

**To:** Jackson, Ryan[jackson.ryan@epa.gov]  
**From:** Morning Energy  
**Sent:** Wed 8/16/2017 2:05:53 PM  
**Subject:** POLITICO's Morning Energy: Trump launches new salvo to speed project permitting — Another twist in Sumner nuclear saga — LCV campaign targets monument review

By Anthony Adragna | 08/16/2017 10:00 AM EDT

*With help from Alex Guillén, Darius Dixon, Doug Palmer and Emily Holden*

**ANOTHER ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW PUSH THUDS:** Before he veered off-message by arguing there were "very fine" people among the neo-Nazis and KKK members in Charlottesville, President Donald Trump actually signed an executive order Tuesday that aims to hit a two-year goal for completing federal environmental permitting for infrastructure projects by designating a lead federal agency for each major project. "It's going to be a very streamlined process," he said at a Trump Tower press conference. "And, by the way, if it doesn't meet environmental safeguards, we're not going to approve it." The order tasks the White House Council on Environmental Quality (still without a nominee to lead it) with developing a government-wide action plan to speed environmental permitting reviews and with sorting out any disputes between agencies.

**Most controversial among the order's provisions** was the revocation of an Obama-era flood standard requiring new federally funded projects be built to withstand the stronger storms likely fueled by climate change - a move that earned broad condemnation. R.J. Lehmann, a senior fellow with the conservative R St. Institute, called the revocation "shortsighted and ill-considered." Republican Rep. Carlos Curbelo, whose South Florida district sees frequent flooding, called Trump's decision "irresponsible and it will lead to taxpayer dollars being wasted on projects that may not be built to endure the flooding we are already seeing and know is only going to get worse." And Sierra Club Executive Director Michael Brune said axing the standard was "actively wasting taxpayer dollars, endangering schools and hospitals, and threatening the lives of people around the country for no other reason than his apparent contempt for the public."

**Supporters of Trump's reversal of the Obama-era initiative** were limited mainly to home builders and some Republicans in Congress. "President Trump made the correct decision to repeal this onerous regulation that was written to make a political statement on climate change rather than for practicality," Louisiana Rep. Ralph Abraham, whose state has been ravaged by more frequent flooding, said in a statement. And National Association of Home Builders Chairman Granger MacDonald praised Trump's action to kill the standard that would "needlessly hurt housing affordability" and said it would "provide much-needed regulatory relief for the housing community and help American home buyers."

**What about infrastructure?** Trump attempted to call attention to his \$1 trillion initiative to rebuild the nation's roads, tunnels and bridges - but provided hardly any detail about what that forthcoming proposal may actually contain, Pro Transportation's Lauren Gardner reports. National Economic Council Chairman Gary Cohn said the White House continued to hope action on infrastructure would come this year but told reporters it would "come on the heels of taxes," another complex issue without a firm proposal ready for congressional consideration.

**WELCOME TO WEDNESDAY!** I'm your host Anthony Adragna, and the American Chemistry Council's Andrew Fasoli was first to name Liechtenstein as the country Snoop Dogg tried to rent out. For today: What iconic rock n' roller died 40 years ago today? (No Googling, as always; h/t reader Craig Meyers.) Send your tips, energy gossip and comments to [aadragna@politico.com](mailto: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).

**SCANA PULLS ABANDONMENT APP FOR SUMMER (FOR THE MOMENT):** After markets closed on Tuesday, SCANA announced that it is yanking the paperwork it filed with regulators to abandon the V.C. Summer nuclear project. Nuclear supporters shouldn't get too excited just yet. Since it decided to pull out of the project two weeks ago, the company brass have met with state lawmakers concerned about the political and financial fallout of Summer's undoing-and the billions of dollars SCANA intends to pass onto its customers. "The purpose of these ongoing meetings is to discuss their concerns and to explain the path that led us to the abandonment decision," SCANA CEO Kevin Marsh said in a statement. Terminating the project, he reiterated, was their "least desired option" but still "the prudent decision."

**South Carolina's 2007 Base Load Review Act** established a six-month clock for regulators to review the abandonment plan, while the state's governor and legislators are scrambling for options to minimize the impact on consumers or rescue the project. Marsh is holding a conference call with analysts at 8:30 a.m. today.

