

MONTHLY NEWS REVIEW

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Monthly News Review is prepared by the Oklahoma Climatological Survey. Its purpose is to provide a summary of weather and climate news or related issues that may help guide policy-makers in the Oklahoma Weather Center. Along with weather, climate, environmental, and science issues, the review includes issues on the national and state agendas and events that affect major businesses in Oklahoma that bear some relation to demands for weather-related information. The summaries and any opinions expressed herein are those of the author, and in no way reflect positions of the Oklahoma Climatological Survey or the University of Oklahoma.

NATIONAL

Omnibus appropriations bill passes (Government Executive 1/22/2004) – The Fiscal Year 2004 omnibus appropriations bill finally passed the Senate. The bill passed the House in December, but was stalled in the Senate due to numerous objections, including new rules on overtime pay and country-of-origin food labeling. The bill includes a 4.1 percent pay raise for both civilian and military employees, above the 2 percent increase for civilian employees proposed by the Bush administration. The administration's Fiscal Year 2005 budget is expected to be delivered to Congress on February 2.

<http://www.govexec.com/dailyfed/0104/012204cdpm1.htm>

<http://www.govexec.com/dailyfed/0104/012204d2.htm>

Economy cools slightly in fourth quarter (AP 1/30/2004) – The economy, which had grown at an annual rate of 8.2% in the third quarter, slowed to an annual growth rate of 4% in the fourth quarter. While still a strong sign of a recovery, it fell short of the projected 4.8% rate that analysts had expected. The boost during the third quarter was helped by consumer spending on durable goods, home refinancing, and business investment in software and new equipment. All three of these declined somewhat during the fourth quarter. Overall, the economy grew by 3.1% during 2003, the strongest growth since 2000 and nearly a one percentage point increase over 2002. Analysts voiced concerns about a downturn in business spending on buildings, which declined by 3% during the fourth quarter and 1.8% in the previous quarter, saying that sustained capital investment is a necessary ingredient for a lasting recovery. Jobless rates have remained steady despite the increased overall economic performance.

<http://apnews.myway.com/article/20040130/D80D9GFO3.html>

State budgets ailing (AP 12/5/2003) – A report presented by the National Governors Association and National Association of State Budget Officers says that states could have new budget challenges in 2004. The report cites rising health care costs and pent-up demand for government services as pressures on an otherwise improving budget picture. In the past three years, states have reduced spending in their general funds, the first time that has occurred since 1983. In the past fiscal year, state budgets declined by 1.6%, and further declined by 2% in the current budget year. Over the past two years, states have trimmed more than \$25 billion in midyear cuts. Meanwhile, Medicaid spending increased by 9.3% in fiscal 2003 and 12.8% in 2002. More than 30 states anticipate shortfalls in their Medicaid budgets this year.

State budgets looking better (USA Today 12/31/2003) – State finances are improving, but don't expect legislatures to tackle major issues this year, says the National Conference of State Legislatures. Smaller issues, like workers compensation, foster care, pharmaceutical prices, tort reform and heating bills, may be addressed, but issues such as tax reform and education financing will likely wait until after the 2004 election year. In 2003, state spending increased only 1.3% in the first nine months, while revenue increased 1.5%, a drastic change from the 4.6% increase in state spending in 2002. The fiscal restraint of 2003 may provide a relatively quiet, non-polarized session for most legislators, which is critical in 22 states where a change of three or fewer seats can put the other party in control. California, Illinois, and Michigan, however, still face severe budget problems.

http://www.usatoday.com/news/washington/2003-12-31-legislature_x.htm

2004 may be very good year, say economists (AP 12/29/2003) – The U.S. economy is poised for rapid expansion in 2004, say economists. Many analysts expect a growth rate of 4.6 percent or more, the biggest gain since 1984. However, most of the expansion is expected to come through increased productivity, as jobless rates are expected to remain near 5.7 percent throughout the year. Tax cuts, interest rates, and federal spending are combining to spur economic growth, and spending is only likely to increase during an election year.

Congress has stayed busy, legislators say (Oklahoman 11/27/2003) - Despite not being able to pass appropriations before the beginning of the fiscal year, Oklahoma's congressmen say that the 2003 legislative session was busy and productive. Senators and Representatives cite Medicare reform, a ban on partial birth abortion, new tax cuts, and progress on the Tar Creek Superfund site as major accomplishments. Some issues which remain unresolved are federal judicial nominations and energy legislation, the latter of which passed the House but has stalled in the Senate.

Science Committee gets new Ranking Member (NOAA Informer 1/21/2004) – The Democratic Caucus named Representative Bart Gordon (D-TN) the new Ranking Member of the House Science Committee. Former Ranking Member of the Committee, Ralph Hall, switched his party affiliation to Republican shortly after January 1, 2004.

House Science Committee clears transportation research bill (Committee on Science 2/4/2004) – The House Science Committee passed, by voice vote, H.R. 3551, which includes transportation research and development as part of the larger transportation bill. The amendment stipulates that 1.08 percent of overall transportation funds be directed to R&D, not to be less than \$500 million annually. HR 3551 focuses on strategic planning to tie R&D to specific goals for improving transportation systems, environmental impacts of transportation systems, and inclusion of social science research. It also seeks to improve the collection, analysis, and dissemination of statistics to help policymakers plan transportation projects. The bill was introduced by Representative Vernon Ehlers (R-MI). [*Thank you to Renee McPherson for the news story.*]

House Science Committee passes Remote Sensing bill (House Committee on Science 2/4/2004) – The House Science Committee passed, by voice vote, HR 1292, that establishes a grant program to help integrate remote sensing data to address state, local and regional needs. The purpose is to expand application or remote sensing data beyond scientific ventures, including use in urban planning, coastal zone management, resource supervision, and disaster monitoring. The bill was sponsored by Representative Mark Udall (D-CO). [*Thank you to Renee McPherson for the news story.*]

Court stays new pollution regulations (Oklahoman 12/25/2003) – A federal appeals court issued a stay on new EPA regulations governing power plant emissions until lawsuits filed by states are resolved. The new regulations change a requirement that previously required power plants to install systemwide pollution controls when expanding their capacity. The new rules would exempt unmodified portions of the plant from new pollution controls. The rule is being challenged by 12 states, most in the northeast, and several large cities.

New EPA restrictions please nobody (Oklahoman 12/16/2003) – New restrictions on mercury and sulfur dioxide emissions from power plants have both industry and environmental groups unhappy. Industry officials claim the new regulations will cost utilities \$5 billion to implement and will not substantially reduce environmental levels of mercury. Environmental groups say the new regulations are much weaker than those originally proposed in 2001 from the waning days of the Clinton Administration. The new regulations would reduce mercury emissions by 70 percent and sulfur dioxide by 68%. The proposed Clinton-Administration rules would have cut mercury by as much as 90 percent by 2008. “We don’t think the science supports the fact that this will have a huge effect on fish” said Melissa McHenry, a spokeswoman for American Electric Power Company. The spokeswoman claimed that naturally occurring sources of mercury far exceed those produced by power plants.

Changes in cattle industry likely (Oklahoman 1/4/2004) – Representative Frank Lucas (R-OK) plans to prompt congress to examine practices in the cattle industry during the upcoming legislative session. Included in the list of practices to be examined are tighter import controls, increasing the number of cattle inspected for mad cow disease, and prohibiting the use of “downer” cows in the food supply. The USDA has already banned the use of “downer” cows – those that can no longer stand because of sickness or injury – a move supported by Lucas while more permanent measures are put into place. Most “downer” cows suffer other ailments, such as leg or hip injuries, and are otherwise healthy.

