

# The Washington Post

## **The Energy 202: Meet the government insiders quietly shaping Trump's energy and environment agenda**

Dino Grandoni

March 27, 2018

Meet the cicada.

**That's the nickname within the Interior Department for Randal Bowman, who has worked there for more than three decades.**

He got that moniker, referring to the insect famous for reemerging every 13 or 17 years, **for being a proponent of limited federal regulation who goes underground during Democratic administrations only to surface under Republican presidents to work on their energy and environmental agendas.**

Outside observers on both the right and left note the resistance among government insiders to the seismic policy changes under President Trump. **But not every member of the "deep state" is a Democrat.**

**Career officials with conservative leanings within the Interior Department, the Environmental Protection Agency and other federal offices are wielding newfound power in the Trump administration, often working to roll back policies they had previously helped craft.**

Juliet Eilperin and I found in a report Monday several examples at the EPA and Interior, which are leading the charge in limiting federal power and curtailing the focus on climate change:

**Bowman, who is now a special assistant to the National Park Service's deputy director, is helping Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke choose which national monuments to recommend Trump shrink.**

The president has reduced the extent of Bears Ears and Grand Staircase-Escalante, both in Utah, by about 85 percent and 46 percent, respectively, drawing the ire of environmental and Native American groups. Bowman is also scrutinizing whether agreements struck with some of those same politically active nonprofit groups mesh with Zinke's priorities.

**Al McGartland, a career official who heads the EPA's National Center for Environmental Economics, argued unsuccessfully under the previous administration that Obama administration**

officials had overestimated the financial benefits of extending the jurisdiction of federal clean-water limits.

The regulation, called the Waters of the United States rule, proved to be dramatically unpopular in rural states with farms that would be burdened with complying with rules regulating agricultural runoff. **Now under Trump, McGartland helped crunch the numbers justifying the proposed withdrawal of that 2015 rule.**

**And then there's Indur Goklany, another longtime Interior employee at the department's Office of Policy Analysis, who found himself in the department's inner circle of leadership weeks after Trump's inauguration.**

Through the George W. Bush and Barack Obama years, Goklany regularly worked with conservative think tanks skeptical of climate change, including publishing two books with the Cato Institute and speaking on panels held by the Heartland Institute. **Now under Trump, he has repeatedly scrutinized the department's climate research.**

Last April, Goklany marked up an Obama-era Park Service brochure on the effects of global warming throughout the parks at the request of one of Trump's appointees, describing a page titled "Responding to Climate Change" as "propaganda for a favored option." A month later, Goklany was reviewing a draft of at least one U.S. Geological Survey paper on climate change and preparing "a summary overview of climate change activities gleaned from examining" past manuals, webpages and secretarial orders.

**Why they matter:** Trump has brought plenty of outsiders to the federal government to implement his "energy dominance" agenda. **But these insiders understand the machinations of the federal bureaucracy better than political appointees, many of whom spent years bashing the federal government without ever having worked in it.**

Without the insider allies, the Trump team may have a tougher time enacting its agenda.

**"They understand the way the government works," said Don Barry, a former career staffer who served as Interior's assistant secretary for fish, wildlife and parks under President Bill Clinton. "They know where the power lies and which levers to use."**

— **"I don't really think that's important anymore:"** That's what Ryan Zinke says about diversity, several Interior employees told CNN. Meanwhile, Interior spokeswoman Heather Swift denied Zinke said anything along those lines: "The anonymous claims made against the secretary are untrue," she told CNN. The Office of Personnel Management also told the news network that of the 68,000 employees in the department, more than 70 percent are white.

— **Meanwhile,** Zinke launched a new outdoor recreation advisory panel that is made up entirely of industry representatives. Juliet Eilperin noted three members of the committee were flagged by the department "as potentially hav[ing] a conflict of interest on the matter." "The membership of the 'Made in America' Outdoor Recreation Advisory Committee ... marks the third time the secretary has assembled panels dominated by industry players to help chart policies affecting their businesses," Eilperin writes.

— **New week, new investigation:** Interior's internal watchdog has opened an investigation into P. Daniel Smith, currently the top-ranking official at the National Park Service, for allegedly making a gesture involving his genitalia in the hallways of the department's headquarter this year. Interior's Office of Inspector General confirmed late last week it opened a probe after receiving a letter from an anonymous Park Service employee describing how on either Jan. 10 or Jan. 11, Smith "grabbed his crotch and his penis and acted out as though he was urinating on the wall."

The case may become a test of Zinke's pledge to root out sexual harassment at Interior. Last year, Zinke took action by firing four senior management staffers within the department for inappropriate conduct, including sexual harassment.

