

Weekly NEWS



An Information Service for Alberta's Environment Industry

The Week Ending April 17th, 2020

**STAYS SAFE
AND STAY
POSITIVE**

Inside this Issue:

- ESAA Webinar Series
- Gov't of Canada Announces Major Funding for Orphan Well Program
- US Megadrought Already Underway
- Grizzly Bears Eating Grain Contaminated with Heavy Metals and Hydrocarbons
- New ESAA Member
- ESAA Member News
- Industry Position Openings

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Comments & submissions are welcome!

Please submit your announcement via e-mail to:
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ENVIROTECH 2020 CANCELLATION

VIRTUAL PRESENTATIONS TO BE ANNOUNCED

Unfortunately, ESAA has made the decision to cancel *EnviroTech* for this year. *EnviroTech* will return in 2021. At this point in time, with ongoing restrictions it is the only logical decision. The health and safety of our attendees at ESAA events is paramount.

Though the event is cancelled as an in-person event, ESAA will be offering as many of presentations as possible via a series of webinars, **Virtual EnviroTech**. **Stay tuned in the coming days for details.**

If you are a sponsor, exhibitor, speaker or delegate, you will have received an email with additional information and steps.

Thank you for your ongoing support of ESAA and *EnviroTech*.



25TH ANNUAL ESAA GOLF TOURNAMENT CANCELLED

Due to the ongoing COVID-19 crisis, ESAA has made the decision to cancel the 2020 ESAA Golf Tournament. The health and safety of everyone is our first priority and it is not prudent to proceed at this time. See you in 2021!

NOW ACCEPTING SUBMISSIONS FOR THE 2020 ESAA PHOTO CONTEST

The ESAA Photo Contest celebrates the connection between the environment and ESAA members. The individual(s) that submit the winning photo(s) are highlighted every year at the *RemTech* Symposium where canvas prints are auctioned off with all proceeds going to charity. Once again this year there is also a non-member category.



The theme for this year's photo contest is "**Get Creative**".

It light of the current health crisis affecting us all, this years theme will keep you closer to home, safe and social distancing. Get Creative – try some macro shots, play with light, create some abstract work, photograph your plants, your backyard wildlife. Surprise Us!

You can find all this information and how to apply online at - <http://www.esaa.org/photocontest/>

THE DEADLINE TO APPLY IS AUGUST 21st.

Any questions can be directed to chowaniec@esaa.org.



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ESAA Weekly Webinar Series

ESAA is pleased to announce a weekly Webinar series on a variety of topics. The webinars are **free** and each webinar is one hour in length and will happen each Wednesday at 11 am. From time to time, there will also be webinars on Tuesdays. The webinars are a way to stay connected during the current COVID situation and an opportunity to discuss a variety of topics and learn from a number of colleagues throughout the industry.



ESAA Webinar Series

(click for details)

Full details below or at: www.esaa.org/webinars/ Recordings of each presentation will also be available on the ESAA Webinar Page.

If you are interested in **sponsoring** a webinar, multiple webinars or the entire series, please contact: chowaniec@esaa.org.

Upcoming Webinar Schedule

(updated April 17th, 2020)

| | | |
|---|--|------------------------------|
| <i>“Alberta’s Economy in a COVID-19 World: What we KNOW, what we DON’T KNOW, and potential opportunities”</i> Todd Hirsch, Chief Economist, ATB Financial | Tuesday, April 21st 2 pm – 3 pm | Register Now |
| <i>Inspections and Investigations: What to do when the regulator comes knocking?</i> Sean Parker, McLennan Ross LLP | Wednesday, April 22nd 11 am – 12 pm | Register Now |