The FY 2005 Budget

Senate Budget Chairman plans more deficit reduction (Congress Daily via Government Executive 1/28/2004) – Senate Budget Chairman Don Nickles (R-OK) aims to cut the deficit by more than that proposed by the Bush Administration. Nickles also said he did not intend to extend all tax cuts previously enacted. Nickles cited partisan divisions and major appropriations measures as challenges to creating a budget that will cut the deficit by more than half over the next five years. In particular, the Transportation Equity Act is due on the floor in early February. The measure is estimated to cost at least \$311 billion over six years. Nickles mentioned he would like to see non-defense, non-homeland-security spending levels frozen this year, and that he did not expect a large war supplemental this year. Nickles hopes to complete the budget resolution before the spring recess on April 12. Despite having budget resolutions in hand, some have expressed skepticism at being able to pass appropriations bills before the end of fiscal 2004. Some House members are already discussing a full-year continuing resolution to fund non-defense and non-homeland security programs.

<http://www.govexec.com/dailyfed/0104/012804cdam1.htm>

Homeland Security budget seeks 9.7 percent increase (Congress Daily 1/22/2004) – President Bush released the Homeland Security budget request in advance of his full budget proposal, which will be sent to Congress on February 2. The Homeland Security budget calls for a 9.7 percent increase in funding in fiscal 2005. The Justice Department's counterterrorism initiatives will have a 19 percent increase requested.

<http://www.govexec.com/dailyfed/0104/012204cdpm2.htm>

NOAA FY05 budget request (NOAA 2/5/2004) – The FY05 NOAA budget requests an increase of \$146.9 million over the FY04 request. Specific goals mentioned in the budget include:

- Weather and Water: \$1.41 billion (\$58.1 million increase) for GOES NPOESS satellites and \$5.5 million more for twice-daily air quality ozone forecasts in northeastern states.
- Climate: \$369.3 million (\$28.7 million increase) for ocean observing systems (\$10.7 million increase), five-year study on aerosols (\$6.6 million increase), carbon cycle atmospheric observing system (\$6.5 million more), and Comprehensive Large Array Data Stewardship System (CLASS; \$3.4 million more).
- Ecosystems: \$1.158 billion (\$145.3 million increase) for fisheries studies and observations
- Commerce and Transportation: \$252.1 million (\$23.1 million increase) for coastal and waterway mapping.

<http://www.publicaffairs.noaa.gov/releases2004/feb04/noaa04-013.html>

AGENCY NEWS

Agency grades continue to improve (Government Executive 1/29/2004) – OMB’s latest quarterly scorecards contained 8 green lights, 54 yellow lights, and 68 red lights. Two years ago, these numbers were 1 green, 19 yellow, and 110 red. The scorecards rate each agency in the five areas outlined in the president’s management agenda: human capital, competitive sourcing, financial management, e-government and integrating budgets with performance. The Office of Personnel Management and Energy Department were the only agencies to receive no red lights. The full scorecard can be found at <http://www.govexec.com/dailyfed/0104/ScoreCard1.htm>.
<http://www.govexec.com/dailyfed/0104/012904a2.htm>

NOAA requests comment on “Fair Weather” draft policy (NOAA 1/12/2004) – NOAA has requested public comment on a newly drafted policy governing National Weather Service interactions with public, private and academic weather and climate institutions. The new policy resulted from the National Research Council’s *Fair Weather: Effective Partnerships in Weather and Climate Services*, issued in 2002 (see <http://books.nap.edu/catalog/10610.html>). The new policy defines processes for making decisions on products, technologies and services, rather than rigidly defining the roles of the NWS and private sector. Comments may be submitted via <http://www.nws.noaa.gov/fairweather/> until May 14.
<http://www.publicaffairs.noaa.gov/releases2004/jan04/noaa04-005.html>

NOAA science advisory board receives research review report (NOAA 1/2/2004) – A preliminary report on NOAA research was delivered to its Science Advisory Board during its January 6 meeting. The Science Advisory Board advises the NOAA Administrator on strategies for research, education and the application of science to resource management, environmental assessment and prediction. The report is posted at <http://www.sab.noaa.gov/Reports/Reports.html>.
<http://www.publicaffairs.noaa.gov/releases2004/jan04/noaa04-r500.html>

Share-in-savings contracting (National Journal 1/22/2004) – Stephen Perry, head of the General Services Administration, is promoting a contracting initiative that would split savings between federal agencies and contractors. Under a 2002 e-government law, federal agencies are allowed to keep unused funds saved from the programs. The contracting initiative would pay vendors from savings their programs generate for the government, thus transferring the risk to the contractor. The more savings the contractor can generate, the more the earnings. The initiative, however, is drawing opposition from some members of Congress because it gives Congress less control over contracts and union opposition to outsourcing.
<http://www.govexec.com/dailyfed/0104/012204tdpm1.htm>

NWS performs well in survey (NOAA 1/28/2004) – An independent survey of products issued by the National Weather Service indicates a high level of satisfaction among customers. The survey included customers in the aviation, emergency management, media and marine sectors. All four sectors placed satisfaction at 76 or above, on a scale of 0 to 100, above the aggregate score of 70 for all federal agencies and 74 for all organizations.
<http://www.publicaffairs.noaa.gov/releases2004/jan04/noaa04-009.html>

NWS investigated for radar purchases (AP 12/28/2003) – An internal investigation of the National Weather Service found that officials “seriously mishandled” the contract for radar power systems. The investigation found that NWS bought and installed defective equipment designed to keep power flowing to the radars, and then paid for and replaced the system at a later time, instead of forcing the contractor to cover costs of defective equipment as had been urged by a government lawyer. Roger Curtis, contracting specialist for the original contract, complained to a top official that the payment was improper, and was subsequently fired (his dismissal is in litigation). Officials stated that they believed the NWS technical specifications were at fault, and not the contractor, but refused to elaborate on why the decision was not disclosed in the contract paperwork.

NASA personnel reform bill moves forward (Government Executive 1/29/2004) – Congress has passed NASA’s personnel reform bill, and with union support. The personnel reform bill will allow NASA to offer scholarships to students who agree to work for the agency, pay relocation costs, provide recruitment bonuses and more vacation time to new hires, and offer higher starting salaries. The measure gained union support not so much because of what it included, but because of what it excluded. NASA had sought more flexibility with demonstration projects and an employee exchange program with the private sector, both of which were cut from the bill. The bill also requires NASA to distribute bonus money among all levels of the organization.
<http://www.govexec.com/dailyfed/0104/012904pb.htm>

Administration seeks to reduce controversy at EPA (Congress Daily via Government Executive 1/27/2004) – Lobbyists and congressional aides predict that the White House will put moderates in a number of key positions in EPA, including general counsel, deputy administrator and enforcement chief. Stephen Johnson, nominated to the position of deputy administrator, has a solid reputation both within EPA, where he served as head of the pesticides program under the Clinton and current Bush administrations, and externally. The move appears aimed at undercutting criticism of EPA enforcement during the past three years, quieting criticism during the election period.
<http://www.govexec.com/dailyfed/0104/012704cdpm2.htm>

New GLOBE director named (UCAR 11/20/2003) – Craig Blurton has been selected to lead the GLOBE program. Blurton’s expertise is in science and computers. He headed the Information Technology and Teaching Group at the University of Hong Kong, where he was associate professor. GLOBE is a hands-on, school-based program for Earth science education, involving more than 24,000 teachers in 14,000 schools globally.
<http://www.ucar.edu/communications/newsreleases/2003/globe.html>

TAO receives Gracie (NOAA 12/10/2003) – The Tropical Atmosphere Ocean (TAO) project was recognized by Government Executive magazine for outstanding use of technology in government. The Gracies, named in honor of Grace Murray Hopper, recognize projects that make exceptional contributions to mission accomplishment, cost effectiveness and service to the public. The TAO network monitors sea-surface conditions in the Pacific Ocean, allowing early detection of the onset of El Ninos and contributing to improved seasonal climate forecasts.
<http://www.publicaffairs.noaa.gov/releases2003/dec03/noaa03-149.html>

Maryland Governor's Award to Robert Leffler (NOAA 12/4/2003) – Robert Leffler received the Maryland Governor's Award for his “outstanding services” to the citizens of Maryland. Leffler has been with NOAA since 1973, and has spent much of his 30-plus years of service working with the nation's Cooperative Observers. In addition to managing the Cooperative Observer program, Leffler has also been a volunteer observer since 1970. Leffler currently works with the National Weather Service's Climate Services Division, where he focuses upon maintaining the integrity of the climate record and enhancing climate services offered by the NWS. He also is a member of the National Climate Extremes Committee.

