superior Wetland Bank to offset wetland losses.

The wetlands permit was the final approval PolyMet needed to build and operate the NorthMet mine, which is expected to produce copper, nickel, and possibly other precious metals. The permit also allows PolyMet to operate a processing plant near Hoyt Lakes, Minnesota.

In approving the mine plan, the Army Corps is protecting the environment while allowing much-needed access to valuable minerals, says Col. Sam Calkins, commander of the St. Paul District Office.

“This has been a very carefully weighed decision,” Calkins said in a press release. “We are confident that we have identified an appropriately balanced alternative and proffered a permit that will allow access to an important mineral resource while maximizing protection to natural resources, including wetlands.”

Widespread Benefits Expected

The mine will boost the region’s economy and create a large number of jobs, Richardson says.

“PolyMet expects to hire over 1,000 people, many from the local area, in the construction phase, which will total over two million hours of work over a 24- to 30-month period,” Richardson said. “When fully operational, the company will employ about 360 full-time workers, with studies indicating the project will create another 600 or so spinoff jobs.

“An older study done by the University of Minnesota-Duluth indicates the mine could add $515 million to the St. Louis County coffers, a figure that might be higher in today’s economy,” Richardson said. “It is a real big win-win that a mining company will be able to operate for 20 years drawing from a well-trained pool whose forebears have been mining in Minnesota for well over 100 years.”

While running for office in the summer of 2018, Gov. Tim Walz said copper is a valuable resource in building solar panels and thereby allowing the electricity sector to reduce its carbon dioxide emissions. Since becoming governor, Walz has refused requests that he try to impede the environmental review and permitting process for the NorthMet mine.

‘Want These Mining Jobs’

The Trump administration recognizes the value of mining to the nation’s economy and has made it easier to expand mining operations, says Isaac Orr, a policy fellow at the Center of the American Experiment (CAE).

“The Obama administration refused to renew two mineral leases along the South Kawishiwi River for the Twin Metals copper-nickel project near Ely, Minnesota,” Orr said. “President Trump’s Interior Secretary, Ryan Zinke, before he resigned, moved to reinstate the two canceled leases, although the matter is still being litigated in federal court.

“The people who live in the area want these mining jobs that pay up to $80,000 a year, with local poll CAE conducted and reported in the Summer 2018 Thinking Minnesota magazine showing 61 percent of northeast Minnesota residents have a favorable view of mining operations, compared with just 43 percent in the urbanized Twin Cities area,” Orr said.

From ‘No’ to ‘Yes’

If more mining is allowed, Minnesota’s mineral wealth could bring even more benefits to the U.S. manufacturing sector, Orr says.

“Minnesota already produces 75 percent of the nation’s iron ore, and also has the largest copper deposits in the world, as well as economically recoverable quantities of platinum, gold, and other precious metals,” Orr said. “The Center of the American Experiment has estimated the mining industry in Minnesota has a net impact of 8,500 jobs, adding $3.7 billion to local economies.

“PolyMet’s permit approvals are just another example of how the U.S. economy is adding manufacturing jobs, with a change in regulatory policy from the previous presidential administration finding reasons to say ‘no,’ to the Trump administration finding ways to make saying ‘yes’ environmentally and economically acceptable,” Orr said.

“Obtaining the permit was a big win for us, allowing us to open a copper-nickel-precious metals mine within the world-class Duluth Complex,” Richardson said. “Startup hinges first on addressing a $243 million debt to Glencore AG.”

“Obtaining financing should be much easier now that we have all of our permits,” said Richardson.

Duggan Flanakin (dflanakin@gmail.com) writes from Austin, Texas.
Federal Judge Blocks Oil and Gas Leases, Development on Federal Lands in Wyoming

By Bonner R. Cohen

U.S. District Judge Rudolph Contreras blocked oil and natural gas lease sales proposed by the Obama administration in 2016 for nearly 500 square miles of federal land in Wyoming, requiring a radical change in how the U.S. Department of Interior’s Bureau of Land Management (BLM) considers potential effects on climate change.

Although court orders involving oil and gas development or pipeline construction are nothing new, this ruling went significantly beyond previous decisions in one key respect. Instead of restricting his order to assessments of the effects of individual permits, Judge Contreras said BLM officials must consider the impact of greenhouse-gas emissions on the climate resulting from all past, present, and foreseeable future oil and gas lease sales or drilling on all federal lands in Wyoming before offering individual lease sales.

“By asserting that these crucial environmental analyses are overly speculative at the leasing stage and more appropriate for later, site-specific assessments, BLM risks relegating the analyses to the ‘tyranny of small decisions,’” Contreras wrote in his March 20 opinion. “Given the national, cumulative nature of climate change, considering each individual drilling project in a vacuum deprives the agency and the public the context necessary to evaluate oil and gas drilling on federal land.

“BLM failed to take a ‘hard look’ at [greenhouse gas] emissions from the Wyoming lease sale,” wrote Contreras.

