

**To:** Jackson, Ryan[jackson.ryan@epa.gov]  
**From:** POLITICO Pro Energy  
**Sent:** Tue 8/1/2017 9:42:51 AM  
**Subject:** Morning Energy: EPA to get earful on corn ethanol — Court orders EPA to reinstate methane rule immediately — Trump finding tough balance on coal, nuclear — Mnuchin won't rule out blocking Venezuelan oil imports

By Alex Guillén | 08/01/2017 05:40 AM EDT

*With help from Eric Wolff, Doug Palmer, Annie Snider and Esther Whieldon*

**RFS HEARING WILL BE POPPING LIKE CORN:** EPA is throwing its annual Renewable Fuel Standard bash today, an all-day hearing for the agency to get feedback on its proposed rule that will set the amount of biofuel that must be blended into the nation's fuel supply. The agency kept the ethanol mandate at the legal maximum of 15 billion gallons, but it dramatically cut the amount of advanced biofuels, and it will surely get an earful on that.

**A-listers of biofuels:** EPA will hear from Iowa Gov. Kim Reynolds and Nebraska Gov. Pete Ricketts, Chris Bliley of Growth Energy, Bob Dinneen of the Renewable Fuels Association, Frank Macchiarola of the American Petroleum Institute, and Donnell Rehagen of the National Biodiesel Board. Reynolds, whose state leads the nation in ethanol production, will tell EPA she's glad they're on track for an on-time rule (they're actually a bit behind schedule). But "I urge the EPA to raise the advanced biofuel, biodiesel and cellulosic volumes. The RFS is a bold policy, and Iowans and the industry as a whole have always risen to the challenge," she plans to add.

**If you go:** L'affaire du RFS will be at the Hyatt Regency Washington, 400 New Jersey Avenue NW. It will start at 9 a.m. and end when everyone who wants to has had their say.

**COURT REVIVES EPA METHANE RULE, AGAIN:** The full D.C. Circuit Court of Appeals on Monday ordered EPA to resume enforcing its methane rule for new oil and gas wells, a potentially temporary but important loss for EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt's deregulatory agenda. A three judge panel reversed Pruitt's stay, but gave EPA time to appeal. The agency hasn't done so, but industry groups have. The court's order was issued by a 9-2 vote. Judges Janice Rogers Brown, who will retire from the court effective Aug. 31, and Brett Kavanaugh voted against reinstating the rule immediately. More here.

**For those keeping track at home:** EPA's methane rule has been on, off, on again, off again, and now back on again. Plus, it's likely to be off again within a couple months, once Pruitt's proposed two-year hold is finalized — and then possibly back on following a new judicial review.

**TRUMP STRUGGLES TO BOOST BOTH COAL, NUCLEAR:** President Donald Trump has promised to revive the nuclear industry and put more coal miners back to work, but he is already finding it difficult to do both at the same time. Dueling announcements on Monday illustrated how difficult it will be for the Trump administration to square its support for nuclear power — whose main attribute is its ability to deliver reliable, carbon-free electricity — with its position that reducing carbon emissions are no longer a priority for the federal government. A

pair of South Carolina utilities said Monday that they would be pulling the plug on two unfinished new nuclear reactors; Santee Cooper, one of the companies, pointed out that "the current political landscape has reduced the urgency for emissions-free base load generation" among the reasons for the decision. That announcement came just a few hours after Trump Cabinet members trumpeted newly announced exports from a Pennsylvania coal mine to Ukraine, a deal the administration said it helped to negotiate. Darius Dixon [explains it all](#).

**HAPPY TUESDAY AND WELCOME TO AUGUST.** I'm your special guest host Alex Guillén. The NRDC's Joan Matthews was first to correctly name all five former presidents who were the same height as Trump (6 feet, 2 inches): George Washington, Chester A. Arthur, Franklin D. Roosevelt, George H.W. Bush and Bill Clinton. For today: How many presidents were born in August, and how many have died in August? Sadly, my time as guest ME host was even shorter than Anthony Scaramucci's time as White House communications director, so please welcome your guest host for the rest of the week, Annie Snider. Send your tips, energy gossip and comments to [asnider@politico.com](mailto:asnider@politico.com). Or follow us on Twitter [@AnnElizabeth18](#), [@AnthonyAdragna](#), [@Morning\\_Energy](#) and [@POLITICOPro](#).

