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Daily Environment Report

Afternoon Briefing - Your Preview of Today's News

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Cities Chafe at Clean Water Rules for L.A.'s Concrete River

Posted September 25, 2017, 02:09 P.M. ET

By [Amena H. Saiyid](#)

The L.A. River may be the perfect setting for Hollywood-style car chases, but it's not your typical river and shouldn't be treated like one under the law, a group of Southern California municipalities say.

They want the federal government to exclude the concrete-lined Los Angeles River and its paved tributaries from Clean Water Act requirements under an upcoming regulation, a move they say could save them from spending billions of dollars on stormwater controls.

City officials from the San Gabriel Valley Council of Governments say the river and its tributaries shouldn't be subject to the Trump administration's upcoming rewrite of the "Waters of the U.S." rule, which defines the scope of federal protections for wetlands and certain isolated or ephemeral waters. They argue they aren't "relatively permanent" flowing waters due to the seasonality of storms, don't support fish or vegetation, and aren't freely accessible to the public.

Sheila Kuehl, member of the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors, however, said she opposes efforts to exclude the river from Clean Water Act protections.

"While we might save some money in the short run by reducing the important protections of the Clean Water Act, we would certainly pay later in increased medical costs for Angelenos sickened by polluted waterways, as well as a loss of tourism dollars as fewer people flocked to LA's famous beaches, lakes and rivers," she told Bloomberg BNA Sept. 25 by email.

"LA County deserves clean healthy ecosystems," she wrote. "I will not support any request to exclude a portion of the LA River and its paved tributaries simply in order to avoid our obligations under the Clean Water Act. "

Environmentalists say they will sue to block such a redesignation and want to ensure the law's

requirements apply. Waterways or wetlands classified as waters of the U.S. are subject to Clean Water Act programs and permitting requirements, including those for stormwater.

\$6 Billion Price Tag

That means any of the 88 municipalities in Los Angeles County that discharge stormwater to the L.A. River must get a permit. Compliance with this permit means about \$6 billion in spending on infrastructure for the San Gabriel Valley Council of Governments to capture stormwater.

It also means monitoring for more than 500 pollutants, constructing recharge basins under parks and parking lots, and installing other green infrastructure methods—such as permeable pavements, rain barrels, and strategically planted vegetation and wetlands—to capture stormwater runoff.

The officials made their pitch to exclude the L.A. channel at a Sept. 19 listening session with the Environmental Protection Agency and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, which have started rewriting the Obama-era 2015 Clean Water Rule.

In 2010, the EPA designated the 51-mile stretch of the mostly concrete-lined Los Angeles River a traditional navigable water on par with the Potomac, Colorado, and Mississippi rivers. That designation triggered the Clean Water Act protections for the river. The river often acts as a drainage ditch for stormwater, a major source of pollution in urban waterways, especially in Los Angeles.

Los Angeles County has been defending its stormwater permit from challenges by environmental groups, including the Natural Resources Defense Council, since 2008 on grounds that the controls within the permit aren't preventing toxic pollutants, debris, and other chemicals from entering its waterways.

The currently stayed 2015 water rule (RIN:2040-AF30), which the Trump administration vowed to rescind and rewrite, excluded stormwater collection systems on dry land, but was silent on their status when flood control channels are an integral part of a waterbody like the Los Angeles River.

Scalia-Inspired Rewrite Underway

The agencies under President Donald Trump's directive are rewriting the rule, using as its basis the late U.S. Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia's 2006 plurality opinion in Rapanos v. United States.

That opinion said waters with relatively permanent flow should be considered jurisdictional "as opposed to ordinarily dry channels through which water occasionally or intermittently flows," such as dry arroyos in Phoenix and the Los Angeles River, according to these city officials.

The EPA and the Corps have indicated they are considering three options for defining waters with "relatively permanent" flows. These would include streams that:

- flow continuously,
- flow continuously along with those that flow at least three months a year; or
- flow continuously along with those that can be considered such, based on their flow, frequency, or connectivity to physical, biological, and chemical features.

“We would like the EPA to critically look at any and all cement sections of all rivers and tributaries in the Los Angeles area and reconsider WOTUS jurisdiction in light of some of the arguments we have made,” Eric Wolf, senior management analyst for the San Gabriel Valley Council of Governments, told Bloomberg BNA in a Sept. 21 email following the public forum.