Expands NEPA’s Scope

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requires federal agencies, in this case the BLM, to undertake comprehensive environmental impact assessments on major federal actions, in this case a proposal to offer new oil and gas leases for development on federal land in Colorado, Utah, and Wyoming. Historically in such cases, BLM would assess how the proposed oil and gas development might affect air and water quality and/or protected species, with BLM then approving or rejecting the plan based on its assessment of whether the project would be harmful and whether the effects could be mitigated or avoided by altering the proposed development plans.

By expanding NEPA’s requirements to include a comprehensive assessment of the effect of projects’ greenhouse-gas emissions on the climate nationwide, before any action, including a lease sale, is even undertaken, Contreras, appointed by former President Barack Obama, has imposed a new condition on environmental impact assessments.

BLM officials are prohibited from issuing drilling permits until they have conducted the court-ordered climate assessment.

Activist Groups Sued

The case dates to two Wyoming oil and gas lease sales held between May 2015 and August 2016. Two activist groups, WildEarth Guardians and Physicians for Social Responsibility, responded by suing the Obama administration in an effort to block oil and gas development on federal land in Colorado, Utah, and Wyoming. Judge Contreras’ order applies only to oil and gas lease sales offered in Wyoming.

Contreras’ decision was “grandstanding” and will do nothing to prevent or limit climate change, said Wyoming Gov. Mark Gordon in a statement expressing his disagreement with the ruling.

“Our country’s efforts to reduce carbon should not center on the livelihoods of those committed workers and industries who seek to provide reliable and affordable energy,” Gordon’s statement said. “Bringing our country to its knees is not the way to thwart climate change.”

‘A Sketchy Decision’

Contreras’ decision will probably be overturned if appealed, says Dan Kish, a senior fellow at the Institute for Energy Research and the American Energy Alliance.

“Obama-appointed Judge Contreras has issued a sketchy decision that ultimately must be struck down for its attempt to legislate from the bench. Contreras’ decision weakens America and has no basis in the law.”

David Wojick, Ph.D., a senior policy analyst with the Committee for a Constructive Tomorrow (CFACT), says Contreras’ decision assumes there is a climate impact from oil and gas production, instead of following the law by accepting BLM’s assessment of what effects should be considered under the law.

“This judgment is stupid,” said Wojick. “Under NEPA, the environmental impact assessment for a project is supposed to do just that, evaluate the identifiable impacts of a project.

“If the court wants to see the impact of a project, it should look at the impact assessment BLM provided it, not impose new types of assessments on a project,” Wojick said.

Money for States, Feds

The Trump administration has made producing coal, natural gas, and oil on federal lands and waters a top priority. In 2017, energy companies paid $6.5 billion to extract fossil fuels in areas under federal jurisdiction, with the money divided between the federal government and the states where the extraction took place.

The Trump administration’s policies are promoting American independence, says Kish.

“President Trump is making America stronger every day by trying to produce more of our energy right here at home,” Kish said.

Considering Options

The Trump administration had yet to respond to the court’s decision at press time. One option is to appeal Contreras’ ruling. In addition, because Contreras’ order is not a permanent ban on drilling, another option is to redo the environmental assessment for this particular project in accordance with the judge’s instructions and resubmit it.

Gordon indicated Wyoming might appeal Contreras’ ruling. Meanwhile, Gordon and the Trump administration are in preliminary talks over how to expand Wyoming’s role in the NEPA process going forward.

Gordon met twice earlier in 2019 with then-Acting Interior Secretary David Bernhardt (see story on pg. 10) to discuss how the state could take the lead role in NEPA environmental reviews in Wyoming, including overseeing the rigorous Environmental Impact Statements required for major federal actions or projects on federal lands within the state.

Bonner R. Cohen, Ph.D. (bcohen@nationalcenter.org) is a senior fellow at the National Center for Public Policy Research and a senior policy analyst with CFACT.
California Activists Push Govt. to Force Insurance Companies to Disclose Fossil Fuel Connections

By Arianna Wilkerson

More than 60 environmental activist groups have signed a petition requesting California’s new insurance commissioner require insurance companies to publicly disclose their investments in fossil fuel-related companies and any fossil fuel projects they underwrite or insure.

The requirement would apply to the more than 1,300 insurance companies licensed in California, the nation’s largest insurance market.

The petition, sent by environmental activists to Insurance Commissioner Ricardo Lara on March 21, links insurance companies’ investments in and underwriting of fossil-fuel-related companies to climate change and an increased frequency and severity of wildfires and other extreme weather events.

The coalition is led by Consumer Watchdog, and other members include the California Environmental Justice Alliance, the Center for International Environmental Law, the Public Citizen, the Rainforest Action Network, and 350.org.

The petition contends insurers are threatening their own success by insuring and investing in fossil-fuel-related businesses. The petition says insurers could become insolvent by being forced to cover billions of dollars in losses resulting from extreme weather events tied to climate change driven by fossil fuel use.

Facing Ruinous Climate Payouts?
The petition ties recent natural disasters to fossil fuel use.

