

To: Jackson, Ryan[jackson.ryan@epa.gov]
From: Morning Energy
Sent: Fri 8/18/2017 2:02:31 PM
Subject: POLITICO's Morning Energy: Scott Pruitt's campaign in waiting? — Comments pour in on offshore drilling plan — Oregon lawmakers back Suniva solar petition

By Anthony Adragna | 08/18/2017 10:00 AM EDT

With help from Emily Holden

IS SCOTT PRUITT PLAYING THE LONG GAME? Ostensibly to gather feedback on rolling back an Obama-era water rule, EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt's 10-state trek this summer - jam-packed with local media hits - is raising eyebrows around the Beltway that the former Oklahoma attorney general is laying the groundwork for a political campaign once he leaves President Donald Trump's Cabinet, Pro's Emily Holden [reports](#). "Whatever he may claim to be, he is a politician with campaign experience," one GOP strategist said, noting EPA likely won't be "his career culmination goal."

It's not immediately clear what office Pruitt, 49, could seek but speculation has focused on the Senate seat held by [Jim Inhofe](#) - should the 82-year old fifth-term senator decide to retire or not seek reelection in 2020. If he does seek elected office, Pruitt could be the first EPA chief to make that jump. His inner circle is dominated by key personnel with links back to Oklahoma, though state strategists say they haven't heard of any campaigns on the horizon: "I can tell you that I have not heard anybody in Oklahoma talk about a Senate run for Scott Pruitt," Oklahoma GOP political strategist Pat McFerron told Emily.

But what's clear to former Republican EPA chiefs is Pruitt has an entirely different focus than past administrators. Former George W. Bush EPA chief Christine Todd Whitman noted he's spending more time on television and away from headquarters. "You've got plenty on your plate. You really don't have a lot of time to go and do the kinds of stuff he's doing," said Whitman, a former New Jersey governor. EPA declined to comment on Pruitt's future plans but defended his trips. "Unlike the previous administration which imposed its regulatory regime from Washington, Administrator Pruitt is taking the conversations directly to the states," said EPA spokesman Jahan Wilcox.

History lesson: Former GOP-appointed EPA Administrator Bill Ruckelshaus said Pruitt "clearly has not bought into the mission of EPA," and is "more interested in reducing the regulatory impact." Though Pruitt's often compared to Anne Gorsuch, who Reagan appointed to EPA to ease environmental regulations, Ruckelshaus argued the Oklahoman might be more effective at shrinking the agency's profile than Gorsuch who didn't successfully dismantle much. "They weren't as knowledgeable about the laws ... the people they brought in were not very skilled," he said. "What this administration is doing is bringing in somebody who has been suing the agency for a long time, although never very successfully." He said Pruitt and his staff, comprised of Hill staffers, are familiar enough with the statute to be "skillful at unraveling the agency's system." Ruckelshaus added that other news from the administration is distracting from Pruitt's rollbacks.

TGIF AND WE MADE IT EVERYONE! I'm your host Anthony Adragna, and the Senate

Energy Committee's Sean Solie was first to identify Kiribati as the only country in all four hemispheres (though France may as well depending on how you count its land overseas). For today: What's the world's only remaining grand duchy? Send your tips, energy gossip and comments to aadragna@politico.com, or follow us on Twitter [@AnthonyAdragna](https://twitter.com/AnthonyAdragna), [@Morning_Energy](https://twitter.com/Morning_Energy), and [@POLITICOPro](https://twitter.com/POLITICOPro).

LIFELINE SOUGHT FOR GEORGIA NUCLEAR PROJECT: Southern Co. and Oglethorpe Power Corp. are in talks with the Energy Department to potentially increase the record \$8.3 billion loan guarantee for the two troubled new reactors under construction at Plant Vogtle in Georgia, Bloomberg [reports](#). "We have filed an application to potentially increase the amount of funds available for the Vogtle project under our DOE loan guarantee agreement to keep all options open for customers," Georgia Power spokesman Jacob Hawkins told the wire service. People familiar with the discussions say the project's growing costs may mean the companies can qualify for additional government support. DOE spokeswoman Shaylyn Hynes said the agency "continues to have daily conversations with our borrowers about the status of Plant Vogtle."

LET IT (CONTINUE TO) FLOW: Both the [Trump administration](#) and the [company](#) behind the Dakota Access pipeline argued in briefs filed late Thursday the pipeline should continue to operate while the Army Corps of Engineers revisits an environmental review a federal court ruled earlier this was inadequate. Dakota Access LLC said in its brief "the extremely low likelihood of any harm if the pipeline remains operational" and the "the certain disruption should the Court order otherwise" justified keeping the project running. A federal judge back in June [found](#) the Army Corps used flawed risk and environmental justice analysis when clearing the pipeline operator to finish construction.