<http://www.publicaffairs.noaa.gov/releases2003/dec03/noaa03-r299-56.html>

Charles L. Mitchell Award to Gary Grice (NOAA 1/14/2004) – The American Meteorological Society presented the Charles L. Mitchell Award to Gary Grice, former deputy director of the National Weather Service Southern Region, at the organization's annual meeting. The award is given in recognition of long-term service in weather forecasting activities. Grice has more than 35 years in public service, including work with the U.S. Navy and Defense Intelligence Agency and more than thirty years with the National Weather Service. During his years as a forecaster with the NWS, Grice developed new techniques that aided forecasters in identifying and forecasting heavy rain events. Grice has been instrumental in a number of transitions, including overseeing transfer of the National Severe Storms Forecast Center from Kansas City to the Storm Prediction Center in Norman; leading the transition program office in the Southern Region during the Modernization and Associated Restructuring program in 1990; and developing the Building Leaders for a Solid Tomorrow (BLAST) program, recognized nationally as a model for spreading progressive leadership skills throughout the National Weather Service.

<http://www.publicaffairs.noaa.gov/releases2004/jan04/noaa04-r203.html>

Joseph Schaefer receives Presidential Rank Award (NOAA 1/7/2004) – Joseph Schaefer, director of the Storm Prediction Center, was awarded the 2003 Presidential Rank Award, given to federal senior executives recognizing exceptional long-term service to the American people. Under his leadership, the SPC broadened its scope to make it an all-hazards forecast center, adding mesoscale aspects of extreme winter weather, excessive rainfall, and fire weather to its tornado and severe thunderstorm outlooks. In addition, Schaefer has directed collaboration between forecasters at SPC and those in local offices, to integrate detailed knowledge that only exists on local levels.

<http://www.publicaffairs.noaa.gov/releases2004/jan04/noaa04-r208.html>

STATE & LOCAL

Governor Henry cautious (Tulsa World 12/2/2003) - Revenues are looking good for FY2004, but Governor Henry cautions against a rush to new spending. July through October revenues exceeded their FY03 counterparts by 14 percent, but are only 3.2 percent (\$47.4 million) ahead of budget projections. While this gives some cover for future months that may fall short of projections, it is not sufficient to warrant new spending, argues the Governor. However, Henry said he would consider targeted tax increases, such as a motor fuel tax for road maintenance or an increase in cigarette taxes for health care costs. Henry noted that several big items need to be addressed in the next session, including corrections, education, and rising health care costs. His plans for proposals on these matters are forthcoming. [Note: November tax revenues exceeded November 2002 revenues by 7%, and projections by 2.8%, adding another \$9.2 million to the fiscal year surplus - Oklahoman 12/10/2003.]

Recovery poses new challenges for state (Oklahoman 12/18/2003) – The recovering economy may actually mean less revenues to the state next year. Through a quirk in Oklahoma’s tax laws, the rising revenues will cause personal income tax rate to drop from 7% to its previous 6.65%, and also will restore sales tax rebates to certain taxpayers. The decline will also impact FY2004 revenues, as decreased tax rates in the last six months of the fiscal year will bring income tax collections in slightly below estimates. However, the strength of other tax sources should keep Oklahoma in the black, according to state officials. [*Thanks to Renee McPherson for the story.*]

EDGE report released (Oklahoman 1/10/2004) – Governor Henry’s team on economic development presented its plan to him. The Economic Development Generating Excellence (EDGE) group highlighted four major goals: encourage research growth, improve education, improve the health of Oklahomans and reform the business climate. Among the centerpieces of the plan is a call for a \$1 billion endowment to support research, turning Oklahoma into the “Research Capital of the Plains.” The endowment, once fully funded, would generate \$35-40 million per year. The group also cited torn and workers compensation as areas where reforms are needed. Information is posted on <http://www.okedge.org/>.

Governor outlines his agenda (Oklahoman 2/3/2004) – Governor Henry unveiled his budget priorities in the annual State of the State message as the Legislature convened for the 2004 session. At the top of his agenda are education, economic development, tax relief and health care. Governor Henry hopes to raise teacher salaries to the regional average, fully cover teacher’s health insurance premiums and pay for national certification bonuses. Henry also proposed a \$1,000 stipend to teachers who complete a summer program in math instruction and a \$2 million appropriation for the Oklahoma Partnership for School Readiness. Regarding higher education, Henry urged the legislature to fully fund state scholarships and endowed chairs and reform of the financial situation of CareerTech. The governor endorsed a tax increase on tobacco dedicated primarily to funding a cancer research center but called for tax cuts on capital gains from in-state companies, expanding income tax relief for retirees and making permanent the 6.65% income tax rate. The governor’s budget also calls for a \$1,000 salary increase for state employees, called for passage of an Indian gaming compact that would provide an estimated \$71 million in new revenues, and outlined a tort reform proposal patterned after Texas. The speech is posted on the Governor’s website: <http://www.governor.state.ok.us/stateofthestate.php>.

State House Republicans outline agenda (Oklahoman 1/27/2004) – Tort reform and workers compensation reform are at the top of the Republican House leadership this session. House Bill 1900, authored by Rep. Chris Hasting, would limit liability for personal injury and institute a “loser pays” system to reduce frivolous lawsuits. Other plans call for allowing companies to negotiate with doctors for workers compensation-related treatment costs, limiting attorney fees on such cases, and requiring proof of injury.

State Senate committee chair changes (Oklahoman 2/6/2004) – Senate Majority Whip Sam Helton (D-Lawton) will chair the Senate Energy, Environment and Communications Committee, effective March 1 following the resignation of Senator Kevin Easley (D-Broken Arrow). Easley is resigning to take a position as general manager of the Grand River Dam Authority. Senator Johnnie Crutchfield (D-Ardmore) will serve as vice chair of the committee. Senate President Pro Tempore Cal Hobson (D-Lexington) also announced that Senator Richard Lerblance (D-Hartshorne) will chair the Veterans, Military Affairs and Public Safety Committee, with Senator Debbie Leftwich (D-Oklahoma City) serving as vice chair. Lerblance’s district includes the U.S. Army Ammunition Plan near McAlester. [*Thanks to Cerry Leffler for the article.*]

Governor appoints science and technology secretary (Oklahoman 1/21/2004) – Governor Henry appointed Joseph Alexander as his cabinet secretary for science and technology. Dr. Alexander holds a doctorate in veterinary science from Colorado State University and is president of the Oklahoma State University Education, Research and Economic Development Foundation.