According to the California Department of Insurance, wildfires in 2018 resulted in 46,000 claims totaling $11.4 billion in insured losses, including damage to more than 28,500 homes, 10,564 of which were destroyed. About 10,000 vehicles and other miscellaneous property items suffered wildfire damage. Insurers also paid out millions of dollars to fossil fuel companies in 2018 for losses related to accidental catastrophes such as oil spills and natural gas pipeline leaks.

“To ensure the solvency of the insurance industry and protect consumers in California, we request that you immediately initiate a rulemaking proceeding and promulgate emergency regulations to require all insurance companies licensed to conduct business in California to fully disclose: (1) all their investments in fossil fuel-related entities, and (2) all the fossil fuel-related companies and projects that they underwrite or otherwise insure,” the petition states.

“By insuring the fossil fuel projects responsible for the increased intensity of wildfires, mudslides, and flooding, insurance companies fuel the very disasters they are insuring homeowners against,” Carmen Balber, executive director of Consumer Watchdog, said in a press release discussing the coalition’s petition.

Increasing Pressure on Insurers

The renewed push for insurers to disclose all dealings with fossil fuel companies comes three years after former California Insurance Commissioner Dave Jones established the Climate Risk Carbon Initiative calling on insurance companies to divest voluntarily from investments in thermal coal (coal used to power electricity-producing turbines) and requiring insurers with more than $100 million (about half of the insurers in the state) to publish their fossil fuel investments.

In 2018, San Francisco became the first city in the United States to pass legislation urging insurers to divest from fossil fuels.

Seventeen large insurers in Europe have divested about $30 billion from coal companies since 2015, and six—Allianz, AXA, Munich Re, SCOR, Swiss Re, and Zurich—have stopped or limited their insuring of the coal industry.

Mapfre, the third largest insurance group in Latin America, announced on March 8 it will stop underwriting new coal projects and will divest from companies deriving more than 30 percent of their revenue from coal.

‘An Attempt to Intimidate’

This proposal is about ending fossil fuel use, not fighting climate change, says Tim Benson, a policy analyst with The Heartland Institute, which publishes Environment & Climate News.

“Insurance companies and fossil fuel companies bear no more responsibility for climate change than does any individual who uses them,” said Benson. “There is no true concern about climate change behind this petition. Rather, it’s about radical environmentalists, who hate fossil fuel use, seeking to destroy the companies that produce them, by any means necessary.”

Consumers will suffer if California’s Department of Insurance requires insurers to disclose their coal, natural gas, and oil investments, says Wayne Winegard, Ph.D., a senior fellow at the Pacific Research Institute.

“This proposal is an attempt to intimidate insurance companies, cloaked in the virtue of transparency,” said Winegard. “These environmental groups are hoping to punish companies, but if their antics are successful it will be consumers, particularly low-income consumers, who will suffer from higher energy costs.”

Arianna Wilkerson (awilkerson@heartland.org) is a state government relations manager at The Heartland Institute.
Federal Agencies Approve Arizona’s Rosemont Mine Permits

By Duggan Flanakin

Two federal agencies issued permits to allow Hudbay Minerals Inc. to build and operate its proposed Rosemont copper mine in Pima County, Arizona. On March 4, The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers announced it had issued a discharge permit, required by the Clean Water Act of 1973, allowing Hudbay to build a water pipeline for the mine. Days later, the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) approved the company’s mine plan of operations (MPO), clearing the last regulatory hurdle for Hudbay to begin construction of the Rosemont mine.

The Section 404 permitting process involved 17 cooperating agencies at various levels of government, 16 hearings, more than a thousand “studies,” and 245 days of public comment spread out over a number of years that yielded more than 43,000 comments. Issuance of the Section 404 permit paved the way for Forest Service approval of the MPO.

Large Money Pledges Required

Hudbay had to agree to numerous environmental and conservation requirements as a condition of its permits. Under the conditions of the permits, Rosemont’s owners pledged to contribute up to $25 million to an endowment to be used to support a trust dedicated to conservation, recreation, cultural, and environmental conservation projects, education, and other environmental ventures.

The company also committed to providing a $50,000 grant to the University of Arizona for camera studies of large predators such as jaguars and ocelots, and it pledged $1.25 million to the USFS to support habitat enhancement and monitoring of western yellow-billed cuckoos and southwestern willow flycatchers.

Hudbay will also contribute $3 million for Forest Service management, removal of harmful nonnative species, and a fulltime USFS biologist. Additionally, Hudbay agreed to plant 38,000 Palmer’s agave plants onsite during reclamation to enhance the food supply of lesser long-nosed bats.

Building for Others

Rosemont is also undertaking conservation measures on 4,500 acres of private land in Pima County, providing $2 million to the Cienega Watershed Partnership to preserve and enhance aquatic ecosystems, and giving $218,000 to the Fred Lawrence Whipple Observatory (FLWO) to offset startup costs and another $100,000 annually for the FLWO’s Smithsonian Institution sky brightness monitoring system.

The company agreed to pay up to $800,000 to the Coronado National Forest to produce a plan and develop facilities and infrastructure for alternative off-highway vehicle trails, to contribute up to $650,000 for the Arizona Trail Association to build two new trailheads and relocate 10 miles of trail away from the Rosemont site, and build a new connector road to provide access across the ridgeline of the Santa Rita Mountains in order to maintain a working cattle ranch already operating in and around the mine site.

