

60 Environmental Rules on the Way Out Under Trump

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Since taking office in January [of 2017], President Trump has made eliminating federal regulations a priority. His administration — with help from the Republican majority in Congress — has often targeted environmental rules it sees as overly burdensome to the fossil fuel industry, including major Obama-era policies aimed at fighting climate change. To date, the Trump administration has sought to reverse at least 60 environmental rules, according to a New York Times analysis, based on research from Harvard Law School’s Environmental Regulation Rollback Tracker, Columbia Law School’s Climate Tracker and other sources. The process of rolling back the regulations has not been smooth, in part because the administration has tried to bypass the formal rulemaking process in some cases. On more than one occasion, the administration has tried to roll back a rule by announcing its intent but skipping steps such as notifying the public and asking for comment. This has led to a new kind of legal challenge, according to Joseph Goffman, executive director of Harvard’s environmental law program. Courts are now being asked to intervene to get agencies to follow the process. Regulations have often been reversed as a direct response to petitions from oil, coal and gas companies and other industry groups, which have enjoyed a much closer relationship with key figures in the Trump administration than under President Barack Obama. Scott Pruitt, the head of the Environmental Protection Agency, has met almost daily with industry executives and lobbyists. (As Oklahoma’s attorney general, Mr. Pruitt sued the agency he now oversees more than a dozen times to try to block Obama-era rules.) The E.P.A. has been involved in nearly one-third of the policy reversals identified by The Times.

OVERTURNED

1. Revoked Obama-era flood standards for federal infrastructure projects
2. Rejected a proposed ban on a potentially harmful pesticide
3. Lifted a freeze on new coal leases on public lands
4. Canceled a requirement for oil and gas companies to report methane emissions
5. Revoked a rule that prevented coal companies from dumping mining debris into local streams
6. Approved the Keystone XL pipeline
7. Approved the Dakota Access pipeline
8. Prohibited funding third-party projects through federal lawsuit settlements (could include environmental programs)
9. Repealed a ban on offshore oil and gas drilling in the Atlantic and Arctic oceans
10. Proposed the use of seismic air guns for gas and oil exploration in the Atlantic
11. Revoked a 2016 order protecting the northern Bering Sea region in Alaska
12. Repealed an Obama-era rule regulating royalties for oil, gas and coal
13. Withdrew guidance for federal agencies to include greenhouse gas emissions in environmental reviews
14. Relaxed the environmental review process for federal infrastructure projects
15. Announced intent to stop payments to the Green Climate Fund
16. Dropped proposed restrictions on mining in Bristol Bay, Alaska
17. Removed a number of species from the endangered list
18. Overturned a ban on the hunting of predators in Alaskan wildlife refuges
19. Withdrew proposed limits on endangered marine mammals caught by fishing nets on the West Coast
20. Stopped discouraging the sale of plastic water bottles in national parks
21. Rescinded an Obama-era order to consider climate change in managing natural resources in national parks
22. Revoked directive for federal agencies to mitigate the environmental impacts of projects they approve
23. Directed agencies to stop using an Obama-era calculation of the “social cost of carbon”
24. Revoked an update to the Bureau of Land Management's public land use planning process
25. Removed copper filter cake, an electronics manufacturing byproduct, from the “hazardous waste” list
26. Reversed a proposed rule that mines prove they can pay for cleanup
27. Withdrew a proposed rule reducing pollutants at sewage treatment plants

OVERTURNED CONTINUED...

28. Overturned ban on use of lead ammunition on federal lands
29. Amended fishing regulations for a number of species

IN PROGRESS

30. Proposed repeal of the Clean Power Plan
31. Announced intent to withdraw the United States from the Paris climate agreement
32. Proposed rescinding a rule that protected tributaries and wetlands under the Clean Water Act
33. Reopened a review of fuel-efficiency standards for cars and trucks
34. Recommend shrinking or modifying 10 national monuments
35. Reviewing 12 marine protected areas
36. Reviewing limits on toxic discharge from power plants into public waterways
37. Reviewing rules regulating coal ash waste from power plants
38. Reviewing emissions standards for new, modified and reconstructed power plants
39. Reviewing emissions rules for power plant start-ups, shutdowns and malfunctions
40. Announced plans to review greater sage grouse habitat protections
41. Announced plans to rescind water pollution regulations for fracking on federal and Indian lands
42. Ordered review of regulations on oil and gas drilling in national parks where mineral rights are privately owned
43. Reviewing new safety regulations on offshore drilling
44. Ordered a review of a rule regulating offshore oil and gas exploration by floating vessels in the Arctic
45. Proposed ending a restriction on exploratory drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge
46. Ordered a review of federal regulations on prohibition of certain hunting methods in Alaska
47. Proposed repeal of a requirement for reporting emissions on federal highways
48. Proposed a repeal of emissions standards for trailers and glider kits
49. Suspended rule limiting methane emissions on public lands
50. Announced plans to review permitting programs for air-polluting plants
51. Reopened outer continental shelf oil and gas leasing plans
52. Overturned a ban on using parts of migratory birds in handicrafts made in Alaska
53. Announced a review of coal dust limits in mines.

IN LIMBO

54. Reviewing a rule limiting methane emissions at new oil and gas drilling sites
55. Put on hold rules aimed at cutting methane emissions from landfills
56. Delayed a lawsuit over a rule regulating airborne mercury emissions from power plants
57. Delayed a rule aiming to improve safety at facilities that use hazardous chemicals
58. Continuing review of proposed groundwater protections for certain uranium mines
59. Delayed compliance dates for federal building efficiency standards
60. Withdrew a rule that would help consumers buy more fuel-efficient tires

Article Questions

1. Why are environmental rules being reversed?
2. Who is Scott Pruitt? How is he involved?
3. Choose two of the environmental rules that you support being overturned. Explain your position.
4. Choose two of the environmental rules that you think should not be overturned. Explain your position.
5. What are the overall effects of so many environmental rules being overturned?