| | | | |
|-----------------|--|--|------------------------------|
| New | <i>When Worlds Collide: Integrating Soil and Groundwater Studies When Remediating and Risk Managing Upstream Oil and Gas Sites</i> Brent Lennox, Waterline Resources | Tuesday, April 28th 11 am – 12 pm | Register Now |
| | <i>Investigating PFAS in Western Canada</i> Lindsay Paterson, SLR Consulting (Canada) | Wednesday, April 29th 11 am – 12 pm | Register Now |
| New Date | <i>Managing a Remote Workforce</i> Janet Salopek and Cindy Sidhu , Salopek & Associates | Wednesday, April 30th 11 am – 12 pm | Register Now |
| New | <i>The 5 W's of Bringing ELearning to Your Company</i> Darel Baker, Keldar Leadership | Tuesday, May 5th 1 pm – 2 pm | Register Now |
| New | <i>Soil Sterilants Program</i> Bonnie Drozdowski and Simone Levy, InnoTech Alberta | Wednesday, May 6th 11 am – 12 pm | Register Now |
| | <i>Environmental Compliance in the wake of Covid-19</i> Amit Bhargava, EnviroApps | Wednesday, May 13th 11 am – 12 pm | Register Now |
| | <i>What's in a Guideline: A Look Back at the History of Risk-Based Guidelines in Canada</i> Janice Paslawski, SNC-Lavalin | Wednesday, May 20th 11 am – 12 pm | Register Now |
| | <i>Disruptive Energy Transition</i> Kae Shummoogum, Gasonic | Wednesday, June 3rd 11 am – 12 pm | Register Now |
| | <i>Effective In-Situ LNAPL and DNAPL Site Remediation Using Innovative Surfactant Enhanced Remediation Techniques</i> George (Bud) Ivey, Ivey International | Wednesday, June 10th 11 am – 12 pm | Register Now |
| New | <i>How To Manage Remote Work Effectively and Reduce Cost During Critical Times</i> Vincent Lam and Sean Huang, Matidor | Wednesday, June 17th 11 am – 12 pm | Register Now |

Completed Webinars

Conceptual Site Models – Built for Purpose

Sheila Duchek, SNC-Lavalin

[Presentation Powerpoint PDF](#)
[Health Canada CSM Builder Tool](#)

[Video Recording](#)

GOVERNMENT OF CANADA ANNOUNCES AID FOR STRUGGLING ENERGY SECTOR, INCLUDING \$1.7B TO CLEAN UP ORPHAN WELLS

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau will update Canadians on the latest measures the federal government is taking to slow the spread of COVID-19. 0:00

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has announced \$1.7 billion to clean up orphan wells in Alberta, Saskatchewan and British Columbia, as well as aid for rural businesses and people working in the arts and culture sectors.

The aid is expected to help maintain 5,200 jobs in Alberta alone.

"Our goal is to create immediate jobs in these provinces while helping companies avoid bankruptcy, and supporting our environmental targets," Trudeau said.

During today's daily briefing outside his residence at Rideau Cottage, Trudeau also announced the government will establish a \$750 million emissions reduction fund, with a focus on methane, to create jobs through efforts to cut pollution. The fund includes \$75 million to help the offshore industry cut emissions in Newfoundland and Labrador.

"Just because we're in a health crisis doesn't mean we can neglect the environmental crisis," Trudeau said.

Trudeau said the government is also working to expand credit for medium-sized energy companies so they can maintain operations and keep their employees.

He also announced \$962 million for regional development agencies to help smaller employers in rural areas that do not have access to traditional financial institutions like banks and credit unions.

He also announced \$270 million for a program for entrepreneurial and industrial research and another \$500 million to support Canadians who work in the arts, culture and sports sectors.

Alberta Premier Jason Kenney was quick to praise the move, thanking the federal government for helping to fund the cleanup of orphaned and abandoned wells.

"This is critical to getting thousands of people in the energy sector back to work immediately," he tweeted.

There are now [more than 3,400 orphan wells in Alberta](#) left behind by bankrupt companies, most of them located on the properties of rural landowners.

There are another 94,000 inactive wells in the province that may eventually become orphaned.

Speaking at his own news conference before the government's announcement, Conservative Leader Andrew Scheer said Conservatives have long supported the idea of providing assistance to clean up orphaned oil wells, but urged the government deliver the help fast.

"I remind you that (Finance Minister) Bill Morneau said that help for the energy sector would be hours or days away, certainly not weeks. He said that over three weeks ago. People suffering from this pandemic and the other hurdles that are in place in the energy sector are suffering in real time," he said.

"They were promised help almost a month ago. So we'll see what happens today or in the coming days. But we're very disappointed at the pace that this program is being rolled out."

The new measures are in addition to previously announced programs to support struggling businesses, including a 75 per cent wage subsidy for businesses of all sizes, charities and non-profits.

The federal government is also backing loans of up to \$40,000 for businesses that have a payroll between \$20,000 and \$1.5 million a year. Up to \$10,000 of the interest-free loan is non-repayable.

To date, 220,000 loans worth \$8.8 billion have been approved.

Trudeau has warned that reopening the economy too soon could run the risk of increasing the spread of COVID-19, but some premiers have been considering ways to gradually get people back to work.