The storm drains underlying the cities, including South Pasadena, that make up the San Gabriel Valley Council empty into boxed channels that lead into the concrete-lined Los Angeles River, where the flow is controlled by the Los Angeles Flood Control District.

“It makes no sense to apply water quality objectives to an engineered channel,” Diana Mahmud, South Pasadena’s council member and chair of the San Gabriel Valley Council of Government’s water policy committee, told the EPA and the Corps.

Wolf said the river still will be protected under California law. The Golden State also is in the process of revising its definition of what waters would be protected under state law just in case the rewritten WOTUS rule doesn’t protect them.

While aware of the cities’ requests, the board of supervisors for Los Angeles County—which includes the cities that fall within the San Gabriel Valley Council of Governments—hasn’t taken a position, county spokesman Kerjon Lee told Bloomberg BNA.

“This comment and all other comments received during these webinars are informing the thinking of the Army and the EPA as we work to develop a proposed rule for public comment,” an EPA spokeswoman told Bloomberg BNA.

Water Status Mired in Debate

The agency added that it was typical for the agency to receive requests to reconsider the jurisdictional status of waters.

However, Lowell Rothschild, a Clean Water Act attorney in the Austin offices of Bracewell LLP, told Bloomberg BNA that the jurisdictional status of the Los Angeles River and its tributaries has dogged the EPA.

“The question is what would the eventual rule look like and how would the Los Angeles River fare under it,” Rothschild told Bloomberg BNA in a Sept. 21 telephone interview.

He said the Scalia opinion would restrict jurisdictional reach based on flow. To the extent the Trump administration proposes a rule based on flow, it’s very possible a river like the Los Angeles River—and possibly other water bodies that flow intermittently in the arid West—could be viewed as nonjurisdictional, Rothschild said.

“Clearly, the president would prefer a rule that excludes waters like the Los Angeles River that flow intermittently,” he said

WOTUS Can’t Overturn Designation

Unlike Rothschild, Sean Hecht, an environmental law professor with University of California-Los Angeles, said the 2010 designation of the L.A. River cannot be overturned by the water rule for several reasons.

A redesignation, he said, would require a rulemaking other than a WOTUS rule rewrite, just as it did in 2010. More importantly, a redesignation of the L.A. River wouldn't change the fact that municipal stormwater will still be regulated under a federal permit because it is being discharged into the Pacific Ocean, which is jurisdictional because it in fact supports navigation, he said.

Hecht also dismissed the cities' claim about the river's seasonal flows, saying the EPA's own analysis showed that there are year-round flows.

The NRDC would oppose any attempt to exclude the L.A. River from Clean Water Act protections, Steve Fleischli, the council's water program director, told Bloomberg BNA.

Fleischli said the cities are trying to skirt their obligations to meet stormwater requirements.

"We will take legal action if [the cities] roll back protections for the river," Fleischli said.

—With assistance from Carolyn Whetzel in Los Angeles

Exxon Touts New Methane Efforts As EPA Pushes Rule Delay

Posted September 25, 2017, 12:48 P.M. ET

By [Abby Smith](#)

ExxonMobil Corp. announced new efforts to reduce methane emissions from its facilities, even as the EPA seeks to delay Obama-era pollution limits for new drilling operations in the oil and natural gas sector.

Some environmentalists are hailing ExxonMobil's new program as "real leadership" in a landscape where the Trump administration is working to broadly roll back federal requirements on the oil and gas industry to reduce methane emissions.

The oil and gas giant today announced an "enhanced" program for detection and repair of methane leaks at natural gas facilities operated by its subsidiary XTO Energy Inc. The program includes a commitment to phase out within three years high-emitting devices. It also includes a commitment to personnel training and research initiatives.

"At a time when others are trying to claw back basic protections and make excuses for inaction, this kind of company responsiveness to local community, investor, and advocate concerns is refreshing," Mark Brownstein, vice president in the climate and energy program of the Environmental Defense Fund, said in a statement.

Exxon's announcement comes after the Environmental Protection Agency Sept. 22 sent to the White House its final versions of rules to delay—for at least two years—key requirements of Obama-era methane limits. Many industry trade groups, including the American Petroleum Institute, which represents ExxonMobil, strongly support the delay.

Water Monitoring Workload Rises with Pesticides, Contaminants

Posted September 25, 2017, 12:06 P.M. ET

By [Tiffany Stecker](#)

A decade ago, the U.S. Geological Survey tested the nation's streams and aquifers for 83 different pesticides. Today, that number has nearly tripled: 225 pesticides and their byproducts.