LET THOSE DRILLING COMMENTS FLOW: Interior officials have plenty of information - 56,000 comments - to weigh as they begin the arduous process of crafting a new five-year offshore drilling plan after Thursday's comment deadline. Some input that caught ME's eyes:

-Virginia Gov. Terry McAuliffe [asked](#) for his state to not be included after previously expressing openness to the idea provided the state got a cut of drilling revenues. "The program as proposed does not adequately protect Virginia's interests and we hope you will heed our request to exclude our coastal areas," he wrote.

-Major energy associations called the drilling plan's expansion to also include new areas in the Atlantic, Eastern Gulf of Mexico, Beaufort and Chukchi seas of Alaska and Pacific. "The decisions made now will have long-lasting impacts on U.S. energy policy," nine trade groups, including the American Petroleum Institute, National Ocean Industries Association and Independent Petroleum Association of America, [wrote](#). "To continue our march towards greater energy independence, bold, forward-looking decisions need to be made."

-Thirty Democratic senators, led by Oregon's Jeff Merkley, urged Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke in a [letter](#) to maintain existing protections and exclusions in the current 2017-2022 offshore drilling plan. "We believe the existing program correctly excludes areas from the leasing program that pose significant environmental, economic, and cultural risk, as well as face

strong community opposition. We urge you to maintain the protections and exclusions outlined in the current 2017-2022 Program," they wrote.

-More than 1,500 veterans [wrote](#) Zinke that expanding offshore drilling was not compatible with military readiness. And a coalition of green groups, including Natural Resources Defense Council, the Sierra Club, Earthjustice, Oceana, Greenpeace and the Center for Biological Diversity, said more than 370,000 people were opposed to any drilling expansion. "There are no new facts to consider," the groups said in a statement. "The public opposes this reckless step and there is no need in the United States for the limited energy that would be produced."

TRUMP, SCOTT TALK DIKE FUNDING: Maybe not your ordinary lunch chatter, but Trump and Florida Republican Gov. Rick Scott heavily focused on the state's push to get money to repair a federally operated dike around Lake Okeechobee while breaking bread Thursday, POLITICO Florida's Matt Dixon [reports](#). Florida wants federal money to help repair the Herbert Hoover Dike around the lake. "Governor Scott wants to do all he can to protect Florida's environment and President Trump is very supportive," Scott communications director John Tupps said in a statement.

Gore TO TRUMP: TIME TO RESIGN: Former Vice President and environmental advocate Al Gore urged Trump to quit during [an interview](#) released Thursday, POLITICO's Darren Samuelsohn [reports](#). Asked what single piece of advice he'd give Trump, Gore told the website LADBible: "Resign."

Speaking of: Gore will keynote the National Clean Energy Summit co-hosted by former Sen. Harry Reid and Nevada Gov. Brian Sandoval on Oct. 13. "Vice President Gore is the most prominent environmental activist in the world today, and I am pleased my friend is coming to Nevada for the National Clean Energy Summit," Reid said in a statement. More on the summit [here](#).

MAIL CALL! OREGONIANS BACK SUNIVA SOLAR TARIFF PETITION: Five Oregon Democrats, including Senate Finance ranking member [Ron Wyden](#), sent [a letter](#) to the International Trade Commission backing "appropriate remedies" to a surge in cheap solar imports that many argue have harmed domestic manufacturers. "Should the ITC make an affirmative finding, we support recommending a remedy that will save and strengthen this important American manufacturing industry," they wrote. The ITC held [a public hearing](#) earlier this week on petitions from Suniva and SolarWorld Americas seeking steep tariffs on imported solar cells and modules.

PUMP THE BREAKS ON WOTUS REPEAL: More than 100 House Democrats are out with [a letter](#) today to Pruitt urging him to reconsider plans to revamp the Obama administration's Waters of the U.S. rule. "We would be willing to work with an administration that wants to develop thoughtful changes that maintain protections for this life-sustaining resource, but this repeal is reckless," the letter, led by Rep. [Don Beyer](#), says.

MORE LAWMAKERS WEIGH IN ON MONUMENTS: California senior Sen. [Dianne Feinstein](#) sent Zinke [a letter](#) urging him not to alter the boundaries of the six national monuments

from her state still under review. "I encourage you to visit these remarkable places and witness firsthand their inspirational beauty and significance to our nation," she wrote, thanking Zinke for recommending no changes to the Sand to Snow National Monument on Wednesday. In addition, Rep. [Martha McSally](#) (R-Ariz.) sent a [somewhat bizarre letter](#) urging Zinke to "carefully consider" the impact of his decisions but offering no recommendations for how he should approach the three other Arizona national monuments still under review.