Big Mine, Many Jobs

As planned, the open pit mine will stretch more than a mile in every direction with a depth of up to 2,900 feet, according the final environmental impact statement.

From the 1.96 billion tons of earth Hudbay estimates it will excavate, the company expects to extract about 700 million tons of ore, leaving 1.2 billion tons of waste rock to fill in the mine when Rosemont finishes operations, per the USFS permit’s reclamation requirements.

According to the plan filed with USFS, Hudbay estimates Rosemont will operate between 24 and 30 years. During that time, it is projected to generate approximately $136.7 million in state and local tax revenues and create 434 direct jobs and 1,260 indirect jobs per year in Pima County. Mine construction will require about 2,500 workers, Hudbay’s plan estimates.

‘Major Milestone’

With these permits secured, the Rosemont mine will soon become a huge asset to the economy, says Alan Hair, Hudbay’s president, chief executive officer, and director.

“The receipt of Rosemont’s 404 water permit is a major milestone in our efforts to build a modern mine that will fulfill the requirements of its permits, create jobs, and provide benefits for all of our shareholders,” Hair said. “With the receipt of the Section 404 water permit, and receipt of the approved MPO, Rosemont is now a fully permit-

ted, shovel-ready copper project, and we look forward to developing this world-class asset.”

The Rosemont copper mine in Arizona and the newly permitted PolyMet copper-nickel precious metals mine in Minnesota (see story on page XX) will be good for the economy and for national security, says Ashley Burke, senior vice president of communications for the National Mining Association.

“It is encouraging to see these world-class projects move forward,” Burke said. “Unfortunately, the United States’ current, inefficient permitting process delayed for too long the high-wage jobs and other economic benefits these projects will bring to rural Arizona and Minnesota.

“The broken process that currently exists can drag on for a decade or even longer, while major mining countries with similarly stringent environmental regulations, such as Canada and Australia, grant permits within two to three years,” Burke said. “Mining’s contributions to the U.S. economy are significant, providing more than 530,000 direct jobs in the United States and another 1,000,000 indirect jobs.”

‘Key Component’ of Economy

Burke says mining is the foundation of modern technology.

“The minerals and metals supplied through mining are at the tip of the domestic supply chain, key components of consumer and industrial technologies, and play a critical role in our national security through their use in the development and manufacture of military equipment and technologies,” Burke said.

Duggan Flanakin (dflanakin@gmail.com) writes from Austin, Texas.
FWS Proposes Returning Gray Wolf Management to States, Tribes

By Kenneth Artz

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), an agency within the U.S. Department of the Interior, is proposing to remove gray wolves from protection under the 1973 Endangered Species Act (ESA) in the lower 48 states.

To support farmers and ranchers, the federal government and state governments paid bounties for confirmed wolf kills and hired hunters to kill wolves, nearly wiping out the gray wolf in the contiguous United States during the late 19th century and early 20th century. Through the collaborative efforts of the federal and state governments, native tribes, conservation organizations, and private landowners, the wolf has recovered and is no longer endangered, says the March 14 press release announcing the FWS decision.

With more than 6,000 wolves across the gray wolf’s current range, the species’ recovery is one of the greatest animal comeback stories in U.S. conservation history, according to FWS.

States, Tribes to Control

With ESA protection no longer warranted, FWS announced its proposal to return management of the wolves to states and tribes with reservations containing the gray wolf populations.

“The facts are clear and indisputable—the gray wolf no longer meets the definition of a threatened or endangered species,” said David Bernhardt, U.S. Secretary of the Interior in a press statement. “Today the wolf is thriving on its vast range, and it is reasonable to conclude it will continue to do so in the future.”

“Today’s action puts us one step closer to transitioning the extraordinary effort that we have invested in gray wolf recovery to other species that actually need the protections of the Endangered Species Act, leaving the states to carry on the legacy of wolf conservation,” Bernhardt said.

Says Delisting Is Long Overdue

The proposed gray wolf delisting is in the best interest of wolves and other species, says Brian Seasholes, an independent scholar who researches endangered species.

“Endangered species conservation depends on public support, which is eroded by the unnecessary retention of the wolf on the endangered species list,” Seasholes said. “Most importantly, endangered species conservation depends on the buy-in of the working-class, rural Americans who live in wolf country, not the wealthy urban elites who support phony conservation groups seeking to keep the wolf listed as endangered.

“Secretary Bernhardt should be commended for standing up for common sense, sound science, and the best interests of wolf conservation.”

BRIAN SEASHOLES

INDEPENDENT SCHOLAR

The 60-day public comment period for FWS’s gray wolf proposal opened on March 15 and ends on May 14.

Kenneth Artz (kennethcharlesartz@gmx.com) writes from Dallas, Texas.
Trump Administration Proposes Major Cuts in Federal Science Programs

By Bonner R. Cohen

Setting up what is certain to be a bruising showdown with Congress over Fiscal Year (FY) 2020 spending, President Donald Trump’s budget proposal recommends significant funding reductions in science programs at a slew of federal agencies.