**MNUCHIN WON'T RULE OUT BLOCKING VENEZUELAN OIL IMPORTS:** After taking the dramatic step Monday of [slapping sanctions](#) on Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro, the Trump administration kept open the possibility of also shutting down oil trade with the South American country to punish Maduro's government. The U.S. "will continue to monitor the situation and consider additional sanctions," Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin said told reporters at a White House briefing Monday, one day after what U.S. officials called a sham election to give the Venezuelan government sweeping new powers.

**The United States imports about 700,000 to 800,000 barrels per day** of Venezuelan heavy crude oil to refineries in Texas, Louisiana and Mississippi. It also exports about 30,000 barrels per day of oil to Venezuela for blending with the heavier product. Mnuchin deflected questions on whether the Trump administration could impose an embargo on oil imports from Venezuela or shut down U.S. oil exports to the country. "This president is not going to advertise what he's going to do in the future. So, all options are on the table and we will consider everything," Mnuchin said.

**BERNHARDT STARTS AT INTERIOR TODAY:** Today is former lobbyist David Bernhardt's first day as Interior Deputy Secretary. Bernhardt had worked at Interior in several roles, including solicitor, during the George W. Bush administration and was a lobbyist for Westlands Water District.

**TRUMP PICKS HEALTH COMPANY LAWYER FOR KEY INTERIOR POST:** President Donald Trump plans to nominate Ryan Nelson to be the Interior Department's solicitor, its top lawyer and third in command. Nelson since 2009 has been general counsel for Idaho-based Melaleuca, an online "wellness shopping club." Nelson previous was the deputy assistant attorney general for the Environment and Natural Resources Division and a lawyer at the Office of Management and Budget. Melaleuca CEO Frank VanderSloot is a noted GOP donor who at first clashed with Trump on the campaign trail (even garnering a [scornful tweet](#) when he initially backed Marco Rubio) before backing Trump after he secured the GOP nomination. Donald

Trump Jr., who has shown influence over and interest in Interior nominees, then visited the company last September.

**Trump will also nominate John Henderson** to be assistant secretary of the Air Force for installations, environment and energy, the White House said. Henderson previously commanded the Army Corps of Engineers' Omaha district, where he oversaw work related to the Dakota Access pipeline — and recommended its approval under the Obama administration.

**API: BORDER TAX, SHMORDER TAX, AS LONG AS WE PROMOTE GROWTH:** API CEO Jack Gerard told ME Monday he was pleased Republicans in Congress and the White House had agreed to drop a border adjustment tax from plans to rewrite the tax code. He instead wants tax writers to give oil and gas companies the means to recoup their investments quicker with tools like accelerated depreciation. "We're encouraged they listen to the public and the consumers, leaving behind the border adjustment tax," he said. Gerard believes a pro-growth tax policy would replace the lost income from the proposed BAT. "The best tax policy is a job creation policy. If you want to grow taxes, you want people who are in a position to pay taxes." Gerard was touting a report sponsored by API that showed the oil and gas industry supported millions of jobs and added billions of dollars to the economy.

**KOCH BACKS PRO-MORRISEY SUPER PAC IN WEST VIRGINIA:** Koch Industries has been a major early contributor to a super PAC supporting West Virginia Attorney General Patrick Morrisey's campaign to challenge Sen. Joe Manchin. The group, 35th PAC, which was formed to boost Morrisey against his key Republican opponent, Rep. Evan Jenkins, reported to the FEC Monday that \$10,000 of the \$20,500 it raised as of the end of June came from Koch Industries. Koch is a contributor to the Republican Attorneys General Association, where Morrisey is currently chairman, and Morrisey is one of the most frequent challengers of Obama-era environmental regulations. Morrisey's actual campaign was only formed a couple of weeks ago and hasn't filed any FEC reports yet. Jenkins' campaign, meanwhile, has about \$1.2 million thanks to his previously existing House campaign chest and more than \$680,000 in donations this year.