— **Patagonia pushback:** The advocacy group Texans for Natural Gas is dinging the outdoor clothing retailer Patagonia in a new blog post for using polyester, nylon and other petroleum products in its clothing while simultaneously leading the corporate charge against the Trump administration's decision to shrink two national monuments in Utah. "No one wants to get soaked on a hike," the group writes. "Thanks to the petroleum-based nylon liner on Patagonia's micro-puff hoodies, that won't be an issue."

— **Profanity-laced text tirade:** Nevada Republican Rep. Mark Amodei blasted Zinke over the move to shake up the Bureau of Land Management in his state. During the Churchill County GOP's Lincoln Day Dinner, Amodei read out loud from a profane text conversation with Zinke that referred to the departure of Nevada BLM chief John Ruhs. There's audio published by the Reno Gazette Journal.

— **Grizzly plan is a go:** The Trump administration plans to restore grizzly bears in the North Cascade Mountains in Washington state, per the Associated Press. Zinke announced the plan late last week while visiting the North Cascade National Park's headquarters. "The Department of the Interior announced in 2014 that it would consider relocating grizzlies to aid their recovery in the Cascades," according to the AP. "An environmental review has been underway, but in recent months there have been questions about whether it would continue. Zinke made clear it would, with a formal decision expected by the end of the year."

— **EPA to ease efficiency rules:** The Environmental Protection Agency decided to side with carmakers in concluding that the Obama-era push to cut emissions should be revised, according to Reuters. A plan, which the agency will make public by April 1, will suggest easing fuel efficiency standards for model-year 2022-2025 cars and light trucks. "The administration is considering significant changes that would make it easier for automakers to meet regulations, a move that could boost vehicle pollution," Reuters writes.

— **Meanwhile,** a group of environmental organizations filed a lawsuit against the EPA for loosening strict rules on sources considered "major" polluters. The suit, filed by groups including the Sierra Club, the Natural Resources Defense Council and the Environmental Defense Fund, says the agency violated law by not calling for public comment on the policy before the change, per the Washington Examiner.

— **Like waiting for paint to dry:** After the Obama administration proposed a plan to largely ban paint stripped from containing the chemical methylene chloride, the Trump administration has pushed back the date for finalizing the rule, the Center for Public Integrity reports.

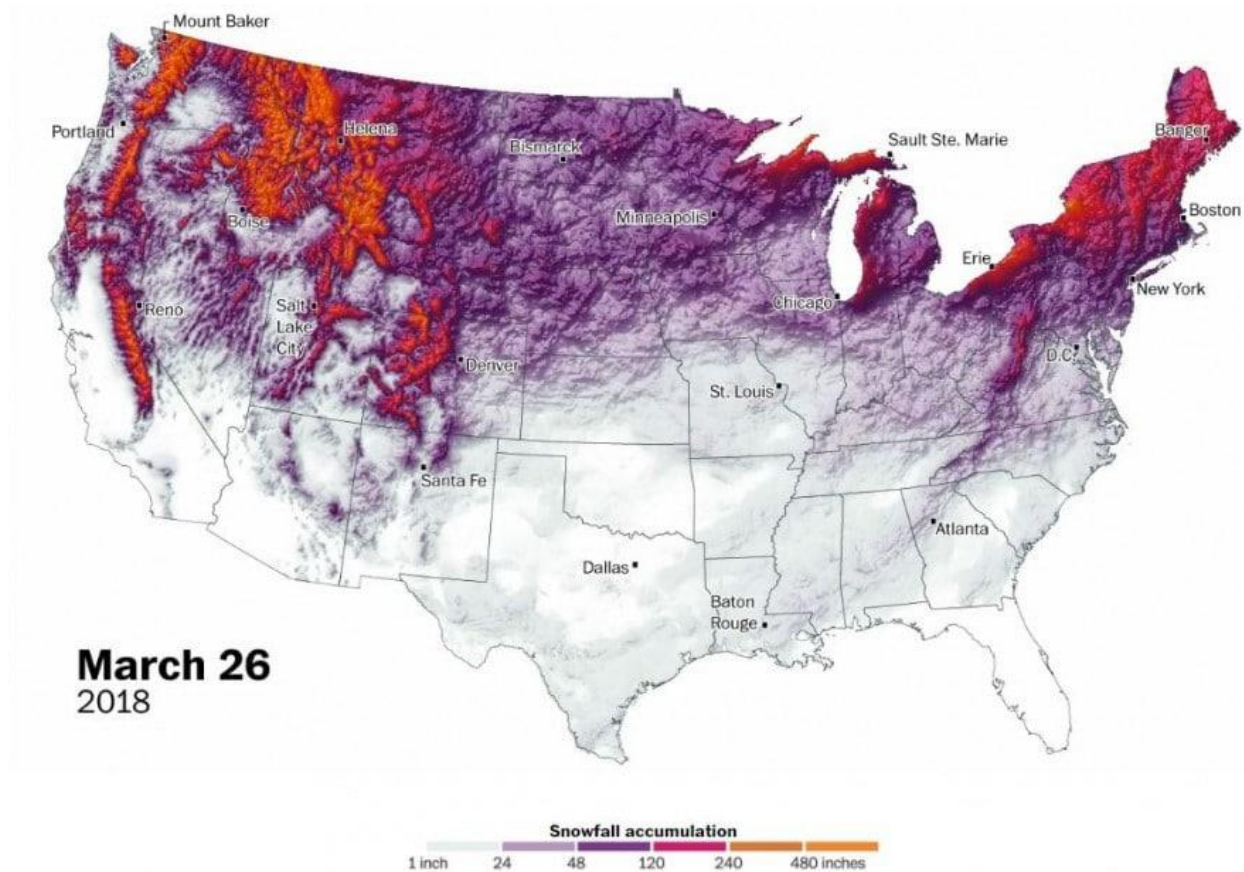
“Consumer advocates fear the proposed rule has been effectively shelved, even as people continue to die while using methylene chloride paint strippers on bathtubs and other items—including at least three last year,” per the report. “Using the product in enclosed areas, where fumes build up, puts people at risk of asphyxiation because methylene chloride is an anesthetic at high doses—knocking victims out and stopping them from breathing.”

