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Daily Environment Report

Afternoon Briefing - Your Preview of Today's News

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EPA to Let More Research Office Science Advisers' Terms Lapse

Posted June 20, 2017, 03:32 P.M. ET

By [Rachel Leven](#)

The Environmental Protection Agency in August will let go dozens more scientists who advise the agency's Office of Research and Development on its priorities and cancel all of the board's subcommittee meetings in 2017, according to a [letter](#) obtained by Bloomberg BNA.

The move is part of the EPA's "need to reconstitute" the Board of Scientific Counselors (BOSC), according to the letter from Robert Kavlock, acting assistant administrator for EPA's Office of Research and Development. The agency hopes the board will be able to restart its work in 2018, Kavlock said.

The EPA in May declined to renew the terms of nine members of the Board of Scientific Counselors. Kavlock said in the letter that members with terms scheduled to expire in August also will not see their terms renewed.

The board's committee chair told Bloomberg BNA the agency's actions would likely leave the research office without this board's advice for nearly a year "when they sorely need it."

"Not only are they [the research office] facing huge proposed changes to their programs (the proposed 2018 budget) but they are also just gearing up for their next 5 year strategic plan," Deborah Swackhamer, chair of the board's executive committee and a professor at the University of Minnesota, said in an email. "So outside advice from BOSC would have been particularly useful this coming year."

Kavlock encouraged board members whose terms expire in August 2017 or March 2018 to [reapply](#) before June 30, according to the letter. The EPA didn't immediately respond to Bloomberg BNA's message requesting verification of the letter and additional comment.

EPA Could Offer 1,228 Employees Buyouts, Union Says

Posted June 20, 2017, 03:26 P.M. ET

By Andrew Childers

As many as 1,228 EPA employees will be eligible for buyout offers, according to a proposed memorandum of understanding on the offers released by the agency's union.

The buyouts would need to take effect by Sept. 2, according to John O'Grady, an Environmental Protection Agency employee and union representative based in Chicago, who released the draft memorandum to reporters June 20. The proposed memorandum is similar to those between the agency and unions reached for similar buyout offers in 2014 and 2015, O'Grady said in an email.

In fiscal year 2016, EPA says it employed 15,376 staff members.

Union officials could not be reached for additional comment. The EPA could not predict the number of employees who would take the buyout, but the agency has previously said it would be targeting supervisor positions, with \$12 million set aside for the offers.

About 450 employees took the EPA's buyout offers in 2014, the agency's Office of Inspector General said in a March report. Those buyouts cost the agency \$11.3 million in incentives.

The EPA's fiscal year 2018 budget request would cut EPA employment lives by approximately 20 percent, bringing its staffing down to mid-1980s levels.

O'Grady said the union hopes to have the memorandum signed by June 30.

Yucca Mountain Offers Lifeline to At-Risk Communities: Perry

Posted June 20, 2017, 03:05 P.M. ET

By Brian Dabbs

Temporary storage of nuclear waste poses an urgent threat to the U.S. public, and Nevada's Yucca Mountain is the "proper" location for a long-term repository, Energy Secretary Rick Perry told House appropriators.

"We can no longer kick the can down the road," Energy Secretary Rick Perry said June 20. "It's your citizens that have the most to lose if we continue to leave this waste in your districts."

Perry testified in support of the White House budget for the Energy Department, which calls for \$150 million in funding to resume technical work for the site. Rep. Mike Simpson (R-Idaho), the top appropriator on the subcommittee hosting Perry, backed the endorsement of Yucca Mountain as a nuclear waste storage facility.

Lawmakers have long battled over the site, and Nevada's congressional delegation is united in its opposition to Yucca Mountain, located 90 miles northwest of Las Vegas. Commercial spent fuel from reactors is currently stored mostly at production sites across the U.S.