**CONTENTIOUS ASIAN CARP STUDY COMING NEXT WEEK:** The Army Corps of Engineers has alerted lawmakers it will release a draft plan for halting the spread of dangerous Asian carp into the Great Lakes on Aug. 7. The study was originally due out Feb. 28, but was put on hold by the Trump administration amid concerns from the barge industry that it could hamper navigation between Lake Michigan and the Mississippi River. Both Republican and Democratic lawmakers have been pushing for the study's swift release, through methods including policy riders inserted in pending appropriations measures.

**THE POSTMAN ALWAYS RINGS THRICE:** Letters from ME's mailbag.

**FERC quorum:** The Electric Reliability Coordinating Council would very much like the Senate to approve the nominations of Robert Powelson and Neil Chatterjee to seats on FERC to get the commission back to a quorum. The group says \$50 billion in capital is "hamstrung" in projects requiring FERC approval, with another \$25 billion starting applications. "Every week's delay compounds the problem as seasonal windows for pipeline analyses close and potential for energy

price spikes increase," wrote ERCC Director Scott Segal.

**'Red team' climate science review:** The American Association for the Advancement of Science and 15 other science groups have asked for a meeting with EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt to talk over his forthcoming "red team" climate science review program. The existing peer review system is already "a multi-dimensional, competitive "red team/blue team" process whereby scientists and scientific teams are constantly challenging one another's findings for robustness," they write.

**Monuments:** The Northwest Guides and Anglers Association wants Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke to leave the Cascade-Siskiyou National Monument in Oregon and California intact.

**GROUP LAUNCHES ZINKE-TARGETED ADS:** The watchdog group Center for Western Priorities is launching a six-figure ad buy today pressuring Zinke against shrinking or revoking any national monuments. The spot will air in Washington starting today, with an online campaign running through the month.

**Another watchdog group, the Western Values Project,** will launch a website today cataloguing "the revolving door between special interest lobbyists and political appointees at the Department of the Interior." WVP's "Department of Influence" site has found 21 political appointees with backgrounds in oil, gas, coal or another resource extraction industry and three with conservation or recreational backgrounds. A dozen served in the Trump campaign.

**INTERIOR SAW 79 NEW EMPLOYMENT DISCRIMINATION COMPLAINTS:** The Interior Department on Monday posted its fiscal 2017 third quarter report on employee and job applicant discrimination complaints. In the last quarter, during which Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke was in office, the agency received 79 new complaints, 58 percent of which involved retaliation allegations. A former Interior senior staffer filed a whistleblower retaliation complaint earlier this month. The agency has received 260 discrimination complaints thus far this fiscal year. The numbers are largely in line with the data from the past five fiscal years.

**ENVIRO ATTORNEY RUBIN DIES:** Noted Washington energy attorney Jim Rubin died Friday just weeks after being diagnosed with cancer, reports Greenwire. Rubin spent almost 15 years at DOJ working on environmental trial issues and on a Clinton-era climate change task force. He spent the last decade at several D.C. law firms, most recently Dorsey & Whitney.

**LOS ANGELES OLYMPICS PUT PRESSURE ON CITY POLLUTION:** Los Angeles reached a deal with the IOC to host the 2028 Summer Olympics, giving the city about a decade to work on its historically high levels of smog and other pollution the world's athletes will be sucking into their lungs. The American Lung Association says Los Angeles has the worst smog pollution of any U.S. city, and despite significant strides in recent years, the area has a long way to go, ALA's Bonnie Holmes-Gen told ME. "In some parts of LA, we have over 140 bad air days every year," she said. "The good news is there are a lot of important initiatives underway. But the state of California and the South Coast air district need to step up the work to move away from polluting fossil fuels, which is the No. 1 cause of pollution in the LA region."

Smog-choked cities have hosted Olympics before — Beijing in 2008, for example. But China resorted to some serious steps to clear the skies for the games, including shutting down factories and construction projects and limiting car usage, none of which would likely go over well in La La Land. That may help temporarily, but Los Angeles' smog chronically plagues millions of residents. Coincidentally, Beijing organizers learned some of their smog reduction techniques from the 1984 Olympics in Los Angeles, when car-crazy L.A. implemented new vehicle restrictions and longtime residents were astounded to see haze clear and reveal mountain ranges.