Twenty years ago, the environmental research arm of the U.S. government didn't test for pharmaceuticals in water. Today it's a relatively common practice. So is testing for cyanobacteria, a blue-green algae that forms as a result of excessive nitrogen and phosphorus in the water.

These "emerging contaminants" have stressed the workload of USGS's National Water Quality Assessment Program (NAWQA), which collects trend data over decades on contaminants in the nation's streams and wells, as resources remain stagnant.

NAWQA's budget has wavered between \$55 million and \$65 million since 2008. USGS's overall spending has hovered above the \$1 billion mark since that year, and the recently passed appropriations bill in the House would keep funding relatively level, further challenging the service's ability to track trends even as new analytical techniques sharpen monitoring efforts.

Program 'Hasn't Grown in Years'

On the ground, however, scientists said the program's growing demands—and more sophisticated, expensive technology—are putting pressure on scientists and the USGS.

"The program [budget] hasn't grown in years," Jeffrey Fischer, a supervisory hydrologist with USGS's New Jersey Water Science Center, told Bloomberg BNA about his region's work. But NAWQA's analytical needs have grown by leaps and bounds.

USGS is not a regulatory agency, but its science has guided major environmental decisions in the last decade. The agency was among the first to discover traces of methyl tert-butyl ether (MTBE)—a gasoline additive to increase octane and a weak carcinogen—in groundwater nationwide. It also sounded the alarm in 2011 over coal tar-based sealcoat, a viscous liquid used in asphalt that contributes significantly to polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbon (PAH) contamination.

Advanced tracking techniques, like methods that can differentiate the source of mercury deposits from a coal-fired power plant or metal mining, are being deployed. Optical sensors can correlate different wavelengths of light with the levels of dissolved nitrates or algal pigments. The cost is expected to come down eventually, but at this point the purchase and installation of these sensors can run close to \$100,000 per site.

Today, USGS is detecting contaminants, or "constituents," at tiny concentrations. Scientists are not looking for the presence of contaminants alone, but are looking at how those contaminants travel and how long they last in groundwater.

Identifying contaminants at smaller concentrations means scientists are finding more and more compounds in the water.

"We're detecting all these compounds no one knew existed," Fischer said. "Parts per million doesn't mean anything to anyone anymore; it's parts per billion, parts per trillion."

As a result of more sensitive methods of detection, USGS is adding more contaminants to its "schedules," the list of a type of pollutants the agency tests for in streams and wells that undergo the same type of testing.

With inflation, “flat funding translates to a cut,” Tim Williams, deputy executive director for the Water Environment Federation, told Bloomberg BNA. “If the program is not adequately funded, you run the risk of not having a true national monitoring program.”

Wells Closed

On a drizzly September afternoon, Fischer and three other USGS scientists set up a makeshift tent and rudimentary testing equipment to collect samples of groundwater from a 40-foot well near the college town of Glassboro, N.J. When the well was drilled more than 20 years ago, the brick homes and well-manicured lawns in the surrounding areas were rapidly replacing farmers’ fields.

The site is in a coastal plain geologic formation that covers the southern half of New Jersey. It’s part of a network of 30 wells to help USGS track how the rural-to-suburban revolution here affects the water underneath. Today, scientists still find traces of the pesticides sprayed on the vegetables from farmland in the groundwater.

The additional demands have led to the program cutting back on its sampling of wells. In New Jersey, the scientists stopped testing a network of five wells several years ago to accommodate the resource shortfall.

“It does limit your ability somewhat” to analyze trends over time, Fischer said.

Hot-Button Pesticides Hard to Test

Lisa Nowell, a Sacramento, Calif.-based USGS research chemist who studies pesticides in streams, said her field of study is constantly evolving.

“Pesticide use changes,” Nowell told Bloomberg BNA. New pesticides are registered every year, others are taken off the market, and economic and scientific advances dictate how much farmers will use.

The methods for analyzing them also are complicated. Scientists like broad-spectrum methods that can detect several different pesticides in one sample, but some of the most common and hot-button chemicals—like glyphosate, the main ingredient in Monsanto Co.’s Roundup herbicide—are not easily detected in these broad-spectrum tests.