The House Energy and Commerce's Environment Subcommittee last week approved a draft nuclear waste bill that would move along licensing efforts that the Obama administration mothballed and

allow the Energy Department to enter into contracts with private interim storage facilities, which would store commercial waste before a permanent repository is developed.

Clean Energy Cuts

Meanwhile, the budget document would slash the Energy Department budget by \$1.7 billion, an overall 5.4 percent cut. That reduction hits clean energy programs the hardest.

The budget proposal seeks to ax the the Advanced Projects Research Agency-Energy (ARPA-E) office, a investment program targeting immature, high-risk energy technologies. Broad emerging energy research allocations would be cut from \$1.84 billion in fiscal year 2017 to \$1.55 billion.

Those cuts would jeopardize U.S. climate change initiatives, said Rep. Nita Lowey (D-N.Y.), the House Appropriations Committee's ranking member.

"While you no longer propose to eliminate the agency, your budget would do grievous harm," she said. "There is still time to protect our planet from the disastrous impacts of climate change."

Perry famously urged the elimination of the department on the presidential campaign trail in 2012.

Meanwhile, Perry touted the budget's proposed increase in defense funds. The budge would boost funding for developing and safeguarding nuclear weapons.

Energy Department Grid Study Expected by Month's End, Perry Says

Posted June 20, 2017, 03:00 P.M. ET

By [Ari Natter](#)

The Department of Energy's highly anticipated study on the U.S. power grid and how it can help coal and nuclear power "should be" available by the end of the month, Energy Secretary Rick Perry said June 20.

"That's a question about do we have the baseload," Perry testified before a House Appropriations subcommittee. "Where does nuclear come into this, where does our renewables play, what role does carbon capture utilization and sequestration, and coal plants have to play in the baseload?"

The study also will look into the security of the grid, Perry said.

The Trump administration's budget request seeks \$28 billion for the energy department in FY18, a reduction of \$1.6 billion from current levels, and includes deep cuts to clean energy spending and the elimination of an advanced energy research office.

House Appropriations Committee Chairman Rodney Frelinghuysen (R-N.J.) said he has "concerns" about cuts to nuclear energy and fusion programs, calling them "pretty dramatic."

The budget request would cut \$283 million from DOE's nuclear energy program. Perry said the budget reflects tough decisions, and prioritizes protecting taxpayers.

"I was a governor long enough to know that budgets don't always come back to you the way they start, and I think that is a fair statement," the former Texas governor said.

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Hundreds of Scientists Recommend Better Oversight of Germ-Killers

Posted June 20, 2017, 02:56 P.M. ET

By [Tiffany Stecker](#)

More than 200 scientists and health professionals are urging consumers to avoid two common germ-killers, while recommending that regulators better label products with the chemicals and evaluate the risks the substances may pose to health and the environment.

The federal government has not gone far enough to protect consumers from triclosan and triclocarban, antimicrobial chemicals used in toothpaste, soaps, clothing, and building materials, the scientists said. The chemicals can accelerate the development of antibiotic-resistant microbes, disrupt hormonal function, and break down into toxic and potentially carcinogenic substances in the environment. The scientists also questioned whether antimicrobial use is always the solution for keeping disease at bay.

“Customers may think added antimicrobials are a way to reduce infections, but in most products, there is no evidence that they do,” Ted Schettler, science director of the Science and Environmental Health Network, said in a statement.

The Food and Drug Administration published a final rule Sept. 6, 2016—that went into effect one year later—that banned triclosan, triclocarban, and 17 other chemicals for use in antiseptic wash products. But the rule doesn’t go far enough, according to the statement.

The scientists recommended that consumers avoid the use of triclosan, triclocarban, and other antimicrobial chemicals except when there is evidence of a health benefit; use alternative antimicrobials when disinfectants are necessary; and label products containing triclosan, triclocarban, and other antimicrobials. They also called for scientific agencies to evaluate the safety of the chemicals throughout the entire product life cycle.

A spokesman for the American Cleaning Institute, whose members make products with the antimicrobials, called the statement outdated and said it doesn’t reflect the current science and regulation of the chemicals.