Governor fills public safety positions (Department of Emergency Management press release 1/16/2004) – Governor Henry named Kevin Ward to lead the Department of Public Safety. Ward, who will also serve as Henry’s Cabinet Secretary for Safety and Security, has been with the Department of Public Safety since 1980 and has been interim Commissioner since October 2003, when Bob Ricks resigned. In addition, Governor Henry named Major Kerry Pettingill as Oklahoma Homeland Security Director and retained Albert Ashwood as Emergency Management Director. Pettingill was commander of the DPS Tactical Teams Special Operations and Bomb Squads, and Ashwood has been Director of OEM since 1997. [*Thanks to Dale Morris for the announcement.*]

Leftwich wins vacant seat (Oklahoman 12/10/2003) - Debbie Leftwich won a special election to fill the state Senate seat of her husband, Keith Leftwich, who died of cancer in September. Leftwich received 55% of the vote in the south Oklahoma City district. Debbie Leftwich, former co-chairwoman fo the state Democratic Party defeated Republican Keith Maughan, former economic development director for Oklahoma County Commissioner Jack Cornett.

State wants targeted pay raises (Oklahoman 12/6/2003) – The Oklahoma Office of Personnel Management recommended that the Legislature consider targeted market adjustments in pay, rather than an across-the-board increase. The last pay raise given to state employees was a \$2,000 increase effective October 1, 2000. Some agencies have been able to award discretionary pay adjustments, but recent budget situations have made that option no longer available.

OG&E deal has companies steamed (Oklahoman 11/30/2003) - Fifteen years ago, OG&E entered into a power-purchase agreement with Smith Cogeneration, based in Oklahoma City. Under provisions of the Public Utilities Regulatory Policies Act of 1978 (PURPA), electric utilities were required to purchase energy from available cogeneration facilities at avoided cost. This means that purchases would favor cogeneration over traditional energy sources, which provides power to the utility and steam to be used in manufacturing. In the case of the Oklahoma City plant, the steam is used by Dayton Tire Company, saving them about \$7.5 million annually. The agreement expires in August 2004 and OG&E wants to purchase energy from a new facility in McClain county, one in which it has agreed to purchase a 77% stake. [Note: since this story aired, the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission delayed OG&E's bid for the McClain power plant, with a final decision expected within the next 18 months, pending hearings. Oklahoman 12/18/2003.]

GRDA may purchase energy from waste facility (Oklahoman 12/5/2003) – The Grand River Dam Authority may be required to purchase energy generated by a poultry waste company proposed in northeastern Oklahoma. The Rural Development Foundation, a non-profit organization based in Antlers, plans to build three waste-to-energy plants, at a cost of \$50 million each. The plants would be located near Jay, Stilwell and Broken Bow. The plants would reduce chicken litter applications on agricultural ground, which in turn would reduce phosphorus runoff into area lakes and rivers. State Representative Joe Hutchinson (D-Jay) requested a House study on the costs of proposed facilities. Rep. Hutchinson said he would prefer that GRDA purchase the energy voluntarily, but would consider legislation if necessary.

OSU ag dean to retire (Oklahoman 1/16/2004) – Sam Curl, dean of agriculture and renewable natural resources at Oklahoma State University, has announced he will retire effective June 30. Curl has served as a faculty member and higher education administrator for 41 years and as an OSU dean for seven years. A national search will begin soon to find a new dean.

Universities to aid Iraqi education (Oklahoman 11/26/2003) – The University of Oklahoma, Oklahoma State University, Cameron University, and Langston University received a \$5 million grant from the US Agency for International Development (USAID) to assist three higher education institutions in Iraq. The grant will help link the three Iraqi universities to resources in the United States, to improve access to scholarly research. Each of the Oklahoma universities will contribute according to its core strengths, such as OSU assisting with agriculture education. The project leader is Tom Owens, with OU's educational leadership and policy studies program.

Air Quality strategy being developed (Oklahoman 10/4/2003) – The Association of Central Oklahoma Governments and the Oklahoma Department of Environmental Quality are looking at long-range strategies to preserve Oklahoma's clean air designations for its metropolitan areas. Computer models of emissions data, covering a two-decade time frame, are providing information on changing patterns and enabling policymakers to devise solutions. Some alternatives under consideration include using cleaner-burning gasoline for commercial consumption, using vapor recovery systems with wholesale gasoline delivery trucks, and reducing emissions from vehicle fleets by converting to natural gas. Officials are concerned that, while Oklahoma has retained clean air status, monitoring stations show they are consistently at the margins of non-compliance.

Clean air, for now (Oklahoman 12/5/2003) – Oklahoma retained a clean-air designation for 2003, but new rules create new challenges for Oklahoma City and Tulsa. New regulations on coal-fired power plants will go into effect soon. The effect of those rules on the metropolitan areas is unknown, but tightening standards make continued compliance challenging. With the variability of Oklahoma’s summertime weather, unfavorable climate one year could bring the cities out of compliance. [*Note: better predictions of summer pollutant concentrations could be an opportunity for the Weather Center.*]

Oklahoma and Arkansas reach agreement (Tulsa World 12/17/2003) – Oklahoma and Arkansas officials agreed on a plan to reduce phosphorus in eastern Oklahoma rivers. The agreement marks the ends of years of legal challenges and conflict over several rivers that originate in northwestern Arkansas and flow into eastern Oklahoma. The rivers, which are heavily contaminated from Arkansas’ chicken industry, form a principal portion of Oklahoma’s water supply, including water for the city of Tulsa. The agreement sets aside Oklahoma’s standard of 0.037 milligrams per liter of phosphorus, and instead uses a watershed management approach. Phosphorus discharges from wastewater treatment plants in Arkansas will be cut by 75 percent in the next ten years and the two states will work together to determine limits on poultry litter application on land in the watershed.

Sorting out tribal water regulations (Oklahoman 1/26/2004) – The Oklahoma Water Resources Board is considering removing the “culturally significant waters” designation from its rules. The designation allows Native American tribes to define water quality standards on its lands, in concordance with federal law. However, the designation has proved complicated, with 39 tribes in Oklahoma able to set differing standards. The rule change will be considered at the February 10 OWRB meeting and, if passed, must be approved by the Oklahoma Legislature.

Water uses challenged (Oklahoman 1/20/2003) – James Barnett, attorney for the Arbuckle-Simpson Aquifer Protection Federation and former director of the Oklahoma Water Resources Board, filed nine requests with the OWRB to deny water-use permits. Barnett claims that the entities either use more than the allotted water, or transfer water outside the boundaries of the aquifer, in violation of state law. The entities include the cities of Davis, Ada and Sulphur, several rural water districts, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the National Park Service. Although the Foundation may appear to be protecting the aquifer’s water, Barnett also represents landowners who are seeking water-use permits in order to sell water to several west-central Oklahoma communities. Some of those targeted by Barnett’s petitions have testified against the landowners represented by Barnett.

Town ordered to rebuild water towers (Oklahoman 1/7/2004) – Rush Springs has been ordered to rebuild two new water towers, at its expense. The water towers were constructed during the past seven years, but do not provide sufficient water pressure. The Oklahoma Department of Environmental Quality, which had approved the previous plans, said the town must rebuild the water towers, which will cost the town an additional \$885,000 over the \$320,000 it already paid. The DEQ says it is the town’s responsibility to assure the plans are correct and that the agency only reviews plans for minimum design standards. Many towns hire professional engineers before constructing water systems, said the DEQ.