The process to decide which contaminants should be a priority starts with a USGS working group. The group decides which emerging chemicals of products should be of interest to the scientific agency. From there, the scientists whittle down the number based on substances that were previously included in USGS studies or have been identified by other agencies or organizations as being of concern to health or present in the environment.

Limited Resources

One of the issues with NAWQA, Williams added, is it was never authorized by Congress, meaning there’s never any guarantee that it will receive a set level of appropriations year after year until the authorization expires.

Williams spent years climbing the Capitol’s steps to convince lawmakers that USGS’s water programs needed more funding.

“Everybody in Congress...was very supportive of the program, but it was always a challenge to increase funding because of other priorities and what they would characterize as limited resources,” he said.

Partnerships With States

As a result, much of USGS’s work on the ground is partially funded by states and other organizations. The New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection funds a portion of the New Jersey work through USGS’s cooperative program. In exchange, the state uses USGS’s monitoring network for testing water and works with USGS on studies.

These cooperative agreements in state USGS offices have helped the agency survive. But as landscapes change and chemicals come and go, the scientists’ are acutely aware of the need to maintain the continuity of the program.

Fischer looks around at the community near Glassboro, where crop pesticides have been replaced by household fertilizers and weedkillers.

“If you see a nice green lawn,” he said. “There’s probably fertilizers and pesticides around.”

“That’s why we’re here,” his colleague, hydrologist Eric Jacobsen, added.

Ameren to Add \$1 Billion of Wind Farms in the Midwest by 2020

Posted September 25, 2017, 01:34 P.M. ET

By [Brian Eckhouse](#)

Ameren Corp., the St. Louis-based utility holding company, is planning to add about \$1 billion of new wind-power plants by 2020 as part of a broader plan to reduce carbon emissions.

At least 700 megawatts of wind farms will be built in Missouri and neighboring states with U.S.-made turbines, Ameren said in a Sept. 25 statement.

The move comes as the company shifts away from coal-fired power plants and falling prices make wind more competitive.

“Because of significant advancement in technology, harnessing wind is less expensive than other forms of new generation,” Michael Moehn, president of Ameren Missouri, said in the statement.

Wind-turbine prices in the U.S. have fallen to \$830,000 a megawatt, below the global average of almost \$1 million, according to Bloomberg New Energy Finance. Because the company expects to complete the projects by 2020, they will probably qualify for a federal tax credit for wind power, Alex Morgan, a New York-based analyst at BNEF, said in an email Sept. 25.

Ameren Missouri, which is targeting a 35 percent reduction in carbon emissions from 2005 levels by 2030, also plans to add 100 megawatts of solar power over the next 10 years, with 50 megawatts expected online by 2025. The company announced in May plans to build as much as 1 megawatt of solar capacity at St. Louis Lambert International Airport that’s expected to be complete in 2018.

It plans to retire more than half of its coal-fired generating capacity, including the Meramec Energy Center in St. Louis County by the end of 2022.

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U.S., Mexico on Verge of New Colorado River Water Pact

Posted September 25, 2017, 7:02 A.M. ET

By [Tripp Baltz](#)

An agreement amending the longstanding treaty between the U.S. and Mexico on management of the Colorado River will continue the practice of water shortage sharing, but also fund new conservation and environmental programs, and aim to reduce the risk of ruinous drought.

The two nations are tentatively scheduled to execute the agreement—Minute 323, an amendment to a 1944 water treaty—on Sept. 26 in Mexico’s Ciudad Juarez. Minute 323 will govern water flows in the Colorado River and other water management issues by extending an existing binational agreement, Minute 319, which was set to expire at the end of 2017.

The deal shows how both countries consider water important enough to set it apart from tensions that have flared during President Donald Trump’s administration over immigration and building a border wall, Stephen Mumme, professor of political science at Colorado State University, told Bloomberg BNA Sept. 22.

Both sides were interested in continuing Minute 319, which describes the operation of the river system as a partnership between the two countries. The newly negotiated Minute 323 specifically defines reservoir management strategies so Mexico shares in river shortages and surpluses through 2026.

Conservation Funding

In return, Minute 323 will authorize \$31.5 million in U.S. funding—slightly more than half of it from the Bureau of Reclamation—for pilot water programs in Mexico that would generate some 229,100 acre-feet of conservation. About 70,000 acre-feet of the conserved amount is designated for environmental purposes in Mexico, about 50,000 acre-feet will benefit the Colorado River system, and 27,275 acre-feet each will be assigned to four U.S. partner agencies.