**ME FIRST - GREENS LAUNCH 'FINAL PUSH' AGAINST MONUMENT REVIEW:** The League of Conservation Voters is launching a final \$100,000 push today across multiple platforms against the Trump administration's review of nearly two dozen previously-designated national monuments. The campaign will urge people to urge Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke against making changes to the designations and promote videos highlighting support of public lands. LCV also plans to use Facebook and Instagram to push Reps. Paul Gosar, Steve Pearce, Doug LaMalfa and Doug Lamborn to stop their support of the review.

**BRING ON THE LOBBYING MUSCLE:** Five European natural gas companies hoping to build a controversial pipeline to deliver Russian gas to Germany hired a U.S. lobbying firm this month, Pro's Ben Lefebvre reports, citing disclosure forms. The five European companies - Shell International, Engie, Uniper SE, OMV Aktiengesellschaft and Wintershall Nederland - will be represented by McLarty Inbound lobbyists including Richard Burt, a former ambassador to Germany. Edward Chow, a senior fellow at the Center for Strategic and International Studies' Energy and National Security Program, said the companies could be reacting to the combination of a more aggressive U.S. energy policy under Trump and Congress' tougher line on Russia.

**COAL VERSUS THE WORLD:** The coal lobby has taken some offense to an initial draft of the Department of Energy's upcoming grid study. The American Coalition for Clean Coal Electricity wants the report to pin losses in coal and nuclear generation on natural gas and Obama-era regulations on fossil fuels, not renewable power. The group wants DOE to look at how increasing reliance on natural gas might cause grid reliability problems when gas is not available, according to a new paper. ACCCE also counters the draft study's findings that EPA

regulations played only a minor role in coal retirements and that coal has been one of "the largest energy subsidy beneficiaries."

**COURT STOPS MONTANA COAL MINE EXPANSION:** A U.S. District Court judge in Montana this week tossed out the Interior Department's 2015 approval of a coal mine's expansion in the state, ruling that the agency failed to study the climate change-related effects of transporting and burning that coal. Environmental groups argued that Interior had calculated the economic benefits of expanding Signal Peak Energy's Bull Mountain mine (including local employment and state tax revenue) without also considering the costs of burning that coal. Judge Donald W. Molloy [agreed](#), and was especially critical of Interior for concluding that the effect of the expansion's emissions would be "too uncertain to predict" while also concluding that the expansion would have no effect "because other coal would be burned in its stead."

"This conclusion is illogical, and places the Enforcement Office's thumb on the scale by inflating the benefits of the action while minimizing its impacts," he wrote in his Monday ruling. Molloy, a Clinton appointee, vacated Interior's previous environmental assessment, ordered a halt to any mining in that area. Interior must revisit these issues and likely conduct a full environmental impact statement if mining is to resume. Environmentalists quickly cheered the ruling. "The company and a government agency tried to cut corners once again. Thankfully the court didn't let that happen," said Anne Hedges of the Montana Environmental Information Center.

**ITC HEARS SOLAR TRADE TESTIMONY:** Industry groups led by the Solar Energy Industries Association, state government officials and representatives of foreign governments all urged the International Trade Commission at a hearing Tuesday not to grant petitions from U.S. solar manufacturers Suniva and SolarWorld Americas for steep tariffs on imported solar cells and modules, Pro Trade's Luis Sanchez [reports](#). Some like Sibylle Zitko, a representative for the European Commission, argued "'inefficiencies" and "bad investments" were more to blame for the U.S. manufacturers' struggles rather than cheap solar imports. ITC has until Sept. 22 to make an injury determination and if the commission sides with Suniva and SolarWorld then Trump would have until Jan. 12, 2018, to make a decision on a remedy and present his plan to Congress.

**WHAT A CRAZY STORY:** Did you know EPA has a fugitive [website](#)? ME neither, but it now boasts a new member thanks to a case involving radioactive waste and a prison escape. James Kenneth Ward illegally dumped radioactive waste at several spots throughout North Dakota but then escaped while on prison transport in Wyoming. He's considered violent and dangerous. More [here](#).