AER: Directive 023 (1991 edition) and Directive 078 Rescinded

As part of its contributions towards the Government of Alberta's initiatives under the *Red Tape Reduction Act*, we will be rescinding obsolete and redundant regulatory requirements. Today, we are rescinding the following oil sands project application directives:

- *Directive 023: Guidelines Respecting an Application for a Commercial Crude Bitumen Recovery and Upgrading Project* (the 1991 edition)
- *Directive 078: Regulatory Application Process for Modifications to Commercial In Situ Oil Sands Projects*

Operators are reminded that *Oil Sands Conservation Act* (OSCA) project applications must continue to be submitted in accordance with [Draft Directive 023: Oil Sands Project Applications](#) (2013). The AER has used *Draft Directive 023* to administer all new OSCA project applications since the draft was issued in 2013.

The application requirements in *Directive 078* were incorporated into *Draft Directive 023* as section 10, "Amendment Applications." Applications to modify commercial in situ projects must continue to be submitted in accordance with this section.

The application requirements under *Draft Directive 023* and processes for OSCA project applications have not changed. We have simply removed obsolete and duplicative information requirements.

Questions can be directed to the Customer Contact Centre by phone at 403-297-8311 (1-855-297-8311 toll free) or email at inquiries@aer.ca.

AER: RELIEF FOR INDUSTRY DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC RESPONSE

Physical distancing and other safety protocols that have been put in place to support the COVID-19 response may impact the availability of industry staff and limit capacity to comply with reporting requirements.

Alberta Environment and Parks and Alberta Energy have temporarily suspended a number of reporting requirements that affect Alberta's energy industry. This direction does not affect monitoring requirements, which must continue to be met.

Industry must continue to report as directed in compliance and enforcement orders. They must also continue to report emergencies, including incidents, notifications, contraventions, and releases that have or may have the potential to impact the environment or public safety to the Energy and Environmental Emergency 24-Hour Response Line at 1-800-222-6514 or 780-422-4505.

ALBERTA ENERGY MINISTERIAL ORDER

Alberta Energy has suspended the following:

- All of the following requirements to report information pursuant to provisions in the *Coal Conservation Rules* and approvals:
 - Annual reporting under section 65(2)(a) and (b)
 - Exploration reporting under section 40
 - All plans specified within approval conditions under the *Coal Conservation Act* except conditions related to geotechnical reporting
- The following requirements to report information pursuant to provisions in the *Oil and Gas Conservation Rules*, directives, approvals, licences:
 - All deliverability, annual, and initial reservoir pressure surveys for resource conservation (including enhanced oil recovery, disposal, oil and gas production depletion strategy) and pool delineation required under *Directive 040: Pressure and Deliverability Testing Oil and Gas Wells* and section 11.102 of the *Oil and Gas Conservation Rules*
 - All annual progress reports and performance presentations for scheme approvals required under section 2.1.4.1 of *Directive 065: Resources Applications for Oil and Gas Reservoirs* and section 39 of the *Oil and Gas Conservation Act*
 - Submission of well logs and summary reports required under section 7.2 of *Directive 080: Well Logging* and sections 11.005 and 11.140 of the *Oil and Gas Conservation Rules*
- The following requirements under *Directive 013: Suspension Requirements for Wells* and section 3.020 of the *Oil and Gas Conservation Rules*:
 - Inactive wells not part of the Inactive Well Compliance Program
 - initial suspension requirements in *Directive 013* for all wells considered low and medium risk type 6
 - on-going inspection requirements in *Directive 013* for all wells considered low and medium risk
 - Inactive wells in the Inactive Well Compliance Program
 - compliance deadline for the final year of the program
- All of the following requirements to report information pursuant to provisions in the *Oil Sands Conservation Rules* and approvals for both oil sands mining and in situ:
 - Annual mine plans under section 30
 - Report of mining operations under section 31
 - Report of operations under section 58
 - Annual geotechnical report under section 32

- All plans specified within approval conditions under the *Oil Sands Conservation Act* except conditions related to geotechnical reporting requirements.

ALBERTA ENVIRONMENT AND PARKS [MINISTERIAL ORDER](#)

As it relates to Alberta Energy Regulator requirements, with some exceptions, Alberta Environment and Parks has suspended the following:

- All requirements to report information pursuant to provisions in approvals or registrations authorized under the *Environmental Protection and Enhancement Act*.
- All requirements to report information pursuant to provisions in licences or approvals authorized under the *Water Act*.
- All requirements to report as required under a formal disposition under the *Public Lands Act*.

While these reporting requirements have been suspended, the following exceptions apply (meaning the following reports must still be submitted).