The average U.S. household uses about one-half an acre foot of water per year.

The agreement also will allow Mexico to continue to store water in Lake Mead, the storage reservoir for the three Lower Colorado River Basin states of Arizona, California and Nevada, according to the Imperial Irrigation District, one of the four domestic water districts involved in the negotiations.

It also will provide for a potentially larger drought response partnership with water users through the Colorado River basin states drought contingency plan and Mexico’s binational water scarcity contingency plan, the district said.

Conservation, Environmental Programs

Additional components of the deal include binational cooperative conservation projects,

environmental programs, salinity management efforts and the opportunity for additional conservation and desalination projects in Mexico, the district said.

The two national governments are expected to make the signed agreement public Sept. 27. Until then an embargo by the State Department precludes the U.S. Section of the International Boundary and Water Commission from providing additional details, Lori Kuczanski, spokeswoman for the section, told Bloomberg BNA.

She said the commission, the agency that applies the boundary and water treaties of the U.S. and Mexico and settles disputes that arise in their application, was working to get all domestic approvals signed. "We're very, very close," she said.

U.S. Partner Agencies

In addition to the Imperial Irrigation District, the three other partnering U.S. water agencies are the Southern Nevada Water Authority, the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California, and the Central Arizona Water Conservation District. The IID Board approved its domestic agreements to Minute 323 Sept. 12.

The Colorado River Board of California adopted a resolution Sept. 13 affirming the primary elements of Minute 323 and acknowledging the need for continued board participation in its implementation.

Food Safety Activists Oppose Spraying Washington Oyster Beds

Posted September 25, 2017, 02:43 P.M. ET

By [Paul Shukovsky](#)

Shellfish growers in Washington's [Willapa Bay](#) and nearby Gray's Harbor are facing opposition from food activists and environmentalists over their proposal to spray a pesticide on tideflats to prevent losing up to 80 percent of their harvest. The growers are seeking a permit to spray imidacloprid, a neonicotinoid, on tideflats to control oyster pests called burrowing shrimp, which disrupt the muddy habitat and cause oysters to sink and suffocate. Use of the pesticide in Willapa Bay—where a mix of salt marsh, muddy tidelands, and freshwater wetlands provide habitat for over 200 bird species—stokes concerns among environmentalists that the chemical will kill a variety of insects and crustaceans that the birds and fish, such as salmon, rely upon for sustenance. The bay is the source of some 25 percent of the nation's oysters.

"This neurotoxin will kill all the invertebrates that it touches," Center for Food Safety staff attorney Amy van Saun told Bloomberg BNA Sept. 21. "We think there needs to be an option for the oyster growers that doesn't involve a neurotoxin, especially on food that we are going to be eating."

The center and other environmental and conservation organizations plan to submit comments on a draft [supplemental environmental impact statement](#) now under consideration by the Washington State Department of Ecology. Agency spokeswoman Jessica Payne said the document could lead to the issuance of a permit to spray by the end of the year.

The state so far has not proposed any action or decided whether it will issue a state waste discharge permit under the National Pollution Discharge Elimination System to allow the spraying, Payne told Bloomberg BNA Sept. 21.

Breaks Down Rapidly

The growers assert they will be using very small amounts of the pesticide, which then breaks down rapidly. "The amount of imidacloprid the growers will be using is not potent enough to kill burrowing shrimp or most non-target species," said Amalia Walton, an attorney with the Seattle office of Miller Nash Graham & Dunn, who represents some 20 growers. The treatment works by immobilizing the ghost shrimp in their burrows, which eventually collapse, smothering the shrimp, she said in a Sept. 21 email.

The "amount of imidacloprid used breaks down in as little as 24 hours, and oysters would only be planted on the beds long after the compound has dissipated," Walton said. Most individual beds would be treated only once every four or five years, she said.

This is the second time the growers have sought to use imidacloprid. An environmental analysis in 2015 led the Department of Ecology to issue a permit to spray, but the growers asked to withdraw the permit after there was widespread negative media coverage and "very notable chefs in the Seattle area said they would not serve oysters out of the Willapa Bay area," Payne said.

Head of Pesticide Trade Group to Step Down

Posted September 25, 2017, 03:52 P.M. ET

By [Tiffany Stecker](#)

The CEO of the largest trade association for pesticides is stepping down next year.