“Consumers can continue to use these products with confidence,” Brian Sansoni, ACI’s vice president of sustainability initiatives told Bloomberg BNA in an email. Manufacturers of antibacterial soaps began phasing out use of triclosan and triclocarban years before the FDA’s final rule. Soap makers are using other antibacterial ingredients and submitting safety and efficacy data to the FDA, Sansoni said.

The [Florence Statement on Triclosan and Triclocarban](#), a consensus agreement signed at the 36th International Symposium on Halogenated Persistent Organic Pollutants in Florence, Italy, was published June 20 in the journal *Environmental Health Perspectives*.

Zinke Tells Senator Methane Waste Rule Will Follow Law

Posted June 20, 2017, 01:40 P.M. ET

By [Alan Kovski](#)

The BLM skirted the law when it halted parts of a rule to waste of methane by oil and gas companies, a Democratic senator said. But Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke assured a Senate committee June 20 that the public will have its chance to participate in the formulation of new regulations governing the venting, flaring, and leaking of natural gas. Zinke was responding to questions from Sen. Maria Cantwell (D-Wash.), who suggested the Bureau of Land Management was cutting the public out of the picture when the agency suspended parts of a rule written to reduce the waste of methane by oil and gas companies operating on federal and Indian lands. She had led a Senate fight to defend the rule.

The revamp of the rule will follow obligations for public notice and comment as the BLM tries to devise a more pragmatic rule, Zinke said during a hearing of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee.

EU Chemicals Agency Tightens Restrictions on Phthalates

Posted June 20, 2017, 01:08 P.M. ET

By [Stephen Gardner](#)

A European Chemicals Agency committee adopted an opinion in favor of a wide-ranging restriction under the European Union's REACH law, which would have the effect of largely prohibiting four hazardous phthalates from consumer products sold in the bloc.

The phthalates that would be affected by the ban and the restriction are benzyl butyl phthalate (BBP), bis(2-ethylhexyl) phthalate (DEHP), dibutyl phthalate (DBP) and diisobutyl phthalate (DIBP).

Use of the four phthalates has been banned in the EU since 2015 under REACH (Regulation No. 1907/2006 on the registration, evaluation, and authorization of chemicals) on the basis that the substances are toxic to reproduction, ECHA's Socio-Economic Analysis Committee said June 20. Under REACH, companies can obtain specific continued-use authorizations for the phthalates if they can prove there are no viable alternatives and the substances can be used safely.

The REACH restriction would reinforce the substance ban by prohibiting on the EU market consumer products that contain the phthalates in a concentration greater than 0.1 percent by weight. The phthalates are used as plasticizers and the restriction would potentially affect a range of imported items made from, or that contain, soft plastic, such as vinyl flooring, cables, footwear, and office equipment. Some specialized uses, such as in laboratory equipment, would be exempted from the restriction.

Following the committee's opinion on the phthalates, the European Commission, the EU's executive arm, will adopt a formal decision on the restriction. The restriction will come into force three years after the commission's decision is finalized.

Pipeline Agency Says It Won't Enforce Obama Gas Storage Regs

Posted June 20, 2017, 01:07 P.M. ET

By [Ari Natter](#)

Regulations for natural gas storage sites put in place after the Aliso Canyon natural gas leak won't be enforced, PHMSA announces.

The pipeline regulator says enforcement halted "in the interim, and for one year after the publication of a final rule," after receiving a petition for reconsideration of interim rules put in place in December.

The rule revised safety regulations related to well integrity, well-bore tubing and casing. It also codified industry recommended practices related to design and functional integrity.

The leak at Sempra Energy subsidiary resulted in the release of 4.62b cubic feet of natural gas, or the carbon-dioxide equivalent of 500,000 passenger cars driven for 1 year, according to the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration.

