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Critics Say Trump Coal Rules Step Backward for Wisconsin

By TRIMMEL GOMES WISCONSIN NEWS CONNECTION • SEP 11, 2018



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Wisconsin News Connection is here.
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MADISON, Wis. - The public can now comment on the Trump administration's proposal to replace the Clean Power Plan, an Obama-era rule aimed at drastically cutting carbon emissions from coal-power plants.

http://mediad.publicbroadcasting.net/p/wxpr/files/styles/x_large/public/201809/GOAL.JPG Under what's being called the Affordable Clean

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Energy Rule, or ACE, states would develop their own reduction goals and submit their plans

within three years to the Environmental Protection Agency. Ryan Billingham, communications director with the Wisconsin League of Conservation Voters, says the new proposal nixes the Clean Power Plan's specific goals for reducing greenhouse-gas emissions in each state. "It will

hurt Wisconsiners," says Billingham. "I mean, we've witnessed the rains and flooding here recently, and we know that that's a product in part of climate change. And this is going to roll back protections that were taking us in the exact right direction with renewable energy. "

Coal is the leading fuel used for electricity generation in Wisconsin which is why state officials had challenged the Obama-era rule. The 2015 Clean Power Plan was put on hold by the U.S. Supreme Court and has not yet taken effect. public comments on ACE will be accepted through Oct. 30.

Janet McCabe, senior law fellow with the Environmental Law and Policy Center, is a former EPA assistant administrator who worked on the Clean Power Plan. She's concerned the new proposal would delay implementing meaningful air-quality improvements in a number of ways, including changing the way an older coal plant's remaining life is factored into how it should be handled. "The proposal gives the states, really, ultimate discretion to require nothing at all," says McCabe. "What this rule would allow is for a state to say, 'Well, given the remaining useful life of this plant, it doesn't make sense to require it to do anything.'

For Billingham, the Clean Power Plan is a landmark policy in conservation and protection of the environment, which is why his organization fought to make sure it was put in place.

In 2017, 9.3 percent of Wisconsin's utility-scale net electricity generation came from renewable energy resources, including hydroelectric power, wind, biomass, and solar, according to the U.S. Energy and Information Administration

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