Jay Vroom, who helmed CropLife America for nearly 30 years, announced his retirement at the organization's annual meeting Sept. 25. His last day will be near the end of 2018, CLA spokeswoman Genevieve O'Sullivan told Bloomberg BNA.

"I cannot begin to express in words all the pride and gratitude I have for the many friends, co-workers and professional allies I have had the privilege to work with at CLA and in my earlier career," Vroom told attendees at the meeting in Dana Point, Calif.

CropLife's board of directors includes representatives from Monsanto Co, Dow AgroSciences LLC, BASF, and other major pesticide manufacturers.

Vroom began his career at CLA in 1988. He has represented the organization through five farm bills, the 1996 Food Quality Protection Act that required health-based standards for pesticides in food, and the more recent application of the Endangered Species Act to the pesticide registration process.

He said he plans to stay involved in agricultural issues after retirement and to spend time on his farm in Illinois.

Funding Tesla Ticks Off Automakers Needing Electric Car Credits

Posted September 25, 2017, 7:16 A.M. ET

By [John Lippert](#) and [Ryan Beene](#)

Tesla Inc. has generated nearly \$1 billion in revenue the last five years from an unlikely source:

Rival automakers. Needless to say, the other companies aren't happy.

California requires that automakers sell electric and other non-polluting vehicles in proportion to their market share. If the manufacturers don't sell enough of them, they have to purchase credits from competitors to make up the difference. Tesla, which exclusively sells battery-powered models, sold \$302.3 million in regulatory credits last year alone.

"It really makes them mad that Tesla got so much of a boost out of being the only purely electric car manufacturer out there," Mary Nichols, the chair of the California Air Resources Board, said in an interview Sept. 22 at Bloomberg's headquarters in New York. "In effect, they helped to finance this upstart company which now has all the glamour."

China and the European Union -- two of the world's biggest auto markets -- are considering mandates and credit systems similar to California's. For all the flack the state has taken from traditional carmakers for how its benefited Tesla, Chief Executive Officer Elon Musk has also been a critic.

Musk, 46, last year said the Air Resources Board was being "incredibly weak" and called its standards "pathetically low." Rules should be tougher and the credits should be worth more, according to the CEO.

"Nobody's happy," Nichols said. "That's my mantra."

--With assistance from Dana Hull.

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German Coal May Be Another Loser as Merkel Pushed Toward Greens

Posted September 25, 2017, 8:19 A.M. ET

By [Brian Parkin](#) and [Mathew Carr](#)

Coal's future in Europe's biggest economy may take center stage when German Chancellor Angela Merkel tries to form a new government after losing support in national elections.

Voters weary with Germany's so-called Grand Coalition between Merkel's Christian Democratic-bloc and the Social Democratic Party cast their ballots elsewhere. While Merkel still came out atop Sunday's poll, her potential partners in a new government narrowed to the Green Party and Free Democrats, both of which have different outlooks for coal.

"What's sure is that campaign pledges on climate protection and a faster phase-out of coal power are not negotiable," said Oliver Krischer, the deputy parliamentary chairman for the Green Party, in a phone interview on Sept. 22.

The Greens were the main force behind the introduction of clean power subsidies the last time they were in the national government from 1998 to 2005. On Sept. 24 they won 9 percent of the vote and could return to power by joining forces with Merkel's bloc and the FDP. Social Democrats have ruled themselves out of government after their worst result since 1949.

Still, energy and environment policy differences will make negotiations for a coalition government

“difficult,” according to a Barclays research note on Sept. 22, which cited opposition among Merkel’s supporters to shuttering coal plants. The FDP campaigned on economic competitiveness being paramount in energy policy.

High Hurdles

“Very high policy hurdles separate us from the Greens -- not just on energy,” said Frank Schaeffler, who’s seeking a return to parliament for the Free Democrats as a finance spokesman, in an interview late Sept 24. “The divisions are not insurmountable but each party has its red lines -- the challenge will be to see just how robust those lines really are.”

Both the Greens and the FDP expect invitations to enter exploratory coalition talks with Merkel, in a process that could take weeks or months before a new government emerges.

The Greens want to shape climate policy in government “but not at any price,” Krischer said.

Hard coal and lignite plants generated about 40 percent of all Germany’s power last year and about a third of all its carbon dioxide pollution. During the election campaign, Merkel eschewed any talk on a phase-out date for coal.

The Greens campaigned to end coal power by 2030 -- a step already envisaged by city states like Berlin. They also want to shut 20 of the most polluting coal plants by 2020 to help the nation meet its carbon dioxide reduction targets.