**MOVER, SHAKER:** Vince Griffin is the new executive director of Indiana Advanced Energy Economy, the state branch of the national group with a similar name that promotes renewables and other advanced energy technologies. Griffin retired last year from the Indiana Chamber of Commerce, where he was vice president of energy and environmental policy.

**Morning read:** FERC has issued new guidelines for "reporting on culture resources investigations for natural gas projects," for compliance with laws protecting historic and preserved sites.

## QUICK HITS

— Billionaire Behind the Dakota Access Is 'Baffled' by Complaints About His New Pipeline. Bloomberg

— Californians urged to save energy during solar eclipse. Fox News

— Alphabet Wants to Fix Renewable Energy's Storage Problem — With Salt. Bloomberg

— Devon Energy sells shale oil assets in Texas. USA Today

— Big Oil weighs in on Texas 'bathroom bill,' warning it will threaten state's economy. Los Angeles Times

— Suicides of nearly 60,000 Indian farmers linked to climate change, study claims. Guardian

## HAPPENING TODAY

9 a.m. — EPA holds a public hearing on the RFS at the Hyatt Regency Washington on Capitol Hill, 400 New Jersey Avenue NW.

10 a.m. — "Oversight of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Superfund Program," Senate Environment and Public Works Committee, Dirksen 406.

## THAT'S ALL FOR ME.

*To view online:*

<https://www.politicopro.com/tipsheets/morning-energy/2017/08/epa-to-get-earful-on-corn-ethanol-024011>

## Stories from POLITICO Pro

### **D.C. Circuit orders EPA to resume enforcing methane rule** [Back](#)

By Alex Guillén | 07/31/2017 06:39 PM EDT

The full D.C. Circuit Court of Appeals today [ordered](#) EPA to resume enforcing its methane rule for new oil and gas wells, a potentially temporary but important loss for EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt's deregulatory agenda.

A three-judge panel ruled on July 3 that Pruitt improperly imposed a 90-day stay of the rule amid a reconsideration of key leak detection and repair requirements.

The court agreed to keep the stay in place for two weeks to give EPA time to decide on an appeal, a timeline that expired last week. The agency has not asked for an appeal, but industry groups and states critical of rule have. The court ordered responses to those appeal petitions be turned in by Wednesday afternoon, with any further reply due Thursday, indicating the court will move quickly on the appeal.

The order was issued by a 9-2 vote. Judges Janice Rogers Brown, who will retire from the court effective Aug. 31, and Brett Kavanaugh voted against reinstating the rule immediately.

EPA is taking comment through Aug. 9 on a proposed two-year stay of the rule through 2019 and could have it in place by September. That longer-term stay may not face the same legal issues as the 90-day one since EPA will incorporate public comment.

**WHAT'S NEXT:** The court could decide as early as this week whether to hear an en banc appeal. Pruitt's 90-day stay would expire on Aug. 31 anyway, putting a ticking clock on the court proceedings before the matter becomes moot.

*To view online [click here](#).*

[Back](#)

### **Trump's coal-boosting eats away at the case for nuclear** [Back](#)

By Darius Dixon | 07/31/2017 08:30 PM EDT

President Donald Trump has promised to revive the nuclear industry and put more coal miners back to work, but he is already finding it difficult to do both at the same time.

Dueling announcements out of South Carolina and Pennsylvania illustrated how difficult it will be for the Trump administration to square its support for nuclear power — whose main attribute is its ability to deliver reliable, carbon-free electricity — with its position that reducing carbon

emissions is no longer a priority for the federal government.

Utilities in South Carolina said Monday they would stop construction on two new nuclear reactors at the V.C. Summer nuclear plant, about nine years after they launched the project. The announcement came a few hours after the Energy and Commerce departments trumpeted an agreement for a Pennsylvania-based company to sell U.S. coal to a Ukrainian utility. But analysts say there is little surprise that coal is thriving while nuclear continues to struggle, thanks to Trump's decision to abandon the Paris climate deal and unwind virtually all of the regulations former President Barack Obama put in place to bring down U.S. carbon emissions in line with that target.