If Congress approves the budget Trump unveiled on March 11, the proposed cuts would go into effect on October 1, 2019. Similar in size to the spending reductions Trump proposed in FY 2018 and FY 2019, this year’s budget blueprint will have to get through a Congress in which Democrats control the House of Representatives.

Proposing Steep EPA Cuts
Largely the work of the White House Office of Management and Budget (OMB), the proposal would dramatically cut funding for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

EPA’s budget would be reduced from $8.8 billion to $6.1 billion, with spending for science and technology cut by $440 million. The White House proposes cutting EPA’s Atmospheric Protection Program, which reports on greenhouse gases, by 90 percent, and reducing funding for the Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy by 70 percent.

The budget cuts proposed for EPA by the White House won’t jeopardize the agency’s mission to protect public health and the environment, says EPA Administrator Andrew Wheeler.

“This commonsense budget proposal would support the agency as it continues to work with states, tribes, and local governments to protect human health and the environment,” Wheeler said in a statement.

DOE, NOAA Reductions Proposed
The White House proposes allocating $5.5 billion to the U.S. Department of Energy’s (DOE) Office of Science, about 16 percent below the FY 2019 amount. Among DOE’s cuts, the budget request calls for eliminating DOE’s Advanced Research Projects Agency–Energy (ARPA-E), which funds experimental technologies the private sector is unwilling to back.

For FY 2019, the White House requested approximately $1.4 billion for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration’s (NOAA) satellite program, including polar weather satellites, space weather instruments, and satellite data collection systems. For FY 2020, the Trump administration has proposed reducing NOAA’s satellite budget by about $200 million, to $1.2 billion.

The plan suggests a budget of $7.1 billion for the National Science Foundation, about 12 percent less than the current level.

‘Wasting Money Is Never Good’
Too much of what the federal government spends on science goes to flawed or frivolous research, says Dan Kish, a senior fellow at the Institute for Energy Research.

“Wasting money is never good, so it’s a good thing the Trump administration is looking for some accountability,” said Kish. “Taxpayers are tired of business-as-usual practices at our bloated bureaucracies, and a reckoning is long overdue.”

Congress is likely to stymie Trump’s attempts to rein in federal spending, says David Wojick, a senior policy analyst at the Committee for a Constructive Tomorrow (CFACT).

“Congress will continue to ignore the president’s valiant attempt to trim the fat at these agencies,” Wojick said. “The president used to be able to refuse to spend unwise appropriations, but those days are long gone.”

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

ND to Charge Electric Vehicle Owners for Highway Maintenance

By Duggan Flanakin

North Dakotans who purchase electric vehicles, plug-in hybrids, or electric motorcycles will soon pay standardized fees to maintain the state’s highways, roads, and bridges, under a new law signed by Gov. Doug Burgum.

Senate Bill 2061 imposes annual fees of $120 on electric vehicles (EVs), $50 for plug-in hybrids, and $20 for electric motorcycles, to ensure owners of these vehicles contribute to highway and road maintenance.

Road construction and maintenance are largely funded by gasoline taxes. Because EVs do not use gasoline, their owners avoid such taxes though EV use still puts wear and tear on roads.

‘Good Start for North Dakota’
With fewer than 150 EVs, less than 4,000 hybrids, and even fewer plug-in hybrids registered in the state, the legislature showed laudable foresight, says Bette Grande, a former North Dakota state legislator who is now a research fellow at The Heartland Institute, which publishes Environment & Climate News (ECN).

“S.B. 2061 is a really good start for North Dakota to be proactive, given that electric vehicle infrastructure is not yet a pressing issue,” said Grande.

“We need to look at how electric vehicles would be charged and used in our vast state and develop a system ensuring EVs contribute to highway maintenance,” said Grande.

‘Paying Their Fair Share’
The law is meant to ensure everyone using North Dakota’s roads contributes to their upkeep, says state Sen. Curt Kreun (R-Grand Forks), who cosponsored the legislation.

“Our concern was down the road there will likely be many more EVs using our highways, and we wanted to ensure they too are paying their fair share to maintain the roads they are using,” Kreun told ECN. “Eventually, everyone may move to mileage fees for all vehicles, but that might require federal action. In the meantime, this is the most equal playing field we could get.”

A user fee based on miles traveled would improve states’ approach to paying for roads and bridges, says Randal O’Toole, a senior fellow with the Cato Institute.

“The real purpose of a user fee is to send signals to both users and producers about the value of the resources they are using,” said O’Toole. “Gas taxes don’t do that very well, and a flat fee does even worse, which is why I support mileage-based user fees.”

Duggan Flanakin (dflanakin@gmail.com) writes from Austin, Texas.
FDA Approves Biotech Firm’s Genetically Modified Salmon Project

By Sarah Lott

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has decided to permit Massachusetts biotech firm AquaBounty to begin importing genetically modified Atlantic salmon eggs to be raised at its private, land-based facilities.