— **New EPA nominee:** President Trump’s nominee to lead the EPA’s Office of International and Tribal Affairs is facing accusations of overseeing an industrial spill that contaminated of groundwater in a suburb in Michigan with a cancer-causing chemical, according to HuffPost. William Charles McIntosh led Ford’s environmental compliance and policy divisions until last year. And Last August, more than 100 homeowners sued the company over the spill.

— **Banks replacement:** The Trump administration has named an Energy Department official to join the National Economic Council to lead the administration’s international energy efforts. Wells Griffith, who has been serving as the principal deputy assistant secretary in the Energy Department’s office of international affairs, will fill the temporary post vacated by George David Banks, per E&E News and Bloomberg News.

— **A conservative climate approach:** Over in the Daily 202, James Hohmann writes about George Shultz, who served as Ronald Reagan’s secretary of state and is now, unlike many other Republicans, embracing the idea of a carbon tax. “Let’s take out an insurance policy to protect against the risk of climate change,” said Shultz, adding a carbon tax would free up private firms to find the most efficient ways to cut emissions. Shultz and some other senior Republican statesmen have been beating the drum about replacing Obama’s climate policies with a carbon tax since the beginning of Trump’s presidency.

## **THERMOMETER**



— **Winter, in one map:** This winter was one for the record books, with four nor'easters pummeling the Northeast in three weeks, including one landing just as spring was officially starting. The Post maps every inch of snow that fell in the lower 48 this year.

## OIL CHECK

— **Shell (yes, that Shell) just outlined a radical scenario for what it would take to halt climate change:** “The company’s Sky scenario was designed to imagine a world that complies with the goals of the Paris climate agreement, managing to hold the planet’s warming to ‘well below’ a rise of 2 degrees Celsius, or 3.6 degrees Fahrenheit,” The Post’s Chris Mooney reports. The result? The world would have to use far less oil, the company’s own product, as electric cars become more prevalent and a carbon storage industry develops. Or as Bloomberg puts it, achieving that goal “will require sucking carbon dioxide out of the atmosphere.”

— **Meanwhile**, the world’s seven top nonstate oil companies are entering a “golden age,” Goldman Sachs Group predicted in a new report. A combination of rising oil prices and low operation costs have provided oil companies “the biggest cash-flow growth in two decades,” Bloomberg reports.

— **Half of all U.S. coal plants would lose money without regulation:** That’s the conclusion of a new study by Bloomberg New Energy Finance. “About 95 percent of those with operating expenses exceeding revenue operate in regions where regulators set rates, the study found,”

Bloomberg News writes. "Instead of allowing market forces to determine their fate, regulators and utilities often keep struggling plants open to ensure stability on their grids." Even without the help Energy Secretary Rick Perry wanted to provide coal (and nuclear) power plants with his proposed 90-day fuel rule, it seems coal plants are still getting a leg up in the face of cheap natural gas and renewables.

## **DAYBOOK**

### **Today**

- The American Water Works Association's Sustainable Water Management Conference continues.
- The Solar Energy Industries Association's California solar power expo continues in San Diego, Calif.
- The American Fuel and Petrochemical Manufacturers 2018 International Petrochemical Conference continues in San Antonio, Tex.
- The EPA will hold a listening session on repealing the Clean Power Plan in Gillette, Wyo.
- The American Association of Petroleum Geologists Global Super Basins leadership conference begins in Houston.

### **Coming Up**

- The United States Energy Association will hold a brown bag discussion on **Wednesday**.
- The Environmental and Energy Study Institute holds an event on U.S. infrastructure on **Wednesday**.
- The National Food Policy Conference begins on **Wednesday**.