**OIL SECTOR: ISDS MUST STAY IN NAFTA:** The American Petroleum Institute is insisting that access to investor-state dispute settlements remain a part of NAFTA, which is the subject of trade talks happening this week. "ISDS is a neutral, international arbitration procedure," the group said in a new [brief](#) on its website. "ISDS is necessary to ensure that, when US oil and natural companies invest abroad, they can seek protection for their investments if they do not have access to developed and independent court systems."

**On the other side,** Sen. [Sherrod Brown](#) [came out hard](#) against the provision, writing in an op-ed that the new NAFTA must "do away with special courts that allow multinational corporations to

undermine U.S. laws and take advantage of American workers. These corporate courts are called investor-state dispute settlement and they've got to go."

**NEW EFFORT TO BOOST CORPORATE SUSTAINABILITY:** The Harvard Business Review, along with top corporate leaders, is today launching a new effort called the Future Economy Project to help companies lay out blueprints for improving their sustainability efforts. Partners in the effort include: Virgin's Richard Branson; Instagram COO Marne Levine; Dow Chemical's Andrew Liveris; PepsiCo's Indra Nooyi; former Treasury Secretary Hank Paulson; Unilever's Paul Polman and Alphabet's Eric Schmidt. The effort will result in a list of principles.

**PENCE CONFIDENT ABOUT VENEZUELA SOLUTION:** Vice President Mike Pence expressed confidence economic and diplomatic pressure would resolve Venezuela's ongoing woes during a Tuesday speech in Buenos Aires, Argentina. "We will continue to act until the Maduro regime restores democracy, holds free and fair elections, releases all of its political prisoners, and ends the repression of the Venezuelan people," he said.

**REPORT: HFC DECISION COULD BOOST POLLUTION:** A new research note from Energy Innovation concludes a federal appeals court ruling striking down an effort from EPA to ban hydrofluorocarbons could lead to the equivalent of between 3.6 billion and 9.5 billion metric tons of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere in 2050, compared to emissions that would have been avoided with the rule in place. It also warns the court's decision, which is likely to be appealed, could hamper U.S. options for upholding its international commitments made last year to reduce HFC emissions.

**ANOTHER AD HITS VIRGINIA PIPELINE:** The Natural Resources Defense Council released an ad Tuesday opposing construction of Dominion Energy's Atlantic Coast natural gas pipeline and urging Virginia to conduct a far more thorough environmental review of the proposed project. The ad argues that the company has a history of water pollution violations associated with their pipelines and asks "how can we trust them to build an unnecessary 600-mile pipeline?" It's backed with a six-figure ad buy and encourages Virginians to weigh in during the public comment period.

**NEW CLIMATE TOOL FOR CITIES UNVEILED:** Quantified Ventures and Neighborly, backed with financial support from the Rockefeller Foundation, are unveiling a challenge today to have two U.S. cities issue the first publicly marketed environmental impact bonds. Proceeds from the bonds will go toward green infrastructure projects like stormwater management or other resilience efforts aimed at protecting vulnerable or low-income communities.

**MOVER, SHAKER:** Connecticut's John Betkoski III has assumed the role of president of the National Association of Regulatory Utility Commissioners; he replaces Robert Powelson, who recently became a FERC commissioner.

**TWEETED:** Former New Jersey GOP Gov. and EPA Administrator Christine Todd Whitman on Tuesday in response to a retweet of a train running over someone with a CNN logo for a head. "Have you no shame @realDonaldTrump? Retweeting a Trump train running over a reporter isn't even acting like an adult, much less a president."

## QUICK HITS

- The Energy Market's Facts Of Life. [Bloomberg Businessweek](#).
- Trump Has Broad Power to Block Climate Change Report. [ProPublica](#).
- Testimony: Group that tampered with northern Minnesota pipeline valve to claim 'necessity' defense. [Inforum](#).
- How Ohio is trying to keep Asian Carp out of Lake Erie. [Cleveland.com](#).
- China imposes import bans on North Korean iron, coal and seafood. [BBC](#).
- US: 'Zero' chance of Colorado River water shortage in 2018. [AP](#).

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