When they mature and are harvested and sold, the salmon will become the first genetically modified organism (GMO) animal raised for human consumption in the United States. The FDA initially approved AquaBounty’s plan to import its GMO salmon in 2015, but in the face of a number of legal challenges filed by environmental groups opposed to GMO animal husbandry, the agency placed an alert on the salmon, resulting in a temporary halt to the importation of the eggs.

FDA has now lifted the alert, saying the salmon has undergone safety reviews and will meet labeling requirements to distinguish AquaBounty’s GMO salmon from other wild and farm-raised salmon and disclose it as genetically modified.

Touting Efficiency, Eco-Friendliness

AquaBounty is currently raising and selling the salmon in smaller quantities in Canada, and it says entering the U.S. market will allow the company to provide the world’s most sustainable salmon, raised and harvested entirely in North America with a smaller environmental footprint than traditional salmon farming or commercial harvesting on the open ocean.

The bioengineered fish are almost identical to traditional salmon but grow to maturity twice as fast, meaning they can be harvested and replenished much more quickly. Raised in controlled, land-based facilities and bred to be sterile, the fish are incapable of affecting wild salmon communities.

If the public accepts and embraces AquaBounty’s GMO salmon, it could reduce the commercial take of wild salmon, helping declining populations to recover.

Economic Boon to Communities

FDA’s thorough review process has shown AquaBounty’s salmon are safe and nourishing, said Sylvia Wulf, AquaBounty’s CEO, in a statement announcing FDA’s decision to lift the alert.

“As FDA noted in their announcement, our salmon was approved by the agency over three years ago based upon a very comprehensive, science-based review process, which established that our salmon was safe, nutritious, and environmentally sound and met all other regulatory requirements,” Wulf’s statement said.

AquaBounty’s salmon production will create jobs and boost local economies, says Wulf.

“We will immediately start the process of importing AquAdvantage eggs from our hatchery in Canada to begin growing at our Indiana facility, and we are moving forward with plans to grow and commercialize our salmon at our facility[ies] in Albany, Indiana and Rollo Bay, Prince Edward Island, Canada,” Wulf said in a statement provided to Environment & Climate News. “We will be putting AquAdvantage Salmon eggs into these facilities as soon as possible and look forward to harvesting these fish in the fall of 2020.

“Once we are in full production, the two facilities combined will produce about 1,500 metric tons of salmon annually,” said Wulf. “AquaBounty has begun the staffing process for both facilities, and as we continue to staff and work with the rural communities where we are located, we will attract young talent with well-paying jobs, further strengthening the economy and our ties to these communities.”

Approval ‘Far Too Long in Coming’

If bioengineered foods can be brought to market, it could reduce the agriculture industry’s impact on the environment, says Bonner Cohen, a senior fellow at the National Center for Public Policy Research.

“Bioengineered animals can often be grown faster, with less impact to environmental resources, and closer to the source of consumption than traditionally raised animal foods, resulting in less fuel use for transportation and allowing for greater sustainability,” Cohen said.

The slow-moving regulatory approval process has almost strangled the nascent GMO food industry in its infancy, says Dr. Henry Miller, a senior fellow with the Pacific Research Institute.

“This final approval for production and sale of the AquAdvantage salmon in the United States was far too long in coming,” said Miller. “FDA’s policy of treating genetically engineered animals as a ‘new animal drug’ and its incompetent implementation—including a 20-plus-year review of the salmon—have virtually destroyed an entire, once-promising sector of biotechnology.

“The genetic engineering of animals could produce the ‘next big thing’ in animal husbandry,” Miller said.

Sarah Lott (lottsarah@gmail.com) writes from Rowlett, Texas.
Renewables Push Undermines Power Grid Serving 65 Million

By Bernard L. Weinstein

Electricity is the most effective and convenient way to consume energy. Without it, we’d be living in the Dark Ages—literally. However, we often forget it takes energy to make energy.

In recent years, environmental zealots have called for an overhaul of the U.S. energy grid. In short, they want more green energy sources to replace coal and nuclear power plants. However, this shortsighted plan could very well endanger the future of American energy production. The combination of too few coal and nuclear power plants being built and too many serviceable power plants being shuttered prematurely threatens the viability of America’s power supply.

How well power systems address the problem will be critical to ensuring a reliable, affordable, and secure supply of energy in the years ahead.

Coal, Nuclear Production Decline

A decade ago, about half of the electricity consumed in the United States came from power plants fueled by coal. Today, natural gas is the leader, providing more than 50 percent of our electricity, and coal’s share has dropped to less than 30 percent. In fact, coal capacity in the United States has fallen by more than a third since 2010, and another 25 percent of today’s coal plants are set to close by 2023.

Nuclear plants, which provide about 19 percent of the nation’s electricity, are also going offline. Since 2013, five plants, with a combined capacity of 43 gigawatts, have shut down. Additionally, eight plants, with a combined capacity of 85 gigawatts, are scheduled for retirement over the next six years. That’s almost enough power to serve the entire state of California. The planned closing of the Indian Point Nuclear Power Plant on the Hudson River by itself will remove two gigawatts of power from the grid, equal to nearly 25 percent of New York City’s electricity consumption.