In his June speech at the Energy Department outlining an "energy dominance" agenda, Trump said his administration would launch a "complete review" of U.S. nuclear policy in order to revive the industry, although it is unclear what progress has been made since then. Energy Secretary Rick Perry said a few weeks later that he had not seen any details of that work, nor a parallel review of grid reliability that may be beneficial for nuclear power. At the same DOE speech, Trump announced plans to lower barriers for overseas coal financing and pointed to Ukraine as an eager customer for U.S. coal exports.

"If the general approach to energy policy from Trump and the gang is going to be that 'we're okay with coal, we're okay with carbon,' then that's one significant reason less [for the private sector] to want to take a chance with other issues on a nuclear plant," said Kit Konolige, a senior utilities analyst with Bloomberg Intelligence.

SCANA, the majority owner of the unfinished South Carolina reactors, cited a long list of reasons for not finishing the Westinghouse-designed AP1000 units: cost concerns about the already over-budget project, "uncertainty" about a getting an extension of nuclear production tax credits from Capitol Hill, and the decision by co-owner Santee Cooper, a state-owned electric utility, to walk away from the project. Of course, cheap natural gas, construction delays, weak electricity demand and the bankruptcy of primary contractor Westinghouse didn't help, but the companies indicted that the change in attitude coming from the White House was a factor as well.

"Today, the business climate has changed considerably," Santee Cooper said in its own announcement that its board of directors sought to stop the project, referencing Obama's emphasis on climate change, the lingering effects of the most recent recession, and energy efficiency programs. "Natural gas prices plummeted after fracking began, and the current political landscape has reduced the urgency for emissions-free base load generation."

Investors rewarded the decision. SCANA's stock closed 5 percent higher than it opened Monday after it announced its plans to abandon the Summer project.

The South Carolina closures send a worrying signal for the fate of the two Westinghouse reactors under construction as part of the Vogtle nuclear expansion, a project similar to Summer being run by Southern Co., Oglethorpe Power Corp. and the Municipal Electric Authority of Georgia.

"I think Southern's gonna go the same way that SCANA is going," Konolige said. "I think, basically, the reasons are pretty much the same: The uncertainty of where policy wants you to put your money and of how long it's going to take to get this thing done — which is going to be a long time — and then they're going to look at the fact that SCANA's stock went up [Monday]."

But Georgia regulators are trying to tamp down any effort to compare the two situations.

"The dissimilarities of these projects should be recognized before making any suppositions on whether construction will continue at Plant Vogtle based on decisions made in South Carolina," Georgia Public Service Commission Chairman Stan Wise said in a [statement](#).

Rich Powell, executive director for ClearPath, a conservative group concerned about climate change, said nuclear becomes increasingly competitive the bigger the emissions cut regulators and legislators aim for, but he argued that Obama's Clean Power Plan was weak for nuclear.

"There's been no indication so far that our policymakers are optimizing for getting our grid to zero emissions," he said. "That's where nuclear gets really valuable. Nuclear's expensive if you're trying to reduce emissions by 30 percent or 40 percent."

He added: "There hasn't been a clear line of support for zero-emissions baseload."

An Energy Department spokeswoman disputed the notion that the administration is not doing enough to help the nuclear industry.

"Secretary Perry shares President Trump's belief that an 'all of the above' energy strategy is what will help America become Energy Dominant," DOE spokesperson Shaylyn Hynes said in an email. "As we look to the future, nuclear power with its zero emissions and around the clock reliability should be a larger part of our nation's energy portfolio."

*To view online [click here](#).*

[Back](#)

## **Treasury sanctions Venezuela's president [Back](#)**

By Zachary Warmbrodt | 07/31/2017 03:44 PM EDT

The U.S. Treasury Department is targeting Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro with sanctions, accusing him of widespread human rights abuses.

Treasury announced the sanctions following the election on Sunday of an assembly to rewrite the Latin American country's constitution.

In a statement, Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin called the vote "illegitimate" and said it

confirmed that Maduro was "a dictator who disregards the will of the Venezuelan people."

Maduro joins Zimbabwe President Robert Mugabe, Syrian President Bashar Assad and North Korean supreme leader Kim Jong Un as a head of state personally sanctioned by the U.S.

"By sanctioning Maduro, the United States makes clear our opposition to the policies of his regime and our support for the people of Venezuela who seek to return their country to a full and prosperous democracy," Mnuchin said.