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AND ENHANCEMENT ACT

- Bird protection plans for oil sands sector
- Annual Mine Financial Security Program submissions for oil sands and coal sectors
- Research program for Base Mine Lake and Miwasin Lake

WATER ACT

- Final reclamation summary reports for all sectors
- Dam safety submissions for all high-, very-high-, and extreme-consequence dams.
- Baseline studies at the McClelland Lake Wetland Complex

PUBLIC LANDS ACT

- Annual aggregate management plan update for oil sands and coal sectors
- Annual disclosure of area cleared for oil sands and coal sectors

During the period of temporary suspensions, parties must continue to record and retain complete documentation and make it available upon request.

We cannot list all requirements contained within approvals issued under each piece of legislation. If you have questions not answered in this bulletin, please contact Industry.Relief@aer.ca.

We will continue to work with the Government of Alberta and industry to ensure the safe, efficient, orderly, and environmentally responsible development of Alberta's energy resources. These are exceptional times, and we will remain flexible and responsive to the changing circumstances.

CLIMATE CHANGE: US MEGADROUGHT 'ALREADY UNDER WAY'

(Source: BBC News) A drought, equal to the worst to have hit the western US in recorded history, is already under way, say scientists.

Researchers say the megadrought is a naturally occurring event that started in the year 2000 and is still ongoing.

Climate change, though, is having a major impact with rising temperatures making the drought more severe.

Some researchers are more cautious, saying that it is too early to say if the region really is seeing a true megadrought.

So what exactly is a megadrought?

According to the authors of this new paper, a megadrought in North America refers to a multi-decade event, that contains periods of very high severity that last longer than anything observed during the 19th or 20th centuries.

The authors say there have been around 40 drought events over the period from 800-2018 in the western US.

Of these, only four meet the criteria for a megadrought.

These were in the late 800s, the mid-1100s, the 1200s and the late 1500s.

How do researchers know what drought conditions were like in the past?

The key to this new study is the use of tree ring records to reconstruct soil moisture data for the past 1200 years.

The team were also able to use supporting evidence such as medieval tree stumps growing in normally wet river beds, the abandonment of settlements by indigenous civilisations at the peak of the 13th century drought, plus evidence from lake deposits indicating wildfire activity was enhanced during these drought periods.

What did the study find?

Image copyright Williams/Science Image caption A graphic showing soil moisture across the centuries in the western US. The blue line at the bottom shows mean soil moisture 2000-2018

The researchers discovered that when they compared the worst 19-year drought events in the past to soil moisture records from 2000-2018, the current period is already worse than three of the four megadroughts recorded.

The fourth one, which ran from 1575 to 1603 was likely the worst one of all, but the difference with the present event is slight.

"The first two decades of this drought look just like the first two decades of all of the mega droughts," said lead author Dr Park Williams, from Columbia University in New York.

"In fact, it is essentially tied with the worst two decades of the worst of the mega droughts."

Is the current megadrought a natural event or was it caused by climate change?

The authors say that undoubtedly the current drought situation is a natural event but is being made much worse by climate change.

The key event seems to have been the El Niño/La Niña weather phenomenon.

"We know from, from many lines of evidence that when you have La Niña type conditions in the tropical Pacific Ocean, then the southwestern US and northern Mexico get dry. And that's what we've seen over the last two decades," said Dr Williams.

Image copyright Getty Images Image caption Lake Mead saw huge drop in water levels during the recent drought

But climate change has super-charged the current drought.

The authors say that in the western US, temperatures have gone up by 1.2C since 2000. Hotter air holds more moisture and that moisture is being pulled out of the ground.

They believe that climate change is responsible for about half of the pace and severity of the current event.

"It doesn't matter if this is exactly the worst drought ever," said co-author Benjamin Cook, who is affiliated with Columbia University and Nasa's Goddard Institute for Space Studies.

"What matters is that it has been made much worse than it would have been because of climate change."

What have been the impacts of the megadrought?

The authors say the two most important water reservoirs in the region, Lake Powell and Lake Mead have both shrunk dramatically during the drought. Wildfires across the region are growing in area.

"At any given year, there's over ten times more forest area burns than we would have expected in a given year, 40 years ago," said Dr Williams.

What has helped to mitigate the impact of the drought has been groundwater - the water held underground in aquifers.

Image copyright Getty Images Image caption The amount of land impacted by wildfire in recent years in the US has increased

This has increasingly been used to bolster supplies for agriculture.

The longer the drought goes on, the deeper into these reserves that people are digging, and they take a long time to replenish.