Unlike natural gas, coal and nuclear power are not dependent on just-in-time fuel delivery. Coal plants, in particular, have proven their value in ramping up electricity production in periods of extreme cold when other power sources cannot.

Limits of Renewable Energy

Despite government mandates and massive taxpayer subsidies, wind and solar power account for only about 5 percent of U.S. electricity generation. Calls for even more reliance on renewables and even natural gas pose serious challenges to grid stability and reliability.

Wind and solar will not completely replace conventional power sources anytime soon. They are great when the wind is blowing and the sun is shining, but this is not always the case. Because large-scale battery storage at a reasonable cost is not yet on the horizon, utilities have to invest heavily in backup generation, typically provided by natural gas peaking plants—power plants that are idle most of the time and are only brought online during periods of unusually high electric power demand.

Wind and solar in their current forms cannot make up for the loss of coal- and nuclear-generated power. And if federal and state subsidies to renewables are reduced, the attractiveness of wind and solar investments is likely to diminish substantially.

Right now, domestic gas is cheap and abundant, but that won’t always be the case. A global market for natural gas is emerging, and the United States is becoming a major player. America is projected to become the world’s second-largest exporter of liquefied natural gas within a few years. A decade from now, natural gas prices will be at least 50 percent higher than they are today, making gas-fired power generation a more expensive proposition, according to a recent forecast by the World Bank.

Valuing a Constant Power Supply

Unlike renewables and natural gas peaking units, coal and nuclear plants are “always on,” so the loss of this baseload power is the most serious threat to power grid integrity.

Unfortunately, some system operators are not assigning value to the resiliency attributes of the baseload plants providing power to their grids. This is the case with PJM, the nation’s largest regional transmission operator, which provides electricity to 65 million people in 13 Eastern and Midwestern states and the District of Columbia.

In an unusual move, senior executives of four utilities that rely on PJM to transmit their power—Public Service Enterprise Group, Exelon Corporation, FirstEnergy Corporation, and Duke Energy—recently sent a letter to the grid operator imploring PJM to adopt market reforms recognizing the importance of their coal and nuclear plants in ensuring grid resiliency and reliability. They argue pricing in the wholesale market, which may be based on the marginal cost of natural gas or the feed-in tariffs of renewables, is not adequately compensating utilities for the reliability of their baseload power plants.

These utilities also want PJM to recognize the importance of fuel diversity for grid reliability and the potential risks to the grid from premature retirements of coal and nuclear power plants.

All power grids, for that matter, must adopt pricing mechanisms sufficient to ensure fuel diversity and an adequate reserve margin. Otherwise, the nation’s system operators will be unprepared for heat waves, polar vortices, spikes in natural gas prices, cyberattacks, and other disruptive events.

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Sorry, Kids, but the Next Energy Alternative Is Not Here Yet

By Ronald Stein

The thousands of young climate change activists in more than 100 countries who played hooky to march to save the climate on March 15 were vague on their definition of “renewable” energy.

That’s hardly the kids’ fault: the marches were driven by politicians, the press, and environmentalists who display mass hysteria about the need to use renewable energy and pursue some idealized Green New Deal to fight catastrophic, purportedly human-caused climate change, so this lack of clarity should not be surprising.

The term “renewable” in all these cases does not refer to energy in its totality, but just “electricity.” Wind and solar farms can only produce electricity, and even that is intermittent, needing the wind to blow or the sun to shine, or both, continually from Oslo in the North to Christchurch in the Southern Hemisphere. This is not going to happen. Electricity is limited in its ability to energize (no pun intended) societies around the world.

‘Magical Elixir’

Until we find an alternate energy, some magical elixir to replace current reliable energy sources, we should honestly acknowledge every industry and all infrastructure are reliant on energy from deep-earth minerals and fuels. Global economies increase, not decrease, their use of fossil fuels each year.

The U.S. Energy Information Administration (EIA) estimates coal use will peak sometime around 2023 and stabilize or modestly decline thereafter. And although the use of renewables will continue to grow, with even nuclear power growing modestly, petroleum and natural gas will dominate energy use through 2040 and beyond (see figure).

The constant drive for fuel efficiency and conservation has slowed the increase in the use of energy, as reflected in slight uptick of the EIA curves for fossil fuels even as billions of people from China and India are beginning to enjoy lifestyles like those in developed countries.

Necessity of Fossil Fuels

Automobiles of today are much more efficient than clunkers from the early 1900s and gas guzzlers from the late 1980s. That’s the good news. However, we have many more cars and trucks on the road.

Electricity can charge my iPhone, light my TV, and power my computer, but it cannot manufacture the chemicals, plastics, and other products required to make those phones, TVs, and computers.

Electricity also allows our space program and military operations to improve, but it doesn’t launch spacecraft nor move planes, ships, tanks, and other military vehicles.

Electricity can turn on the lights in your cruise ship cabin, but the cruise liner industry uses around 80,000 gallons of fuel per day, per ship, to accommodate 25 million passengers annually, a number that increases every year.