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Brazil Bank Approves \$312 Million in Loans for Wind Farms

Posted June 20, 2017, 01:04 P.M. ET

By [Michael Kepp](#)

The Brazilian Development Bank approved 1.04 billion reais (\$312 million) in low-cost financing for three utilities to develop wind complexes that will generate enough energy to power 700,000 homes.

The developers are EDF of France, Enel S.p.A. of Italy, and a local developer co-owned by Brazilian mining giant Vale SA, the bank announced June 19.

The bank approved a loan of 486.4 million reais to EDF for a 116.6 megawatt wind complex and 307.8 million reais to Enel for a 96 megawatt wind complex, both in northeastern Bahia state. It also approved a loan of 243.5 million reais for a 98.7 megawatt wind complex in northeastern Ceara state that will be undertaken by Alianca, a Brazilian energy company co-owned by Vale SA and Cemig.

The development bank has approved a total of 2.48 billion reais in financing for wind energy projects this year, a spokeswoman for the bank told Bloomberg BNA June 19.

Wind power is expected to account for 6.6 percent of Brazil's electricity mix in 2017, up from 5.4 percent in 2016, according a division of the Mines and Energy Ministry.

Court Upholds Plant Performance Rule in Largest U.S. Power Grid

Posted June 20, 2017, 12:49 P.M. ET

By [Stephen Cunningham](#)

A U.S. appeals court found that the power plant performance standard in PJM Interconnection's annual forward capacity auction is proper, according to a recent opinion.

In June 2015, FERC approved more stringent performance rules for generators competing in annual forward capacity auction held by PJM to address reliability concerns.

Generators that provide supplies during peak-demand periods receive higher payouts, while they're penalized for failing to meet commitments.

The legal challenge was pursued by the Natural Resources Defense Council, Sierra Club, American Public Power Association, and the Advanced Energy Management Alliance (Advanced Energy Mgt. v. FERC, D.C. Cir., No. 16-1234, 6/20/17).

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Trump's Emergency Manager Earns Support of Climate Advocates

Posted June 20, 2017, 12:34 P.M. ET

By Christopher Flavelle

Brock Long was cleared by the Senate to become President Donald Trump's emergency-management director June 20 after gaining the support of one unlikely constituency: environmentalists.

While climate advocates panned Trump's selections to head the Environmental Protection Agency and Energy Department, they expressed optimism that Long, Alabama's former emergency manager, would seek to protect Americans from the increased risks of hurricanes, flood and heat waves linked to global warming.

Long was confirmed by a 95-4 vote.

"He is a rare Trump appointee who is a well-known professional in the field in which he was appointed," said Eli Lehrer, president of The R Street Institute, a Washington research group that promotes market-based solutions to climate change. "Every part of his reputation suggests he'll take a careful, deliberate, technocratic approach to the job."

Environmentalists' view of Long's nomination stands in contrast to their response to other Trump appointees. In March, as the vote on Scott Pruitt to lead the EPA was headed to the Senate, environmental groups sent senators a letter arguing his confirmation would be a disaster "for every person in the United States who drinks water or breathes air."

The pick of Rick Perry as Energy secretary was mocked because he had campaigned in the 2012 presidential race on the idea of eliminating the Energy Department and argued in his 2010 book "Fed Up!" that the Earth was in a "cooling trend."

Continuity Signaled

While Pruitt and Perry pledged to reverse Obama-era climate and clean-energy efforts, Long has signaled more continuity for the Federal Emergency Management Agency, or FEMA.

Preparing for storms, floods and other extreme weather is "the cornerstone of emergency management," Long testified June 7. "If we ultimately want to reduce costs in the future for disasters, we have to do more mitigation."

Environmentalists cite two reasons for their optimism that Long will take climate risks seriously.

First, they point to Long's previous experience in Alabama, one of the states most exposed to hurricanes, floods and other types of extreme weather.