Efforts to cut emissions have faltered in Germany, despite the highest rate of renewable energy use in Europe. Persistent coal use means Germany is set to reduce carbon dioxide as much as 31 percent by 2020 rather than the 40 percent it targeted, according to Berlin-based environmental think tank Agora Energiewende.

“We will find ways to achieve our 40 percent target by 2020 -- that I can promise you,” said Merkel in a Sept. 14 campaign speech that suggested a willingness to cap coal’s future in Germany.

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India’s Modi Starts \$2.5 Billion Plan to Grow Electricity Access

Posted September 25, 2017, 02:17 P.M. ET

By Rajesh Kumar Singh

India’s Prime Minister Narendra Modi unveiled a 163.2 billion-rupees (\$2.5 billion) program to ensure electricity for all households.

The program will help poor people get electricity connections at no cost, Modi said, adding that his government is making efforts to provide power to about 3,000 unelectrified villages. Power Minister R. K. Singh said the nation will aim to complete electrification of all households ahead of a March 2019 deadline.

The announcement comes amid concerns over a slowing economy, which has led the government to consider measures to boost growth. Modi came to power in 2014 with popular promises such as job creation and electricity for all and will be tested on the pledges in 2019, when he faces re-

election.

“Power for all is a very ambitious plan and the prime minister knows the political gains it can bring if he can pull it off,” said Sandeep Shastri, a political analyst and a pro vice chancellor at Jain University in Bengaluru. “So, when he announces schemes to connect all households, beyond a shadow of doubt he has the 2019 elections in mind.”

Nearly 304 million Indians don't have access to electricity, accounting for about a quarter of the global population living without power, according to NITI Aayog, a government think-tank. Several of these are in rural areas, where state power retailers are reluctant to supply electricity as returns fall below the investment made in infrastructure.

—With assistance from Bibhudatta Pradhan.

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Dubai Introduces Incentives to Spur Electric Vehicle Market

Posted September 25, 2017, 01:39 P.M. ET

By Matthew Kalman

Electric-car drivers in Dubai will enjoy free parking, recharging, vehicle registration, and toll exemptions until the end of 2019, the Dubai Supreme Council of Energy announced.

The incentives are designed “to encourage the public use of electric vehicles in Dubai to help protect the environment,” said Mohammed Al Tayer, vice chairman of the energy council and managing director/chief executive officer of the Dubai Electricity and Water Authority.

The move is part of the Dubai Green Mobility initiative to motivate organizations to use more hybrid and electric vehicles to help reduce carbon emissions in ground transportation, which is the second-largest greenhouse gas emitter in Dubai, according to Al Tayer.

Additions to Government Fleet

At least 10 percent of the new cars that Dubai's government institutions buy between 2016 and 2020 will be electric or hybrid, helping to raise the proportion of such vehicles to 2 percent by 2020 and 10 percent by 2030.

“This supports the Dubai Clean Energy Strategy 2050 for Dubai to have the lowest carbon footprint in the world by 2050, and the Dubai Carbon Abatement Strategy to cut carbon emissions by 16 percent by 2021,” Al Tayer added.

Abu Dhabi currently has 100 public electric vehicle charging stations, with 100 more planned in 2018. Electric or hybrid cars are distributed by Tesla, BMW, Renault, and Toyota. The sector grew by 30 percent from 2014 to 2016, Al Tayer said. The incentives could save the average driver commuting daily to Dubai's business district, charging and parking for free and using the Salik toll gates more than 10,000 dirhams (about \$2,722) each year, said Nabeel Alzaka, co-founder and CEO of Surface Mobility Consultants in Dubai.

“There is an appetite for electric vehicles, particularly now that car manufacturers are becoming a

little bit more inventive,” Alzaka said by phone Sept. 24, noting that some electric models, like the BMW i8 now in service with the Dubai police, matched in looks and performance the high-end supercars popular in the Emirates.

“These cars are as fast as Lamborghinis and Ferraris. They are as glitzy and as glamorous,” he said. “The car manufacturers are heading toward providing those fast supercars the Dubai market will want. Will that ever eradicate Ferraris and Lamborghinis? I don’t think so. People will still want to have the gas-guzzlers and the sound of the engines but I think you’ll find people will swap their petrol cars for a nice, shiny, sparkling electric vehicle.”

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