Electricity powers traffic lights, but road and air travel dominate most peoples’ lives in industrialized countries and emerging markets. Airlines conduct more than 100,000 flights a day around the world. Commercial aviation, with 23,000 commercial airplanes worldwide, consumes more than 225 million gallons of aviation fuels to transport almost 10 million passengers and cargo every day. Aircraft, like automobiles, have improved their efficiency tremendously, but we are and will fly more to accommodate thriving economies around the world.

An electric power grid operating entirely on renewable energy would be unable even to support the two prime movers that have done more for the cause of globalization than any other: the diesel engine and the jet turbine. Both run on petroleum products, and without transportation, there is no commerce.

What About Climate Change?

When discussing the energy used in the last few centuries—taking society from horses and buggies and sailing ships as primary modes of transportation to today’s automobiles, planes, modern ships, and trains—the discussion always turns to the impact of emissions from fossil fuels, the current primary energy sources, on the world’s climate.

During the billions of years the planet has been around, the climate has changed on multiple time scales, globally, regionally, and locally. Ice Ages have occurred at least five times. Obviously, natural forces greater than human activities caused the previous warming cycles that melted the ice, so can humans’ minuscule presence on Earth really be the cause of the next warming cycle?

Until recently, two prominent organizations have been clear on this topic. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and the United States National Climatic Data Center have stated the primary force directly driving climate change is the Sun, which heats the Earth’s oceans and lands. Oceans and land heat the air, not the reverse.

The one constant on Earth is the climate is always changing.

Sharing the Progress

Even as we continue to pursue greater efficiencies and conservation in our daily lives, to use fewer resources and produce less waste for the goods and services we produce, we should recognize “alternative” or renewable energy sources are still a long way from being able to maintain the standard of living in so-called developed countries have attained, much less uplift the billions of people in undeveloped countries out of poverty and allow them to enhance their lives.

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Ronald Stein, P.E. (Ronald.Stein@PTSAdvance.com) is founder and ambassador for energy and infrastructure at PTS Advance, headquartered in Irvine, California.
At the Arthur B. Robinson Center on Climate and Environmental Policy at The Heartland Institute, we are producing the research and conducting the effective advocacy needed to help restore sound science and common sense to efforts to protect the environment.

The center promotes pro-energy, pro-environment, and pro-jobs policies based on sound science and economics, not alarmism or ideology.

Through events, publications, social media, and government relations programs we have changed public opinion on climate change and other environmental topics. We have changed public policy not only in the United States but in other countries as well.

In 2018 and onward, we are focusing on winning the global warming war and repealing bad legislation and regulations adopted during the height of the global warming scare.

With your help, we can succeed. Please contact us at 312/377-4000 or think@heartland.org, or visit our website at heartland.org/Center-Climate-Environment.

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ARTHUR B. ROBINSON, PH.D.
APRIL 2017

The center is named in honor of, and chaired by, Arthur B. Robinson, Ph.D., a distinguished chemist, cofounder of the Oregon Institute of Science and Medicine (OISM), and editor of the influential newsletter Access to Energy. He received a Ph.D. in chemistry from the University of California at San Diego.
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By Linnea Lueken

The Indiana Utility Regulatory Commission (IURC) is considering a plan filed by Northern Indiana Public Service Co. (NIPSCO) to remove coal from its electric power mix by 2028 and replace it primarily with electricity generated by solar power.

NIPSCO states a comprehensive analysis it conducted determined its plan would save ratepayers and the state money over the long term.

NIPSCO provides electric power to approximately 460,000 customers across Indiana. In the Integrated Resource Plan NIPSCO filed with the IURC, the company proposes closing its Wheatfield coal plant by 2023 and its coal unit in Michigan City by 2028.

Zero Coal Goal

Under NIPSCO’s proposal, the percentage of electric power generated by coal would decrease from 65 percent today to 15 percent in 2023 and zero by 2028.

NIPSCO proposes replacing the 1,800 megawatts (mw) of electric power generated by the two coal plants with a mixture of 1,500 mw of solar with battery backup, 150 mw of wind, 125 mw of reduced demand through efficiency and demand-side management programs, and 50 mw of electricity purchased from other utilities.

Although NIPSCO says its electric power shift will save ratepayers more than $4 billion in the long run, it has asked IURC to approve a 12 percent rate hike to pay for decommissioning its existing power plants and building the renewable capacity to replace it.

‘Political Patronage and Power’

NIPSCO’s claim its proposal will reduce electric costs in Indiana does not align with reality, says Ladwig. “When it comes to providing energy in Indiana, we’re probably providing energy in the most efficient and environmentally friendly way right now,” Ladwig said. “That’s reality.”

“NIPSCO’s idealized vision of the future of a less expensive energy system powered by renewables fails to match up with reality,” said Ladwig.

Linnea Lueken (linnea.heartland@gmail.com) writes from South Carolina.
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_ltt_6.0beta5.txt. All past data were revised when the methodology was updated in April 2015.

MARCH 2019

GLOBAL AVERAGE

The global average temperature was 0.34°C above average.

NORTHERN HEMISPHERE

The Northern Hemisphere’s temperature was 0.44°C above average.

SOUTHERN HEMISPHERE

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