New EPA chief tours Tar Creek site (Tulsa World 11/27/2003) – Michael Leavitt, the newly-confirmed head of the EPA, toured the Tar Creek Superfund site in northeastern Oklahoma. The tour was Leavitt's first trip as EPA Administrator, a promise he made to Senate Environmental and Public Works Committee chairman Jim Inhofe (R-OK). EPA regional administrator Richard Greene and Quapaw Tribe Chairman John Berrey joined Leavitt and Inhofe on the tour. Leavitt, who was formerly governor of Utah, is quite familiar with mine tailings, but was amazed to see the concentration of tailings, subsidence, water problems, and yard remediation work in the 40-square-mile site. The EPA estimates that there are 75 million tons of tailings, 800 acres of mining sludge ponds, and hundreds of open mine shafts in the area that must be addressed. Leavitt endorsed Inhofe's \$45 million remediation plan, which the Senator claims will have the site cleaned up in six years. The EPA hopes to have a consent decree signed soon that will allow them to begin moving the tailings within the next 18 months. Also remaining to be resolved are property and ownership issues in the area with the Quapaw tribe, which Greene hopes to resolve in January.

Governor advocates targeted buyouts (Tulsa World 11/17/2003) – (Oklahoman 1/27/2004) – Governor Henry has proposed a \$5 million plan that would allow families with children six years of age or younger to sell their homes in Picher, Cardin, or North Miami to the state. The towns, at the center of the EPA-designated Tar Creek Superfund site, are heavily contaminated by lead from mining activities. The funding would come from the \$117 million federal assistance the state received last year. Miles Tolbert, Oklahoma secretary of the environment, estimates about 100 families could qualify for the voluntary relocation. The plan undercuts efforts by Senator Jim Inhoffe, who arranged for Cherokee Investment Partners of Raleigh, N.C. to buy out residences in the Superfund site. Area officials and the governor are concerned that the private buyout may take advantage of residents desperate to sell their property.

WEATHER & CLIMATE

Climate Reference Network goes online (USA Today 12/17/2003) – Beginning in January 2004, the National Climatic Data Center’s (NCDC) Climate Reference Network (CRN) will be operational. The network presently has 47 sites in 26 states, and expects to expand to 100 sites in the next two years. The network uses redundant temperature and precipitation gauges to monitor trends in regional and national climate. Sites are positioned on land that is not likely to be developed over the next 100 years, and should remain relatively free of urban influences. Observations will be on NCDC’s website: <http://www.ncdc.noaa.gov/oa/climate/uscrn/index.html>. The network was developed for the purpose of detecting unambiguous climate change signals. http://story.news.yahoo.com/news?tmpl=story&u=/usatoday/20031217/tc_usatoday/12072124

New Climate Applications and Research Institute established (NOAA 11/14/2003) – NOAA and Columbia University have established the Cooperative Institute for Climate Applications and Research (CICAR), based at the Lamont-Doherty Earth Observatory. The Institute will focus on modeling, understanding, prediction and assessment of climate variability and change, and will include archiving and analysis of paleoclimate data and specialized applications for decision-makers and risk assessment. CICAR will be supported through NOAA’s Geophysical Fluid Dynamics Laboratory. <http://www.publicaffairs.noaa.gov/releases2003/nov03/noaa03-r516.html>

Oklahoma Lawmaker threatens hearing over bad forecast (Oklahoman 12/12/2003) – Oklahoma State Senator Stratton Taylor is considering holding hearings on the Oklahoma Transportation Authority’s (OTA) handling of snow removal on the Creek Turnpike during an early December winter storm. Taylor criticized OTA for “minimal, if any maintenance work performed” on the Creek Turnpike. OTA spokeswoman Brigitte West said the event was unusual, because only a trace of snow had been forecast and the area received eight inches of snow. West said the agency has done a post-event review and has identified mistakes that can be corrected, such as calling in help from unaffected areas a bit sooner.

Hurricane track forecasts improve (UCAR 11/24/2003) – Preliminary data from the National Hurricane Center shows that the average track error in NHC’s 2003 Atlantic forecasts has been the smallest on records. There was still variability in the success; some such as Isabel followed a relatively smooth track while others such as Kate and Nicholas were more erratic. Despite the variability, however, the past four years have seen a consistent improvement in forecast tracks, according to NHC deputy director Edward Rappaport. Improvement in the range of 48 hours is even more impressive: a 35% improvement since 2000. Although tracks have improved, strength and inland rainfall remain problematic.

<http://www.ucar.edu/communications/newsreleases/2003/uswrp.html>

River prevents re-enactment of crossing (AP 12/25/2003) – The Delaware River was deemed too dangerous for the annual re-enactment of George Washington’s Christmas Eve crossing, for the second year in a row. Recent rains and snowmelt pushed the river 7 feet above normal, with a current of about 15 mph. In 2002, sleet, wind, and strong currents – conditions similar to what occurred in 1776 – prevented the re-enactment.

Countries plan on going ahead with Kyoto (AP 12/13/2003) – Several countries, including the 15 member nations of the European Union, intend to abide by the Kyoto accord greenhouse gas emission caps, despite the unwillingness of the United States, Australia, or Russia to commit to the Kyoto accord. At the close of the U.N. climate change conference in Milan, the nations pledged to meet their targets, even though they are behind on them. Australia also said it would try to meet the targets, despite choosing not to ratify the treaty. Delegates at the conference agreed that reforestation can be used as credits toward meeting emission goals and pledged to commit funds for developing countries to develop new technology and cope with the effects of global warming. Harlan Watson, lead negotiator for the United States, noted that the commitment to new technology was one of the main initiatives of the Bush Administration.

Methane concentrations level off (NOAA 11/17/2003) – A new study, appearing in Geophysical Research Letters, shows that methane concentrations in the atmosphere have leveled off. According to lead author Ed Dlugokencky, methane concentrations have been constant for four years, although it is not clear whether this is a new state of equilibrium or a temporary pause in the trend toward higher concentrations. The study also finds a change in distribution between the northern and southern latitudes, attributed to decreased fossil fuel production in Russia. Methane is considered a greenhouse gas, and has more than doubled since pre-industrial times. The leveling off is considered an unexpected finding.

<http://www.publicaffairs.noaa.gov/releases2003/nov03/noaa03-135.html>

Cities may be changing climate (NASA 12/11/2003) – A new study, presented at the fall Meeting of the American Geophysical Union, showed that daily precipitation trends have changed in regions downwind of Houston over the last 60 years. The study, which combines data from the TRMM satellite with ground-based observations, show that cities tend to be one to ten degrees Fahrenheit warmer than surrounding suburbs and rural areas. Urban heat islands, urban structures that alter wind fields, and interactions with sea breezes affect precipitation patterns in and around urban areas, according to the researchers. Related studies show that increase aerosol concentrations provide condensation nuclei, inhibiting development of large raindrops and leading to bigger clouds and heavier rain.

<http://www.gsfc.nasa.gov/topstory/2003/1211urban.html>

Southeastern Oklahoma drought threatens water supplies (Oklahoman 1/2/2004) – Atoka Lake in southeastern Oklahoma is 11.5 feet below normal, or about 13 billion gallons short. Tree stumps once submerged now stand on dry ground. The declining lake level is largely attributed to the rainfall deficit in that part of the state. During 2003, southeastern and south-central Oklahoma received only 64 percent of normal rainfall, the lowest totals in 30 years. Oklahoma Marsha Slaughter, director of the City Water Department, noted that fall rains have not produced runoff due to the dry soils, thus inhibiting recharge of the reservoir. The lake is an important water supply for the City, which has a pipeline from Atoka Lake to Lake Stanley Draper in central Oklahoma.