DOJ sued for monument records: The Western Values Project filed a [lawsuit](#) Thursday after DOJ's Office of Legal Counsel didn't respond to FOIA requests seeking records related to any efforts to legally justify a roll back of national monument designations made under the Antiquities Act. "The Trump administration is stonewalling the release of public information as they try to fabricate legal loopholes to revoke or resize national monuments," Jayson O'Neill, Western Values Project's deputy director, said in a statement. In particular, the suit seeks records from DOJ communications with Pacific Legal Foundation and American Enterprise Institute staff, as well as two specific attorneys.

SETTING THE RECORD STRAIGHT: Paul Bailey, president of the American Coalition for Clean Coal Electricity, tells ME his group's [paper](#) urging the Department of Energy to rethink parts of its [draft](#) grid study was misunderstood by some. "The way this appeared in one trade press ... it sounded like we were being critical of natural gas and that's not really the purpose of the paper or in fact the tone of it," Bailey said. "I hope they would be fair about pointing out the shortcomings of natural gas, as well as the advantages. All electricity sources have pluses and minuses." That said, Bailey said he wants staff to distinguish between reliability and resiliency and note that gas can't always make its way to power plants in emergency situations.

OKLAHOMA REP POISED FOR NASA NOMINATION: Trump is getting ready to tap Oklahoma GOP Rep. [Jim Bridenstine](#) as NASA administrator, according to [multiple reports](#) this week. Bridenstine has been the rumored selection for months. His selection would likely spell trouble for the agency's Earth science program that studies, among other things, climate change. Back in 2013, Bridenstine demanded an apology from Obama on the House floor for what he called the "[gross misallocation](#)" of taxpayer dollars into the study of climate change.

KEEP ON TRUCKIN': EPA plans to reconsider parts of the Obama administration's 2016 Phase 2 emissions rule for heavy-duty trucks, which established new standards for model years 2021-2027 of tractor-trailers, school buses, delivery vans and other large workhorse vehicles, [Pro's Alex Guillén reports](#). The agency may revise trailer standards and a part of the rule that classifies gliders - refurbished engines installed into a new tractor chassis - as a new motor vehicle. It plans to keep separate requirements for tractor engines.

GREENS GO BIG FOR NORTHAM: Virginia's League of Conservation Voters announced Wednesday it would spend \$1.1 million on a field campaign boosting Democrat Ralph Northam's bid for governor. The effort will stress door-to-door campaigning in the Richmond area and also back Mark Herring for attorney general and Justin Fairfax for lieutenant governor. "We live in an era of unprecedented attacks on the environment from the federal level and Ralph is the only candidate in this race who will stand up to this radical agenda and do the right thing for the air we breathe, water we drink, and the special places we love," Michael Town, the group's

executive director, said in a statement.

WHILE ZINKE'S AWAY: Deputy Interior Secretary David Bernhardt was in Zinke's home state of Montana Thursday "at the dedication of a new wildlife corridor" at the site of a former mine, he [tweeted](#). Kinross Gold U.S.A., Inc., Trout Unlimited and the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation teamed up to protect the site near Yellowstone and top politicians, including Gov. Steve Bullock, Sens. [Jon Tester](#) and [Steve Daines](#) and Rep. [Greg Gianforte](#) all attended.

HAVE A LISTEN: DOE is out with a new podcast looking at what next week's solar eclipse might mean for the electric grid. Have a listen [here](#). And the Third Way released [a short video](#) detailing how the agency helps develop and commercialize new energy technologies.

MOVER, SHAKER: Ramsey Kropf, former deputy solicitor for Interior's water resources division, has joined Somach Simmons & Dunn as a shareholder. She'll work out of the firm's Boulder, Colo. office in its western water practice.

CONGRATS! Jeff Grappone, who works in corporate communications at Siemens USA, proposed to Amy Graham, who works in public affairs at the EPA, on Tuesday. "Jeff proposed on Siasconset Beach in Nantucket and they celebrated at dinner in town with friends before finishing the night at the Club Car's piano bar." A picture of the couple [here](#). (h/t Playboy)

QUICK HITS

- Henry Hub Emerges as Global Natural Gas Benchmark. [Wall Street Journal](#).
- How did Trump wind up sharing a toast with Gov. Christie Whitman? [NJ.com](#).
- NY sues feds over LI Sound dumping plan. [Newsday](#).
- Pruitt assigns political appointee to vet grant requests. [E&E News](#).
- July ranks 2nd for heat globally, hottest recorded on land. [AP](#).
- Norway authorities stop Greenpeace protests at Arctic well. [Reuters](#).

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