Is there full agreement among scientists that a megadrought is taking place right now?

No. This new study is contentious, especially as the definition of what exactly a megadrought means is still being argued over.

Some say that it is also way too early to declare that a megadrought is ongoing.

But even those who disagree with the idea, acknowledge there is water stress in the region and this is likely to get worse in the future.

"Whether or not the western US has crossed a threshold into an event that goes by any specific label, what's been clear this century is that water is an essential resource in the western US, and it's a precarious one, because the region can have long spells with little precipitation," said Dr Angeline Pendergrass, a scientist with the US National Center for Atmospheric Research (NCAR).

"And it looks like climate change won't make it better - indeed, it will likely make it worse."

The [study has been published](#) in the journal Science.

GRIZZLY BEARS EATING GRAIN CONTAMINATED WITH HEAVY METALS AND HYDROCARBONS

(Source: St. Albert Today)

BANFF – Bears are feeding on contaminated grain and vegetation along the railway line in Banff and Yoho national parks.

Researcher Sonya Pollock set out to determine if grain spilled from hopper cars, as well as vegetation eaten by grizzly bears growing next to the train tracks, could expose bears to pollutants that are usually found within a transportation corridor.

Measuring several heavy metals and polyaromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs), she found grain was much more contaminated than dandelions, especially for the metals molybdenum, iron, lead, and cadmium and for heavy, carcinogenic PAHs.

"Lead concentrations in it were about three times higher than the federal limits established for animal feed," said Colleen Cassady St. Clair, a professor of biological sciences at the University of Alberta, who was Pollock's supervisor.

Pollock also measured metals in bear hair, expecting that the bears that made the greatest use of the transportation corridor, which includes the Canadian Pacific Railway line and the Trans-Canada Highway, would have higher concentrations.

"Surprisingly, they did not," said Cassady St. Clair. "But male bears had higher concentrations of metals than females."

The research also showed a link, albeit weaker, between metals and both elevation and use of ski hills.

"These patterns were driven by just a couple of bears, but sources of metal contamination on ski hills might merit additional exploration," Cassady St. Clair said.

Pollock said she studied when grizzly bears most often travelled along the train tracks, which was highest in spring and fall.

“Spring railway use may be correlated with early herbaceous feeding opportunities, and use in the fall with fruit availability along the railway or the higher deposition of train-spilled grain due to higher export volumes,” said Pollock.

This paper, recently published in the *Environmental Management* journal, came out of a five-year Parks Canada-Canadian Pacific Railway study to look at the reasons for an alarming number of grizzly bear deaths on the train tracks in Banff and Yoho national parks. The study wrapped up in 2017.

At least 17 grizzly bears, which are a threatened species in Alberta, were killed by trains in the two parks between 2000-13, striking a blow to the local population of about 60 grizzlies. These mortality numbers do not take into account bears that may have been struck by a train but never found.

The CP-Parks Canada study indicated approximately 110 tonnes of grain is spilled or trickled from trains carrying grain from the prairies to the West Coast for export across a 137-kilometre stretch of railway in Banff and Yoho – enough to feed 50 bears for an entire year.

A spokesperson for Canadian Pacific Railway, Salem Woodrow, said it is important to note that there has been no confirmed grizzly strikes or deaths on the railway line in Banff or Yoho national parks since 2013.

She said CP thanks all of the researchers who have significantly advanced the knowledge of how wildlife and the railway environment interact in the past decade.

“As the company approaches the end of a multi-year vegetation management program throughout Banff and Yoho national parks, CP will continue to focus on science-based mitigations to prevent wildlife mortality on the railway,” said Woodrow.

Railway transportation is a major producer of both heavy metals and PAHs, which originate from incomplete fossil fuel combustion, material abrasion, machine grease and oils, and creosote-treated railway ties. These can accumulate in the surrounding soil and vegetation.

In addition, researchers observed contaminated areas along the railway such as grease lubricating stations, which occasionally contained grain-filled bear scats, and also heard reports of bears with oil on their fur.

Other studies suggest exposure to even low concentrations of some pollutants can jeopardize the health of wildlife.

These include changes in behaviour, growth, metabolism, or reproduction such as reduced sperm concentration and mobility. Exposure to PAHs, especially in-utero, can cause developmental problems.

“Exposure to both heavy metals and PAHs can reduce the condition and fitness of individuals, with the potential for population-level effects,” said Pollock.

“Railway-associated contaminants from any source may require mitigation when they occur in protected areas and involve threatened population.”