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

Congressional Visits Day (American Geological Institute 2/1/2004) – The AGU has scheduled the 9th annual Science, Engineering, and Technology Congressional Visits Day (CVD) for March 3-4, 2004. A workshop will be held March 3 at AGU headquarters for geoscience participants to learn about communication with Congress. Participants will individually meet with their senators, representatives, and staff members on March 4. For more information, see <http://www.agiweb.org/cvd/>. [*Thanks to John Cortinas for this notice.*]

NSF creates new senior advisor position (UCAR 12/19/2003) – The National Science Foundation named Thomas Windham to serve in the newly created position of senior advisor for science and engineering workforce. The position is geared toward broadening participation in science and engineering careers and as a liaison to minority-serving institutions. <http://www.ucar.edu/communications/newsreleases/2003/windham.html>

NASA plan questioned (Congress Daily via Government Executive 1/28/2004) – Senators John McCain (R-AZ) and Bill Nelson (D-FL) challenged the administration's proposal for future space exploration. The senators questioned NASA Administrator Sean O'Keefe on whether the costs of a Mars mission were realistic. Senator Nelson voiced concerns that a \$1 billion increase over five years - \$200 million per year – would not be sufficient, and that other funding constraints would pose limitations on the mission. <http://www.govexec.com/dailyfed/0104/012804cdpm1.htm>

Biomonitoring could shed new light on pollutants (AP 12/26/2003) – A new technique called biomonitoring allows scientists to catalog pollutants accumulating in human bodies. The tests, which cost \$5,000 each, may help scientists better understand the links between environmental contaminants and buildup of chemicals within the human body. In the study, even those who only ate organic food and lived healthy lifestyles were surprised to find pesticides, flame retardants and other man-made chemicals in their bloodstream. The tests may yield some clues on exposure, but they are far from conclusive. There are more than 75,000 chemicals found in the United States and advocates are still uncertain for which of the chemicals to test.

Low-carb diets could threaten wheat production (Oklahoman 12/6/2003) – The popularity of low-carbohydrate diets poses a challenge to wheat and grain growers. The increase of high protein diets in the last two years has created an image problem for the wheat industry, according to Lori Sachau of the Wheat Foods Council, who spoke at the Wheat Growers Association's annual convention in Enid, Oklahoma. In response, the council has started the Great Grain Campaign to educate the public on the benefits of grain foods. Sachau cited a study by the National Academy of Sciences that finds that 45-65 percent of daily calories should come from carbohydrates, and that high protein diets can increase cholesterol. Other problems discussed at the meeting included integrating biotechnology into production, such as introducing more disease-resistant or drought-resistant strains of wheat, and increasing crop insurance to cover 75 to 85 percent of losses.

REPORTS & STUDIES

Air quality management needs improvements (National Academies 1/30/2004) – Despite the progress made toward cleaner air, more needs to be done to improve the nation's ability to confront future air pollution challenges, says a new report from the National Academies' Board on Environmental Studies and Toxicology. The committee recommended that the EPA target groups of pollutants rather than individual ones and consider how pollution travels across state and international borders. Also included among the recommendations is improved tracking of emissions to assess at-risk populations. The report was conducted at the request of Congress, who asked the committee to review the effectiveness of the Clean Air Act. Overall, the committee reported substantial progress in improving air quality management since the Act's passage in 1970, but noted some areas for improvement. The report is on the National Academies website, <http://books.nap.edu/catalog/10728.html>. [Thanks to Cerry Leffler for the story.]

<http://www4.nationalacademies.org/news.nsf/isbn/0309089328?OpenDocument>

Transition to a hydrogen economy (National Academies 2/4/2004) - A transition to hydrogen as a major fuel in the next 50 years could significantly change the U.S. energy economy, reducing air emissions and expanding domestic energy resources, but technical, economic, and infrastructure barriers need to be overcome, says a new report from the National Academies' National Academy of Engineering and National Research Council. In the best case scenario, the transition to a hydrogen economy would take many decades, and any reductions in oil imports and carbon dioxide emissions are likely to be minor during the next 25 years, said the committee that wrote the report. The report, *The Hydrogen Economy: Opportunities, Costs, Barriers and R&D Needs*, is online at: http://books.nap.edu/catalog/10922.html?onpi_newsdoc02042004.

<http://www4.nationalacademies.org/news.nsf/isbn/0309091632?OpenDocument>

Groundwater Fluxes Across Interfaces (National Academies 1/23/2004) – The National Research Council's Committee on Hydrologic Science, Water Science and Technology Board released a report on *Groundwater Fluxes Across Interfaces*. The report examines the movement of groundwater fluxes to and from surface water boundaries, including temporal and spatial distribution of the fluxes and standard procedures for measuring recharge. Various scientific committees and federal agencies have identified groundwater fluxes as a priority area for research, but the multiple disciplines and needs create difficulties for devising standards of measurement. The report is on the National Academies Press website, <http://www.nap.edu/catalog/10891.html>.

Intelligent Transportation Systems (National Academies 1/23/2004) – The National Academies' Transportation Research Board has completed a review of the U.S. Department of Transportation's Intelligent Transportation Systems Standards Program. The report, *Development and Deployment of Standards for Intelligent Transportation Systems*, is available in pre-publication form on the Academies' website, <http://books.nap.edu/html/SR280/SR280.pdf>. The USDOT requested a review of its ITS Standards Program in 1999, for which the Academies issued a report. The new report is a follow-on to the original that focuses on emerging obstacles to effective standards deployment.

NSF calls for new roadways research program (National Academies 1/12/2004) – Recent advances in meteorology and roadway technology could help make roads safer and more efficient during inclement weather, such as snow, rain and flash floods, says a new report from the National Academies' Board on Atmospheric Sciences and Climate and Transportation Research Board. The federal government should establish a national road weather research program led by the Federal Highway Administration to bring together the weather and transportation research communities to tackle these issues. The report calls for development of new technologies to monitor, predict, and communicate road conditions, with testing in national demonstration corridors. A prepublication version of the report, *Where the Weather Meets the Road: A Research Agenda for Improving Road Weather Services* can be found at the Academies' website, http://books.nap.edu/catalog/10893.html?onpi_newsdoc01122004. The committee was chaired by John Snow, dean of the College of Geosciences at The University of Oklahoma. <http://www4.nationalacademies.org/news.nsf/isbn/0309091365?OpenDocument>

NSF needs improved process to rank proposals (National Academies 1/14/2004) – According to a new report, the National Science Foundation needs a clear process to set criteria and rationale for the selection of large research-facility projects, within the Major Research Equipment and Facilities Construction (MREFC) account. In recent years, the number of plans to build new facilities has grown, and approved projects have become increasingly complex and expensive. The committee recommended a three-stage ranking process to shape selection of projects. The first stage would request researchers in a given field or interdisciplinary area to determine which proposals have the greatest scientific potential, including factors such as technological readiness, scientific credentials, and project-management capabilities. The second stage would require the senior leadership of the appropriate NSF “directorates” to evaluate proposals surviving the first round, including how well the proposal fits with NSF strategic goals. The third stage would have the National Science Board review all remaining proposals, evaluating using broad, national goals as criteria. The report also recommended greater oversight on funded projects, including periodic review by scientific experts as well as considerations of financial and project management. The report, *Setting Priorities for Large Research Facility Projects Supported by the National Science Foundation*, is provided on the Academies' website: http://www.nap.edu/catalog/10895.html?onpi_newsdoc01142004. <http://www4.nationalacademies.org/news.nsf/isbn/0309090849?OpenDocument>

Better methods needed to size up doctoral programs (National Academies 11/21/2003) - New analytical tools and sources of data are needed to evaluate research-doctorate programs and foster useful comparisons, says a new report from the National Academies' Board on Higher Education and the Workforce. The report assesses the strength and weaknesses of the methodology used in a 1995 Academies report, *Research Doctorate Programs in the United States: Continuity and Change*, and recommends ways to improve new assessments. The full report is on the Academies' website, <http://books.nap.edu/catalog/10859.html>, along with a PDF Brief.