Second, Long's testimony during his Senate confirmation hearing this month suggested he will continue efforts started under President Barack Obama to better prepare for floods and storms before they happen. Long told senators that he'll work to make the country more resilient and hinted that he will push back on Trump's proposed cuts to flood mapping and other programs intended to reduce communities' vulnerability to disasters.

"He spoke to the importance of trying to reduce risk on the front end," said Shana Udvardy, a climate-preparedness expert at the Union of Concerned Scientists. "He could be a good advocate when it comes to the president's budget."

Others noted that despite his experience, the emergency management job will be challenging. Trump has called climate change a hoax, pulled out of the Paris climate agreement, and rolled back rules that reduce emissions.

Long will have to persuade his colleagues in the administration that preparing for worsening storms should nonetheless remain a priority. During his confirmation hearing, he avoided mentioning climate change, even as he said preparations for storms and floods must improve.

"That could put him in a tough spot," said Rob Moore, senior policy analyst at the Natural Resources Defense Council.

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Lyon Group Plans \$501 Million Australia Solar, Storage Project

Posted June 20, 2017, 8:01 A.M. ET

By Perry Williams

Lyon Group will build a A\$660 million (\$501 million) solar and battery storage project in the Nowingi district of Victoria by January 2018 combining a 250-megawatt solar-power station with 160 megawatt-hours of storage, according to a June 20 statement.

The private-equity backed company has also launched a tender to retailers, generators and large power users to bid for up to 640 megawatt-hours of storage capacity across Nowingi and two other projects in South Australia and Queensland. It hopes contracts will be finalized by October.

Separately, the company's already-announced A\$1 billion solar and battery storage project in the Riverland region of South Australia is scheduled to be built by the end of the year while a A\$200 million Cape York development in Queensland is on track for the first quarter of 2018.

"Projects like these are the heart of Australia's energy transition, allowing for substantially higher levels of variable, low emissions generation while strengthening the resilience of the system," Lyon Group partner David Green said.

The Finkel Review into Australia's future energy mix released last month recommended consumers should be rewarded for cutting electricity consumption and using power from sources including rooftop solar and battery storage systems.

The Nowingi solar facility will have 2.3 million solar panels, while the storage system would deliver power on demand through 1.1 million batteries.

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NYC Planners with Sandy Nightmares Say Barrier May Come Too Late

Posted June 20, 2017, 7:42 A.M. ET

By [Henry Goldman](#)

The warming Atlantic Ocean has raised the risk of another Hurricane Sandy. And still, trillions of dollars of real estate and infrastructure near the shores of New York City and northern New Jersey remain vulnerable to devastation.

A storm-surge barrier similar to those in Louisiana and parts of Europe might protect the area, but politicians have questioned its \$30 billion cost, effectiveness and environmental impact. A group of scientists, planners and property owners is urging the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to accelerate its study of the project. It may take another hurricane to speed up the process.

“The danger is increasing as the sea level rises,” said Malcolm Bowman, an oceanographer at the State University of New York at Stony Brook, who is among the group. “It won’t take a monster storm like Sandy to devastate the region.”

Bowman warned of a catastrophic storm as far back as 2005, in a [New York Times Op-Ed article](#). Seven years later, Sandy struck the region, flooding airports and tunnels and ravaging shore communities from Atlantic City, New Jersey, to Bridgeport, Connecticut. It caused \$68.9 billion in damage, making it the second-costliest storm in U.S. history after Katrina, [according to](#) the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

Water Wars

Bowman’s group is pushing for an evaluation of a 5-mile (8-kilometer) retractable storm-surge barrier at the mouth of New York Harbor from the Rockaways to New Jersey’s Sandy Hook. That, and another smaller structure at the western edge of Long Island Sound, could protect about 800 miles of shoreline from Port Elizabeth, New Jersey, to the Bronx, Bowman says.

As Bowman describes it, before a major storm, barriers would rise from the seabed or close in a gate-like structure to deflect the force of a wind-blown surge, as occurred with Sandy.