As Pollock expected, male bears in the study area had higher overall metal concentrations in their fur than female bears.

“This may have occurred because female bears are able to transfer contaminants to their offspring via milk or because male bears have much larger home ranges with greater cumulative exposure to metal pollution,” she said.

“Further, male bears spend less time hibernating than female bears and their comparatively larger body mass increases nutritional demand, both factors potentially heightening exposure.”

Higher rates of scavenging and predation by male bears would provide additional exposure via bioaccumulation, said Pollock.

“However, we found no evidence that metals accumulated with age in bears as reported in other studies,” she said.

Pollock’s first recommendation to reduce wildlife exposure to contaminants on the railway line is the speedy removal of grains, such as wheat, barley, canola, flax, lentils, peas and soybean.

“Grain removal might be focused in areas like railway sidings where trains are stopped for extended periods and can accumulate both grain and pollutants,” she said.

“Lubricating stations along railways should be fenced or cleaned to limit exposure of wildlife to petrochemicals that contain numerous toxicants, including metals and PAHs.”

Pollock said the study’s result linking metal and ski hill use by bears also warrants further investigation.

This was largely driven by one adult female bear, which had consistently high metal concentrations in her hair and spent a large proportion of her time on a ski hill. There was also a sub-adult male bear that regularly used the ski hill, but to a lesser extent.

Pollock said more work is needed to know if vegetation could harbour metals associated with fertilizers and chemical additives for snow hardening, herbicide application, snowmaking operations, including pumping systems, alloy pipes, and potentially contaminated water sources, and general machinery operations such as grooming and clearing.

“Although the association between metals and use of ski hills in our data was caused by just two individuals, more work on metal exposure in ski hill ecosystems could be warranted because bears consistently use ski hills and attract considerable tourism,” she said.

Studies have shown this population of grizzly bears has some of the lowest densities and reproductive rates in North America. “This may increase its vulnerability to the detrimental effects of railway-associated contaminants,” said Pollock.

E.P.A. WEAKENS CONTROLS ON MERCURY

(Source: New Times) WASHINGTON — The Trump administration on Thursday weakened regulations on the release of mercury and other toxic metals from oil and coal-fired power plants, another step toward rolling back health protections in the middle of a pandemic.

The new Environmental Protection Agency rule does not eliminate restrictions on the release of mercury, a heavy metal linked to brain damage. Instead, it creates a new method of calculating the costs and benefits of curbing mercury pollution that environmental lawyers said would fundamentally undermine the legal underpinnings of controls on mercury and many other pollutants.

By reducing the positive health effects of regulations on paper and raising their economic costs, the new method could be used to justify loosening restrictions on any pollutant that the fossil fuel industry has deemed too costly to control.

“That is the big unstated goal,” said David Konisky, a professor of public and environmental affairs at Indiana University. “This is less about mercury than about potentially constraining or handcuffing future efforts by the E.P.A. to regulate air pollution.”

Climate Fwd: What on earth is going on? Get the latest news about climate change, plus tips on how you can help.

The proposed change is the latest in the Trump administration’s long-running effort to roll back environmental regulations and reduce regulatory burdens, particularly on the coal, oil and gas industries. Over the past three years the administration has weakened rules to cut planet-warming carbon dioxide emissions from coal-fired power plants, restrict coal companies from dumping debris in streams and claimed falsely that that President Trump has revived the dying coal industry.

Over the past few weeks as the nation struggled with the coronavirus, the administration has also rushed to loosen curbs [on automobile tailpipe emissions](#), opted not to strengthen a regulation on [industrial soot emissions](#) and moved to drop the threat of punishment to [companies that kill birds “incidentally.”](#)

The deregulatory push appears designed to secure less restrictive rules quickly, in case Republicans lose control of Congress and the White House in November. A new government could move quickly under the Congressional Review Act to overturn any regulation or federal rule within 60 days of it being finalized — making any rule completed after late May or early June vulnerable.

The mercury rollback is a particular victory for Robert E. Murray, the former chief executive of Murray Energy Corporation and a top fund-raiser for Mr. Trump. Mr. Murray personally requested the rollback in a written ["wish list"](#) to top officials shortly after the president took office. The company has since declared bankruptcy and is undergoing a reorganization.

"Under this action, no more mercury will be emitted into the air than before," Andrew R. Wheeler, the E.P.A. administrator said in announcing the rule.

Environmental lawyers and public health leaders called the timing of the final mercury rule, as well as its substance, an attack on air quality.