Treasury said in a release that all of Maduro's assets subject to U.S. jurisdiction were frozen and that U.S. persons were prohibited from dealing with him.

Mnuchin warned that anyone who participates in the assembly that was the subject of Sunday's election "could be exposed to future U.S. sanctions."

He declined to comment on any further steps the U.S. government might take.

The move comes on the heels of President Donald Trump's reluctant agreement to sign a legislative package overwhelmingly passed by the Senate last week, consisting of sanctions on Russia, Iran and North Korea, constraining his bid to defrost relations with Moscow.

*Victoria Guida contributed to this report.*

*To view online [click here](#).*

[Back](#)

**Trump's Interior pick lifts outdoors groups** [Back](#)

By Esther Whieldon and Annie Snider | 12/15/2016 05:00 AM EDT

President-elect Donald Trump's selection of freshman Montana Rep. [Ryan Zinke](#) as Interior secretary is a sign that hunting and fishing groups may still wield clout in a Trump administration loaded with oil and gas executives — and in a Republican Party split between its Theodore Roosevelt and shrink-the-government wings.

Influencing Trump's choice for the post was the top priority for sportsmen's groups, which had two main criteria for any candidate: The new Interior secretary had to be a hunter or angler, and someone committed to keeping public lands public.

They said Zinke, a Republican and former Navy SEAL commander, fit the bill on both counts — in contrast with Rep. [Cathy McMorris Rodgers](#) (R-Wash.), who has co-sponsored [legislation](#) that would have forced the sale of millions of acres of federal land.

McMorris Rodgers appeared to be the front-runner for the post last week. But the outdoors

groups voiced their qualms about her to Donald Trump Jr., an avid hunter and member of the group Backcountry Hunters and Anglers, when he asked for their opinions, sources close to the discussions say.

While the groups can't claim all the credit for McMorris Rodgers' fall from grace, they said Zinke's nomination — officially announced Thursday — gives them reason to hope the new president will hear their voice. Other potential candidates that sportsmen groups had supported included Wyoming Gov. Matt Mead and Nevada Gov. Brian Sandoval.

"There was some negative reaction to some of the names that were put forward and those comments were shared all the way to the very, very top," said Collin O'Mara, CEO of the National Wildlife Federation. He added: "We're not going to win on every issue, but I think we'll have the ability to make our case. And at this point, that's all we can ask for."

Conservationists also hope Zinke will serve as a counterbalance to other Trump Cabinet picks, including Exxon Mobil CEO Rex Tillerson as secretary of state and Oklahoma Attorney General Scott Pruitt as head of the EPA, whose selections have raised fears that the decks are being stacked in favor of the oil and gas industry.

"This looks to me like a cabinet that's shaping up to be filled with special interests ... especially from the fossil fuel energy kind of side," said Peter Aengst, senior director of the Northern Rockies region for The Wilderness Society. "The hope here is that Zinke will be an important check on some really concerning other Cabinet picks."

Aengst said he also drew some hope from the fact that Zinke has opposed efforts by other Republicans in Congress, including House Natural Resources Chairman Rob Bishop, to transfer vast stretches of federal land to the states. "What would give me much more hope is if I could point to specific examples where he's also gone up against fossil fuel special interests," Aengst said.

Zinke's selection could also help Democrats keep the Senate seat held by Jon Tester — whose supporters include Backcountry Hunters and Anglers leader Land Tawney — by keeping Zinke from challenging him in 2018. But Tawney told POLITICO this week that his support for Tester played no role in his group's decision to praise Zinke as a contender for Interior.

Zinke accepted Trump's nomination Thursday while invoking the name of the conservation movement's favorite Republican president.

"As inscribed in the stone archway of Yellowstone National Park in Gardiner, Mont., I shall faithfully uphold Teddy Roosevelt's belief that our treasured public lands are 'for the benefit and enjoyment of the people,'" Zinke said in a statement released by Trump's transition. "I will work tirelessly to ensure our public lands are managed and preserved in a way that benefits everyone for generations to come."

Those words offered a contrast with years of conservative attacks on pieces of Roosevelt's legacy, including efforts by Republicans to loosen the power that Interior holds over Western

states as the owner of one-third of all U.S. land. The Heritage Foundation has urged Trump's administration to hand states the responsibility for all leasing and permitting of federal lands within their borders, while Texas Sen. Ted Cruz made similar promises during this year's Republican presidential primaries.