“You have to allow for marine traffic and the daily flow of the tides to flush out the harbor,” Bowman said, “But when a storm is forecast with enough wind at high tide to create a surge, you close the gates or raise it from the seabed so water that wants to flow into the harbor can’t.”

Studying Studies

Weeks after Sandy, New York Governor Andrew Cuomo said his administration planned to talk with city and federal officials about the possibility of installing storm-surge barriers. Corps engineers, in discussions with New York and New Jersey since last August, are still studying what protection strategies merit further study.

“At this point, it is premature to say whether broad-scale solutions such as that advocated by this group, or other more regional or localized potential solutions will fare best,” said Corps spokesman Hector Mosley.

Piecemeal Jobs

In the meantime, the state has moved ahead with a \$616 million plan for Staten Island that includes a boardwalk promenade that would double as a storm-surge bulwark. The Corps has that project scheduled for completion in 2022, paid mostly by the federal government.

Billions more in federal, state and city funds are being spent along shore areas, enhancing dunes and berms on beaches, cultivating wetlands, building walls and awarding subsidies for waterproofing homes and office buildings. City officials also envision a mostly-U.S. funded \$816 million horseshoe-shaped elevated park wrapped along the southern half of Manhattan, dubbed “[The Big U](#),” to keep out the Hudson and East Rivers.

Such localized approaches may work as well or better than a mega-project, said Jainey Bavishi, Mayor Bill de Blasio’s director of the Office of Recovery and Resiliency. Her concerns about a storm barrier include cost and construction time; possible environmental impact; and whether it would leave densely populated areas of Long Island and New Jersey vulnerable, and perhaps even more exposed to flooding from displaced water.

“A harbor barrier is not the silver bullet,” Bavishi said.

Sea Life

Many of these issues have been solved with barriers that protect low-lying populations around the world, said Robert Yaro, former president of New York’s Regional Plan Association. Its retractable feature would allow for marine traffic and tidal flow, minimizing impact to sea life and water quality, he said. The technology holds the promise of protecting the region from catastrophic floods for the next 150 years, Yaro said.

“The Dutch have used this engineering for decades and barriers currently protect New Orleans, Stamford, Providence, London and St. Petersburg, Russia,” Yaro said. “We in New York are far behind and among the cities on Earth we have the most to lose.”

Yaro and Bowman were among several advocates promoting the idea last month at an [all-day conference](#) in lower Manhattan attended by 250 municipal bond investors, real estate developers, business owners, insurance companies, and planners.

Lessons Learned

They heard Andrew Kopplin, former director of the Louisiana Recovery Authority, describe how in New Orleans after Katrina, a bipartisan coalition of elected officials and business leaders persuaded Congress to approve a \$14.5 billion system of levees and a [storm-surge barrier](#). The barrier, a 1.8-mile array of gates, protected the city from Hurricane Isaac’s landfall in 2012, said Kopplin, now president and chief executive officer of the Greater New Orleans Foundation, a non-profit charitable civic group.

“It was simply a matter of political will,” he said.

Officials in the Cuomo and de Blasio administrations say they await the Corps' findings.

"We clearly want to see the New York Harbor barrier studied," said James Tierney, Cuomo's deputy environmental commissioner for water resources. "The process requires a full-blown feasibility study. The Army Corps process is what we have to live with."

Next Storm

Marco Pasanella, 54, who lives above his gourmet wine shop on lower Manhattan's South Street that got flooded when Sandy hit, says the pace and scope of government response has been disappointing.

He's says he's seen no measures that would protect his neighborhood if another storm hit. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration has predicted as many as 17 tropical storms, about five more than average, may hit the Atlantic coast this year.

"The decisions have Balkanized the neighborhoods with a piecemeal approach, just a series of uneven, irregular blockades that will not stop the water from finding its way ashore," Pasanella said.