"What is most disconcerting to me is this administration's lack of interest in science and, frankly, their lack of concern for our nation's children," said Aaron Bernstein, interim director of the Center for Climate, Health and the Global Environment at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health. "Mercury pollution in the United States damages our children's brains before they even come into the world, and estimates are that that cost is in the billions of dollars."

Patrick Parenteau, a professor at the Vermont Law School, noted that in virtually every environmental rollback, Mr. Trump's E.P.A. has acknowledged in the fine print that enormous increases in health problems and deaths will occur because of increased pollution.

A plan to weaken carbon dioxide emissions at power plants, for example, predicted as many as [1,400 additional premature deaths](#) a year. A draft [analysis](#) of the soot policy put forward this week showed that tightening the existing standard by 25 percent could save as many as 12,150 lives a year.

Two people close to the administration said the White House was concerned enough about the public perception of loosening environmental rules during the outbreak that it held the mercury plan for several weeks after it passed a review from the White House Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs. E.P.A. officials assured the White House that the agency was merely responding as required to a 2015 Supreme Court ruling that found it must justify the economic impact of the mercury standards.

The weakening of the mercury rule would be one of the most significant regulatory rollbacks engineered by the Trump administration. [The existing federal regulation on mercury pollution, completed in 2012](#), is the most expensive clean air regulation ever written by the E.P.A.

[When it published its draft cost-benefit changes last year](#), the Trump administration's E.P.A. said the cost of cutting mercury from power plant emissions "dwarfs" the economic benefits and argued that the Obama rule could not be justified as "appropriate and necessary."

The E.P.A.'s 2012 regulation was the first federal standard to require power plants to install pricey pollution controls to limit mercury emissions — at a cost to industry of \$9.6 billion a year. The Obama administration justified that cost with some mathematical legerdemain of its own. The Obama E.P.A. tallied not just the benefits of reducing mercury but also "co-benefits" like reducing sulfur dioxide, fine particulate matter and other pollutants that were also curbed by the equipment.

In his announcement on Thursday, Mr. Wheeler called the Obama administration's accounting of health benefits "dishonest."

Driving down mercury emissions alone, the studies at the time found, would yield a \$6 million annual benefit, a fraction of the cost of the controls. But by adding in co-benefits like projected gains in avoided heart disease, asthma attacks and other health problems, the total benefits reached \$80 billion over five years. Overall, the Obama administration estimated that the rule would prevent 4,700 heart attacks, 130,000 asthma attacks and 11,000 premature deaths each year.

Under the Trump administration's new rule, such co-benefits will no longer be calculated with cost, only direct benefits.

While coal producers urged Mr. Trump to roll back the rule, the vast majority of electric utility companies have agreed the cost-benefit changes may be of little help to them, because they have already spent the billions of dollars needed to come into compliance. Many of those companies urged the Trump administration to leave the mercury measure in place.

Coal plants subject to the rule “have already spent millions of dollars to install mercury equipment to reduce mercury emissions,” wrote Scott A. Weaver, the director of air quality services for American Electric Power, an Ohio-based electric utility company that operates power plants in 11 states, in a public comment on a draft of the rule.

“Rescinding the standards at this point will create new problems” Mr. Weaver wrote, noting that companies that have sought to recoup the cost of installing mercury control equipment through bills to customers may no longer legally be able to do so. That means the new rule could actually cost companies more money.

Yet in comments to the E.P.A, major coal companies and the United States Chamber of Commerce also supported changing the underlying cost-benefit analysis to prevent future rules that they might consider onerous.

Matthew Davis, a former E.P.A. scientist who worked with the agency’s office of children’s health protection to develop the original rule, said weakening the rule still represented a threat to children’s health.

“The reason we did this rule is because children and developing fetuses are harmed by mercury,” said Mr. Davis, who now works at the [League of Conservation Voters](#).

Jeffrey R. Holmstead, an attorney for the electric utility industry who served in the E.P.A. under the second President George Bush, rejected the idea that the decision was a cynical calculation to set the stage for other regulatory rollbacks.

“It’s not as if the administration has been shy about rolling back other things,” Mr. Holmstead said, dismissing environmental concerns. “I don’t think there’s any impact whatsoever from this.”

In Congress, the Obama-era mercury rule has bipartisan support. Senator Thomas R. Carper of Delaware, the top Democrat on the Environment and Public Works committee, and Senator Lamar Alexander of Tennessee, the chairman of an energy and water appropriations subcommittee, wrote an opinion piece in [USA Today](#) in November urging the Trump administration to leave the regulation unchanged.

