



»» **Federal Air Regulations**

Two new air regulations proposed by the Environmental Protection Agency have states busy analyzing rules, submitting comments and developing plans to comply. In June 2014, the EPA proposed a rule to reduce carbon emissions by 30 percent by 2030. Each state has a different target, with some required to reduce carbon emissions by more than 30 percent, some by less. States can meet their targets through upgrading power plants, switching from coal to natural gas, increasing use of renewable energy sources or improving energy efficiency. States are required to submit individual or multi-state plans by June 2016. States also will be analyzing EPA's new proposal to lower the National Ambient Air Quality Standards for ozone from the current level of 75 parts per billion to a range of 65 to 70 parts per billion. Where the EPA sets the standards will determine how many areas within a state will fall under nonattainment, requiring states to draft state implementation plans to bring those areas back into compliance.

»» **Grid Reliability**

Grid reliability is becoming an increasingly important topic of conversation, especially as new federal regulations cause shifts in the predominant fuels used in America's power supply. Infrastructure is a key component for grid reliability, whether it be building new supply infrastructure like natural gas pipelines, or optimizing and modernizing existing transmission infrastructure in the wake of increasing use of wholesale and consumer-distributed energy. Security of the physical grid components always has been a concern, but with continued efforts to develop a smarter and more automated grid, cybersecurity is becoming increasingly important.

»» **Waters of the United States**

In response to two U.S. Supreme Court cases, the Environmental Protection Agency, along with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers proposed a new rule in April 2014, to clarify and define what waters are protected under the Clean Water Act. The rule clarifies that most seasonal and rain-dependent streams, as well as wetlands near rivers and streams, are protected. The proposed rule acknowledges other waters may have a connection and would be determined on a case-by-case basis. Agriculture and business groups have been adamant that the language in the proposal is too broad, encompassing things like ditches and runoff.

»» **Endangered Species Act**

Conversations about the Endangered Species Act are often localized because a species and the location of its habitat are usually quite specific. Occasionally, a species on the list makes the news because its listing affects industry and jobs—like the Northern spotted owl's impacts on the Oregon timber industry in the 1990s. Environmental groups settled a lawsuit in 2011 with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, which agreed to make a listing determination for 757 species by 2018. The Fish and Wildlife Service in 2015 will decide if the greater sage grouse will be listed as an endangered species. That decision could impact 174 counties in the 11 Western states the bird utilizes as habitat. The grouse's potential listing has drawn attention because of the potential impacts it could have on land uses like mineral extraction and agriculture.

»» **The Use of Science-Based Decision Making**

Policymakers are bombarded by information in today's ever-connected, fast-paced world. Advances in communication platforms, like social media, have brought a sea change in the public's ability to access data at unimaginable depths and speeds. This interconnectedness also can pose challenges for state officials trying to solve already difficult issues by adding another layer of complexity to the public policymaking process. As information becomes more available and immediate, the necessity for policymakers to determine and utilize sound science to make decisions is becoming a vital skill in the realm of policymaking.

For more information on these topics and for additional resources on energy and environmental policy, see » www.csg.org/top5in2015.

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REBEKAH FITZGERALD



THE COUNCIL OF STATE GOVERNMENTS

Rebekah Fitzgerald joined CSG in January 2014 as an associate for the Association of Air Pollution Control Agencies, a CSG affiliate. She moved into her current role as program manager for energy and environmental policy in March 2014. Prior to her work with CSG, Fitzgerald served as the natural resource policy analyst for Wyoming Gov. Matt Mead, serving as a lead staffer for Mead on a variety of energy and environmental policies and projects, including large multimillion-acre federal land management plans, single-site natural gas projects, and wildlife and water studies. Fitzgerald worked with local, state and federal policymakers, as well as constituents and nongovernmental organizations, on a variety of energy and environmental policy issues.

A Wyoming native, Fitzgerald holds a bachelor's degree in political science from Oklahoma Baptist University.

GET INVOLVED »

CSG provides state leaders a variety of regional and national opportunities to actively engage on issues of importance to their jurisdictions and constituents. CSG's regional and national committees and task forces are designed to encourage multi-state problem solving, the sharing of best practices, and networking among state officials and between the public and private sectors.

CSG's Energy and Environmental Policy Task Force is co-chaired this year by Rep. Brad Witt, Oregon and Rep. Pat Garofalo, Minnesota. Over the past two years, the task force has focused on several key issues, including net metering policies, distributed energy sources like wind and solar, and analyzing the EPA's proposed carbon emissions rule.

The committee will hold its next meeting as part of the CSG 2015 Annual Conference, Dec. 10-13, in Nashville, Tenn.

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