Across Manhattan at Chelsea Piers, a recreational facility situated over the Hudson, Michael Braito, the property's chief engineer, said neighborhood protections won't be enough to stop storm-surge water coursing through his building.

"These piecemeal fixes buy little more than peace of mind," Braito said. "It's like a boat with 100 holes and we've patched half of them and we're going to sink. They need to think bigger."

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Green Groups Critical Ahead of Trump Power Grid Report

Posted June 20, 2017, 7:26 A.M. ET

By [Patrick Martin](#) and [Ari Natter](#)

Critics aren't waiting for opening night to pan a Trump administration study on the U.S. power grid they believe will demonize renewable energy while promoting coal and nuclear generation.

The report, ordered up by Energy Secretary Rick Perry and expected this month, will examine whether policies that favor wind and solar energy are accelerating the retirement of coal and nuclear plants needed to ensure reliable power supplies, according to an April 14 memo obtained by Bloomberg News. A coalition of green energy groups released a report in support of renewables on June 20.

Since taking office, President Donald Trump has reversed policies enacted by Barack Obama that helped solar and wind developers, even as a glut of cheap natural gas from shale continues to pressure coal-fired power generators out of business. Critics fear Perry's report will take on the talking points of fossil fuel producers and muffle science-backed programs that endorse renewable power.

"A report that comes out that supports the conclusion that baseload generation is needed for a

reliable grid and that renewables and certain policies are leading toward deterioration of reliability is problematic for a number of reasons,” said Arvin Ganesan, vice president of federal policy at Advanced Energy Economy, a group that promotes clean energy.

Perry’s study on electricity markets and reliability will cover power markets and “critical issues central to protecting the long-term reliability of the electric grid,” according to the April memo.

In a preemptive strike, Advanced Energy Economy and other green energy groups released a separate study June 20 showing that market forces such as new technologies and the emergence of shale gas are behind coal and nuclear plant retirements, not policies supporting renewable energy.

“All we have to go on is the public comments,” Ganesan said in an interview. “We’re putting this out in advance of a report coming out to try and inform the conclusions the report might make.”

Tom Pyle, who led Trump’s Energy Department transition team, called the backlash over Perry’s report overblown.

“I think it’s perfectly fitting for an incoming secretary to want to get a perspective on these issues in hopes there is a role for the department to ensure we don’t have trouble keeping the lights on,” Pyle, president of the American Energy Alliance, a conservative, fossil fuel-oriented advocacy group, said in an interview. “It feels like a coordinated attack on a study that was largely designed to be instructive.”

Affordable Energy

And while the report could recommend changes to the Federal Power Act, which directs how generators are dispatched during emergencies, major changes to energy legislation are unlikely, said Jeff Navin, acting chief of staff for Ernest Moniz, Obama’s energy secretary.

“Using that law to “to favor one source of generation over another would certainly be unprecedented, and it certainly won’t hold up in court,” Navin said, in an interview.

Charles E. Jones, chief executive officer of coal and nuclear operator First Energy Corp., told analysts on an April earnings call that the Akron, Ohio-based company may delay a bankruptcy filing for one of its units until the study is released.

Fossil Fuels

“I am pleased the Trump Administration and Secretary Perry recognize the importance of fuel diversity in maintaining clean, reliable and affordable supplies of electricity,” Jones said in a statement provided to Bloomberg.

Howard Crystal, a senior attorney [Center for Biological Diversity](#), said that assumptions in the April memo may translate into recommendations that support fossil fuel generation. The memo notes that coal and nuclear baseload generation are in decline, a trend that may create reliability issues.

“This grid study is a veiled attempt by the Trump administration to keep dirty and dying power plants on life support by demonizing renewable energy,” Crystal said in a June 14 statement. “It’s very possible that big polluters had a direct hand in developing the study.”

The American Wind Energy Association co-funded the study from the Analysis Group, a consultant with expertise in energy that serves clients including energy producers, suppliers, consumers and tribal governments.

--With assistance from Mark Chediak.

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