FEDERAL LEGISLATION

Introduced (in committee)

HR 268 – “United States Weather Research Program Act of 2003”

- Introduced 1/8/2003 by Rep. Ehlers [MI-3]
- Last Major Action: 2/20/2003 Referred to House subcommittee
- Status: House Committee on Science; referred to subcommittee
- Description: Authorizes appropriations for the Weather Research Program for fiscal years 2004-2006; sets research priorities including forecasts of strength and landfall of hurricanes, improving forecasts of heavy precipitation and winter storms, improving flood forecasting and warning systems, improving short and medium-range (2-14 day) forecasts, and examining societal and economic impacts, including evaluating methods for delivering information to users and assessing social and economic impacts.

HR 460 – “Wildfire Prevention Act of 2003”

- Introduced 1/29/2003 by Rep. Hayworth [AZ-5]
- Last Major Action: 2/13/2003 Referred to House subcommittee
- Status: House Agriculture and Resources committees; referred to subcommittees
- Description: Establishes Institutes to conduct research on the prevention of and restoration from wildfires in the interior West.

HR 748 – “Urban Sprawl and Smart Growth Study Act”

- Introduced 2/12/2003 by Rep. Udall [CO-2]
- Last Major Action: 2/24/2003 House committee actions
- Status: Referred to House Committee on Resources; comment requested from CEQ
- Description: Requires Council on Environmental Quality to conduct a study on urban sprawl and smart growth.

HR 1293 – “Family Farm and Ranch Innovation Act of 2003”

- Introduced: 3/13/2003 by Rep. Udall [CO-2]
- Last Major Action: 3/19/2003 Executive Comment requested from USDA
- Status: Committees on (1) Small Business and (2) Agriculture; Agriculture requested comment from USDA on 3/19/2003
- Description: authorize the Small Business Administration and Department of Agriculture to assist farmers and ranchers seeking to develop and implement agricultural innovation plans in order to increase their profitability in ways that provide environmental benefits

HR 1578 – “Global Change Research and Data Management Act of 2003”

- Introduced 4/2/2003 by Rep. Udall [CO-2]
- Last Major Action: 5/1/2003: House Science committee defeated measure to report
- Status: Referred to House Science, Budget, and International Relations Committees
- Description: Directs the President to establish an interagency committee to coordinate federal research activities related to global change, develop and interagency research program to provide periodic assessments of the vulnerability of the U.S. and other regions, and develop a National Global Change Research Plan. Also requires the President to establish an interagency climate and other global change data management working group, including establishing an Office of Global Change Research Information.

HR 2447 – Interagency task force on biotechnology

- Introduced 6/12/2003 by Rep. Smith [MI-7]
- Last Major Action: 6/24/2003 House committee requests comments
- Status: Referred to House (1) International Relations and (2) Agriculture Committees; Agriculture requests Executive Comment from USDA
- Description: Establishes a federal interagency task force to promote the benefits, safety, and potential uses of agricultural biotechnology.

HR 3402 – “Permanent Emergency Agricultural Disaster Assistance Act”

- Introduced 10/29/2003 by Rep. Peterson [MN-7]
- Last Major Action: 11/3/2003 Reported Referred to House committee; Comment requested
- Status: Referred to House Committee on Agriculture; Executive comment requested from USDA
- Description: Would establish permanent authority for the Secretary of Agriculture to quickly assist agricultural producers who incur crop losses as a result of damaging weather or related conditions.

HR 3551 – “Surface Transportation Research and Development Act of 2003”

- Introduced 11/20/2003 by Rep. Ehlers [MI-3]
- Last Major Action: 2/4/2004 Reported from House Science Committee
- Status: Reported from House Committee on Science, still in House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee (subcommittee)
- Description: Authorizes appropriations for research and development projects related to surface transportation; includes requirements for strategic planning and annual reporting; bill includes \$50-75 million annually for training and education, \$56-90 million annually for University Transportation Research, and \$130-145 million annually for Intelligent Transportation Systems research.

S 17 – “Global Climate Security Act of 2003”

- Introduced 1/7/2003 by Sen. Daschle [SD]
- Last Major Action: 1/7/2003 Referred to Senate committee
- Status: Referred to Committee on Environment and Public Works
- Description: Initiates federal actions to reduce risks from climate change to the economy, the environment, and quality of life (contains major provisions of climate change amendments to Energy Policy Act of 2002).

S 118 – “Emergency Warning Act of 2003”

- Introduced 1/9/2003 by Sen. Edwards [NC]
- Last Major Action: 1/9/2003 Referred to Senate committee
- Status: Referred to Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation
- Description: Provides for development of an all-hazards public warning system.

S 139 – “Climate Stewardship Act of 2003”

- Introduced 1/9/2003 by Sen. Lieberman [CT]
- Last Major Action: 10/30/2003 Referred to Senate committee
- Status: Discharged from Committee on Environment and Public Works (10/29/2003); Amendment failed; Referred back to Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works
- Description: Provides for scientific research on abrupt climate change, establishes greenhouse gas emissions tradeable allowances that could be used interchangeably with passenger fuel economy standard credits, limits greenhouse gas emissions in U.S., and reduce dependence upon foreign oil.

S 194 – “National Greenhouse Gas Emissions Inventory and Registry Act of 2003”

- Introduced 1/17/2003 by Sen. Corzine [NJ]
- Last Major Action: 1/17/2003 Referred to Senate committee
- Status: Referred to Committee on Environment and Public Works
- Description: Establishes and inventory of greenhouse gas emissions and encourage voluntary reductions in emissions.

S 321 – “Firefighting Research and Coordination Act”

- Introduced in Senate 2/5/2003 by Sen. McCain [AZ]
- Last Major Action: 4/30/2003 Senate subcommittee hearings held
- Status: Referred to Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation
- Description: provides for development of new technology and methods (“a scientific basis”) for new firefighting technology standards, improve coordination and training, and improving response to emergencies.
 - Related Bill (identical): H.R. 545; Introduced in House 2/5/2003 by Rep. Camp [MI-4]; referred to House Committee on Science

S 561 – “State Water Sovereignty Protection Act”

- Introduced: 3/6/2003 by Sen. Crapo [ID]
- Last Major Action: 3/6/2003 Referred to Senate committee.
- Status: Committee on the Judiciary
- Description: Subjects management and control of water in a State to the laws of such State and delegates authority to regulate water to the States

S 944 – “Renewable Energy Investment Act of 2003”

- Introduced: 4/29/2003 by Sen. Jeffords [VT]
- Last Major Action: 4/29/2003 Referred to Senate committee.
- Status: Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
- Description: establishes national renewable energy portfolio standards and markets and distributes receipts from the sale of credits to states for use in promoting renewable energy production, consumer rebates, distributed generation and research and development.

S 1164 – “Abrupt Climate Change Research Act of 2003”

- Introduced: 6/2/2003 by Sen. Collins [ME]
- Last Major Action: 6/2/2003 Referred to Senate committee.
- Status: Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation
- Description: Comprehensive research program on abrupt climate change, to be housed within NOAA; provides \$60 million for research on indicators and documenting past occurrences.

S 2009 – “Sound Science for Endanger Species Act Planning Act of 2004”

- Introduced: 1/20/2004 by Sen. Smith [OR]
- Last Major Action: 1/20/2004 Referred to Senate committee.
- Status: Committee on Environment and Public Works
- Description: Amends the Endangered Species Act of 1973 to give greater weight to scientific or commercial data that is empirical or has been field-tested or peer-reviewed.

House/Senate Floor

HR 238 – “Energy Research, Development, Demonstration, and Commercial Application Act of 2003”

- Introduced 1/8/2003 by Rep. Boehlert [NY-24]
- Last Major Action: 6/27/2003 House preparation for the floor
- Status: Referred to House Resources and Science committees; Reported favorably from House Science Committee on 4/2/2003; Discharged from Resources Committee on 6/27/2003; placed on Union Calendar
- Description: Supports energy research, reduce consumption from imported sources, improve energy efficiency and supply, reduce environmental impacts, aid domestic production, and stimulate markets for advanced energy technologies.