But Trump disagreed with that anti-Washington fervor during the campaign, telling Field & Stream magazine that he would not support proposals to divest federal lands to the states.

"I don't like the idea because I want to keep the lands great, and you don't know what the state is going to do," the New York billionaire said in January. "I mean, are they going to sell if they get into a little bit of trouble? And I don't think it's something that should be sold. We have to be great stewards of this land. This is magnificent land."

Conservationists, who want to ensure that people have access to public land for fishing, hunting and recreation, see Zinke as someone who shares their values and isn't afraid to stand his ground.

Besides bucking Bishop's efforts to transfer federal lands to the states, Zinke resigned as a delegate to last summer's Republican National Convention because the party's platform included language calling for the sale of public lands. Zinke was also the lone Republican on Bishop's committee to join with Democrats last year in trying to permanently authorize the Land and Water Conservation Fund, a 51-year-old pot of federal money that Bishop opposes renewing without major changes.

"He's definitely one who's not afraid — just look at his military background," said Steve Moyer of the group Trout Unlimited.

Hunting and fishing groups have raised concerns with some aspects of Zinke's record, however, and other environmental organizations are hardly sold on him. Defenders of Wildlife President CEO Jamie Rappaport called him "unsuitable for the job" because of votes he cast against Endangered Species Act protections for individual species and his support for fossil fuel development.

"Other than supporting the Land and Water Conservation Fund, we struggle to find something positive," Rappaport said in an interview.

Moreover, Zinke is firmly anti-regulation, voting the Republican line in opposition to the Environmental Protection Agency's Waters of the U.S. rule — an Obama administration effort that Trout Unlimited and the National Wildlife Federation strongly backed — as well the EPA's climate regulations for power plants. The League of Conservation Voters gave him a lifetime score of 3 percent on environmental issues.

Zinke has also backed legislation to rip up the Obama administration's plans for protecting the greater sage grouse, an imperiled bird that dwells on prime oil and gas land in the West. And he has criticized Interior's overhaul of the royalty and valuation process for fossil fuels on federal lands and co-sponsored a bill that would sunset the agency's moratorium on new coal leases in 2019.

Endangered Species Act issues are likely to be front and center in Congress next year, especially as Bishop angles for major changes to the bedrock law. That makes some of the groups that most frequently litigate on endangered issues nervous.

Zinke has "voted for legislation to remove grizzly bears from the endangered species list, wolves, lynx, he's fought protection for the sage grouse and at every turn and he wanted to exempt big water developers ... in California from the Endangered Species Act," said Kieran Suckling, executive director of the Center for Biological Diversity, a green group that frequently sues Interior over its species protections.

But sportsmen's groups hope that with Zinke at the table, the conversation will be more constructive than it would otherwise be with a Republican-controlled Congress and White House.

"He's not somebody saying we should eliminate the act or not care about the species," said the wildlife federation's O'Mara. He said he hopes Zinke can shift the conversation away from controversies about adding species to the endangered list, and focus instead more on how to manage them better.

Zinke could help cut through some of the politics around the 1973 law, said David Allen, CEO of the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation.

"The Endangered Species Act has been hijacked and has gone way beyond what it was ever intended [to do] when it was introduced during [President Richard] Nixon's time," Allen said, arguing that he hopes Zinke can make the act a "conservation tool and less of a political tool."

*To view online [click here](#).*

[Back](#)

**Donald Trump Jr. taps hunting pal for Interior liaison** [Back](#)

By Esther Whieldon | 03/17/2017 05:01 AM EDT

Donald Trump Jr. is still exerting influence at the Interior Department and has tapped a hunting buddy to serve as a go-between for the agency, sportmen's groups and his father's White House.

President Donald Trump's eldest son is an avid hunter and played a key role in picking Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke, who is also a hunter and fisherman. And now Donald Trump Jr. has asked Jason Hairston, a former San Francisco 49ers linebacker and founder of hunting gear company Kuiu, to serve as a liaison among himself, Zinke, sportsmen's groups and the White House on conservation and public lands issues, Hairston said on Thursday.