“Changing the rule after billions of dollars have already been spent means that utilities will have less certainty about federal regulations,” they wrote. “The gains we have made over the past decade to protect children and families from dangerous mercury pollution should not be lost.”

NEW ESAA MEMBER

ESAA’s Board of Directors and staff would like to welcome the following new member:

Full Member:



Orion Environmental Services Ltd

Box 1144

Whitecourt, AB T7S 1P1

Phone: (403) 510-2292

Web: <https://orionenviro.ca/>

Darren Clark, VP Strategy and Development

e-mail: darren@orionenviro.ca

World-class Hydro Excavation and Industrial Cleaning Services. Our expert team & turnkey infrastructure will execute every phase of excavation, transportation and disposal.

ESAA Member News

AGAT LABS LAUNCHES CAMPAIGN TO “LIFT OUR LEAF. BUY CANADIAN” DURING COVID-19

Local businesses represent the backbone of our economy and sustain the social fabric of our communities throughout Canada. Unfortunately, the scope and scale of the economic devastation caused by COVID-19 is threatening the survival of many Canadian companies, or at the very least, their ability to rebound in a post-pandemic landscape.

The graphic features a central image of a hand holding a red maple leaf against a white background. Above the leaf, the text "Though apart, we're together" is written in a bold, red, sans-serif font. Below the leaf, the phrases "Lift our Leaf" and "Buy Canadian" are written in a bold, black, sans-serif font. The background of the graphic is a collage of small images showing various people in professional settings, including scientists in lab coats, a person in a grocery store, and a person holding a sign that says "OPEN". At the bottom left, the AGAT Laboratories logo is displayed, and at the bottom right, the text "Service Beyond Analysis" and the website "www.agatlabs.com" are visible.

As Canada's sole privately-owned laboratory network, we can relate to the difficulties faced by many of these Canadian companies and entrepreneurs who are struggling to save their life's work and their employees' livelihoods. That's why AGAT Labs has launched a campaign to “**Lift our Leaf. Buy Canadian**”, exhorting our employees, clients, suppliers and communities to rally behind local businesses and help keep them afloat during this critical time.

From coast to coast, we are all doing our part to flatten the curve, protect the most vulnerable in our midst, connect with our loved ones, support our communities and continue providing essential services. In the same vein, it is crucially important to keep reinvesting into our national economy by supporting local businesses in our neighbourhoods, cities and provinces. We must all come together to lift our country and fellow countrymen up in these difficult times.

We strongly urge you to support this campaign by sharing what you are doing to **#LiftOurLeaf** through this unprecedented crisis. Every little helps and every gesture counts, so please tell us how you **#LiftOurLeaf** on your social media, as well as on AGAT's [LinkedIn](#) and [Twitter](#) pages.

Thank you and stay safe,

Marissa Reckmann
Chief Executive Officer

ECO CANADA SURVEY – IMPACT OF COVID-19

ECO Canada would like to hear how your business has been impacted by recent events and the changing market. We invite you to participate in a survey (should take approx.. 10 mins) that will help us gauge current and ongoing workforce challenges. Your participation will help us determine additional labour market measures, programs, and resources needed to support the Canadian environmental sector. Survey Link: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/2020EmployerHRSurvey>



Industry Positions Openings



As a benefit of ESAA Membership, ESAA Members can now post position openings on our website at no charge. Position opening ads also will appear in the newsletter at no charge. For full details visit: <https://www.esaa.org/news/job-board/>

Note: You must still complete the advertising form. After completing the order form, you will receive an email with a link to post your position.

Non-Members are welcome to advertise as well for a nominal charge. Visit [advertising form](#) to place your order.

| Job Title | Organization | Application Deadline | Term | Details |
|---|------------------------------|----------------------|-----------|----------------------|
| Intermediate/Senior Vegetation Ecologist | Trace Associates Inc. | 2020-04-30 | Full-Time | more |
| Environmental Scientist or Biologist - 5 to 10 Years Experience | Langan | 2020-04-30 | Full-Time | more |
| Senior Environmental Engineer/Geoscientist | DILLON CONSULTING LIMITED | 2020-04-30 | Full-Time | more |
| MRF Operations Manager | KBL Environmental | 2020-04-30 | Full-Time | more |
| Air Quality Scientist I | SLR Consulting (Canada) Ltd. | 2020-05-08 | Full-Time | more |
| Air Quality Scientist II | SLR Consulting (Canada) Ltd. | 2020-05-08 | | more |
| Department Manager I | Element Materials Technology | 2020-03-16 | Full-Time | more |

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