HR 1292 – “Remote Sensing Applications Act of 2003”

- Introduced 3/13/2003 by Rep. Udall [CO-2]
- Last Major Action: 2/4/2004 Reported from House Science Committee
- Status: Reported from House Committee on Science
- Description: Requires NASA to establish a grant program for pilot projects to explore the integrate use of sources of remote sensing and other geospatial information to address State, local, regional, and tribal agency needs; includes requirements for an advisory committee and independent evaluation and assist in development of commercial applications.

HR 1346 – “Federal Government Energy Management Improvement Act”

- Introduced in House 3/19/2003 by Rep. Turner [OH-3]
- Last Major Action: 6/2/2003 House preparation for the floor
- Status: Reported favorably from House Committee on Government Reform (3/20/2003); Discharged from House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure (6/2/2003); Placed on Union Calendar.
- Description: Encourages Federal procurement policies that enhance energy efficiency and reduce dependency on non-renewable energy sources.

HR 3261 – “Database and Collections of Information Misappropriation Act”

- Introduced: 10/8/2003 by Rep. Coble [NC-6]
- Last Major Action: 1/21/2004 Referred from Committee.
- Status: Reported favorably from House Committee on the Judiciary 16-7 on 1/21/2004
- Description: Extends civil liabilities to distribution of a substantial part of the information contained in databases; provides exceptions for certain reasonable uses; excludes government and Federally funded mandated databases and computer programs from these protections

S 791 – “Renewable Fuels Act”

- Introduced in Senate 4/3/2003 by Sen. Inhoffe [OK]
- Last Major Action: 6/3/2003 Senate preparation for floor
- Status: Reported favorably (4/9/2003) by Environment and Public Works Committee; Placed on Senate Legislative Calendar
- Description: would amend Clean Air Act to establish a renewable fuels program and set standards by 2005, encourage the use of ethanol, and phase out MTBE.

Passed originating body (House / Senate)

HR 135 – “Twenty First Century Water Commission Act of 2003”

- Introduced: 1/7/2003 by Rep. Linder [GA-7]
- Last Major Action: 12/9/2003 Passed House; referred to Senate committee
- Status: Passed House 11/21/2003 by voice vote; referred 12/9/2003 to Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works
- Description: Establishes the “Twenty-First Century Water Commission” to study and develop recommendations for a comprehensive water strategy to address future water needs. Guidelines for the Commission include respecting states rights, identifying incentives, avoiding unfunded mandates, eliminating duplication among Federal agencies, considering all available technologies, making recommendations for capturing excess water for use in times of drought, developing financing options for public works projects, and developing strategies for conservation and repair of infrastructure.

HR 3157 – Designation of USDA disaster liaison

- Introduced: 9/4/2003 by Rep. Blunt [MO-7]
- Last Major Action: 11/18/2003 Referred to Senate committee.
- Status: Passed House by voice vote on 11/17/2003; Referred to Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry
- Description: Directs the Secretary of Agriculture to designate Department of Agriculture employees to serve for up to 30 days as disaster liaisons to State and local Department Service Centers to coordinate assistance with other designated disaster agencies in a federally declared disaster area.

S 196 – “Digital and Wireless Network Technology Program Act of 2003”

- Introduced in Senate 1/17/2003 by Sen. Allen [VA]
- Last Major Action: 7/21/2003 Referred to House subcommittee
- Status: Passed Senate 97-0 (4/30/2003); Referred to House (1) Science and (2) Education and Workforce Committees
- Description: establishes \$250 million program in NSF to improve access to and use of digital and wireless network technology at minority-serving institutions; includes efforts to increase scientific, mathematical, engineering, and technology instructions and research.

S 212 – “High Plains Aquifer Hydrogeologic Characterization, Mapping and Modeling Act”

- Introduced 1/23/2003 by Sen. Bingaman [NM]
- Last Major Action: 10/30/2003 House subcommittee hearings held
- Status: Passed Senate by Unanimous Consent (4/7/2003); Referred to House Committee on Resources, Subcommittee on Water and Power
- Description: Authorizes the Secretary of the Interior to cooperate with the High Plains Aquifer States to conduct a hydrogeologic characterization, mapping, modeling and monitoring program for the aquifer (originally introduced in House in 2002).

S 515 – “ Ombudsman Reauthorization Act of 2003”

- Introduced in Senate 3/5/2003 by Sen. Crapo [ID]
- Last Major Action: 6/2/2003 Referred to House subcommittee
- Status: Passed Senate by Unanimous Consent of 5/21/2003; Referred to House Committee on Energy and Commerce
- Description: Would provide additional authority to the Office of EPA Ombudsman, making the office independent within the agency.
 - Related Bill (identical): H.R. 347; Introduced in House 1/27/2003 by Rep. Bilirakis [FL-9]; referred to House Committee on Energy and Commerce (2/3/2003).

S 1400 – “Ocean and Coastal Observation Systems Act”

- Introduced 7/14/2003 by Sen. Snowe [ME]
- Last Major Action: 1/5/2004 House committees requested Executive Comment
- Status: Passed Senate by Unanimous Consent 10/31/2003; Referred to House (1) Resources, (2) Science, (3) Armed Services, and (4) Transportation and Infrastructure Committees; Resources requested Executive Comment from Commerce (11/13/2003); Armed Services requested Executive Comment from DOD (1/5/2004)
- Description: Establishes an integrated ocean and coastal observing system of marine monitoring, data communication and management, data analysis, and research to detect and predict changes in the marine environment; requires that at least 51% of NOAA funds be reserved for grants to develop and implement regional coastal observing systems (FY04-08).

In Conference (passed both bodies)

HR 6 – “Energy Policy Act of 2003”

- Introduced: 4/7/2003 by Rep. Tauzin [LA-3]
- Last Major Action: 11/18/2003 Conference Report agreed to in House
- Status: Passed House 247-175 on 4/11/2003; Passed Senate 84-14 on 7/31/2003 (S.14 substitute); Conference Report passed House 246-180; motion on cloture failed in Senate 57-40 on 11/12/2003
- Description: Omnibus energy legislation. Part II, Sections 1341-1345 contain language on climate services, including creating a National Climate Service Plan.

Sent to President

HR 1904 – “Healthy Forests Restoration Act of 2003”

- Introduced in House 5/1/2003 by Rep. McInnis [CO-3]
- Last Major Action: 12/3/2003 Became Public Law No: 108-148
- Status: Passed House 256-170 on 5/20/2003; Passed Senate 80-14 on 10/30/2003; Conference Report agreed to by House 286-140 on 11/21/2003; Conference Report agreed to by Senate by Unanimous Consent on 11/21/2003; signed by President 12/3/2003
- Description: Bill would improve the capacity of the Secretaries of Agriculture and Interior to plan and conduct hazardous fuels reduction projects on National Forest System lands and Bureau of Management lands to reduce threats of wildfire.

S 189 – “21st Century Nanotechnology Research and Development Act”

- Introduced: 1/16/2003 by Rep. Wyden [OR]
- Last Major Action: 12/3/2003 Became Public Law No: 108-153
- Status: Passed Senate by Unanimous Consent on 11/18/2003; Passed House by voice vote on 11/20/2003; No Conference; signed by President 12/3/2003
- Description: creates advisory committee on nanotechnology, to be within the President’s Council of Advisors on Science and Technology (PCAST); increases spending on nanotechnology from \$677 million for one year to \$4.7 billion over five years and creates interdisciplinary research centers.