"I'm absolutely going to take the position," Hairston told POLITICO, but the job won't come

with a salary, and he plans on staying in California where he lives and manages his business.

But an official with the Interior Department said there had "been no discussion of creating of a new role like this" and White House deputy press secretary Stephanie Grisham said in an email there were no new personnel announcements.

Hairston said Donald Trump Jr. had hoped to play the liaison role between Interior and the White House himself, but his decision to stick with running his father's business empire with his brother, Eric Trump, put a kink in that plan.

"It's really a role he was hoping to fill, but he can't because of conflict of interest," Hairston said.

Hairston and Donald Trump Jr. have been hunting buddies for at least two years — and Donald Trump Jr. [tweeted](#) out his congratulations last year after Hairston's company was featured in a [Bloomberg news](#) article. The two have tracked game together in mountain ranges in the West and Canada, and Hairston helped to organize meetings between sportsman groups and Donald Trump during his campaign, including a February 2016 gathering in Las Vegas, Hairston said.

The president "knows that it's not just a sport, that it really is something that's more meaningful to hunters and how important wildlife and conservation are because of everything Don and Eric have experienced and shared with him," Hairston said. "So he's not just pacifying his kids over this. He understands it and gets it."

Outdoor recreation groups have recently stepped up their fight against efforts by some Western Republican lawmakers to force the Interior Department to transfer more of the vast amounts of public lands it controls in the West to states — a move the groups say would cut them off from prime hunting and fishing ground. And having Hairston as their advocate would give them a direct line to the White House.

While he said his position hasn't been given a formal starting day, Hairston said he has "already started with the work on it," including "meeting with different organizations to determine what challenges and issues we're facing and really just what we should be working on — what's important."

Hairston has met with Zinke twice: once before Zinke was confirmed as secretary and again on March 7 when Hairston traveled to Washington and talked with the heads of conservation and hunting organizations. Those included the National Rifle Association, Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership, National Shooting Sports Foundation and Safari Club International.

*To view online [click here](#).*

[Back](#)

**Interior official files whistleblower complaint over job reassignment [Back](#)**

By Esther Whieldon and Ben Lefebvre | 07/19/2017 07:06 PM EDT

A former senior Interior Department official has filed a whistleblower complaint after the agency transferred him from a leadership position focused on climate change to a desk job collecting royalties from oil and gas companies.

In a [complaint](#) and [disclosure](#) filing with the Office of Special Counsel and in a Washington Post [op-ed](#), former Interior Office of Policy Analysis Director Joel Clement claimed he was [reassigned](#) to a position at the Office of Natural Resources Revenue to stop him from publicly discussing climate change impacts on native Alaskan coastal communities.

Clement was among dozens of senior executive staff reassigned to other jobs in June.

Clement told POLITICO no Interior political staffers ever raised concerns about his activities prior to his reassignment. "It was kind of obvious to reassign the climate adaptation experts to the accounting office where they collect fossil fuel royalty checks. That was pretty flagrant, I would say, in terms of sending the message. So that message was received loud and clear that they wanted me to quit."

Clement said he'd like his old job back, and he hoped other staff would also complain.

Interior spokeswoman Heather Swift said the personnel moves were "conducted to better serve the taxpayer and the Department's operations."

Clement may have difficulty proving his case because agencies have wide discretion to reassign staff, according to Jeff Ruch, executive director of Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility. "It sounds like he's being retaliated against because of his job, not because of any disclosure he made," Ruch said. "He's suffering due to the nature of his job, and maybe because he did it too well."

*Annie Snider contributed to this report.*

*To view online [click here](#).*

[Back](#)

Was this Pro content helpful? Tell us what you think in one click.				
<a href="#">Yes, very</a>	<a href="#">Somewhat</a>	<a href="#">Neutral</a>	<a href="#">Not really</a>	<a href="#">Not at all</a>

You received this POLITICO Pro content because your customized settings include: Morning Energy. To change your alert settings, please go to <https://www.politicopro.com/settings>

---

This email was sent to [jackson.ryan@epa.gov](mailto:jackson.ryan@epa.gov) by: POLITICO, LLC 1000 Wilson Blvd.  
Arlington, VA, 22209, USA

---