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Trump Administration Rolls Back Environmental Regulations for Environmental Approvals

Last week, the White House’s Council on Environmental Quality formally implemented a final rule to update the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) regulations. The new rule aims to streamline existing environmental reviews and decrease the number of infrastructure projects that will ultimately be subjected to NEPA. Since being signed into law during the 1970s, NEPA rules have required federal agencies to assess the potential environmental impacts of proposed major infrastructure projects and can apply to a variety of activities, including the construction of transportation infrastructure projects like roads, bridges, highways, public transit, and airports. In some instances, NEPA reviews for highway projects currently can take more than seven years to complete and are also the most litigated area of environmental law.
The latest move highlights a continued trend by the Trump Administration to minimize or eliminate regulatory burdens for approving infrastructure projects. The new NEPA regulations incorporate key elements of the Trump Administration's One Federal Decision policy, which includes a two-year goal for completing environmental reviews. The move to dismantle NEPA will likely be challenged in court and also comes before the November election. Democratic presidential nominee Joe Biden, who recently unveiled a $2 trillion climate change plan, has vowed to reverse Trump’s environmental rollbacks.

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**House Committee Approves Bipartisan Water Infrastructure Bill**

The House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure advanced the Water Resources Development Act of 2020 (WRDA) by a voice vote on July 15. The bipartisan water bill would authorize construction of 34 projects approved by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) and also authorizes 35 new USACE feasibility studies and directs the Corps to expedite the completion of 41 ongoing studies. The new legislation marks a significant increase in projects when compared to the 2018 WRDA bill.

Additionally, the bill also "unlocks" nearly $10 billion from the Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund, which represents a significant goal of Chairman DeFazio (D-OR). Ranking Member Sam Graves (R-MO) praised the bill and emphasized the significant bipartisan work that went into drafting the bill. Graves noted that the bill is fiscally responsible, asserting, "the amount authorized in this bill is offset by de-authorizations of projects that are now out of date or no longer necessary." SFAA supports the passage of the WRDA bill in advance of the current program's expiration. The bill provides important authorizations to address our nation's critical water infrastructure needs.

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**SFAA & ABC Hosting a Webinar - The Impact of COVID-19 on the Surety Industry - What Contractors Need to Know**

Please register for the SFAA & ABC webinar, being held tomorrow, Wednesday, 7/21/20 at 3p EST and join ABC National's President Mike Bellaman who will moderate a panel consisting of Michael Gross of CNA Surety, Thomas McClellan of Zurich Surety and Steve Nelson of Markel Surety. These seasoned industry leaders will address how contractors should protect themselves contractually during the pandemic, pitfalls to avoid, along with other topics related to the pandemic. We hope you can join us. Register here – [https://abc.org/Education-Training/Academy-Pages/entryid/17853/Default](https://abc.org/Education-Training/Academy-Pages/entryid/17853/Default)

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**SFAA Released Economic Overview Document from S&P and Others re: Putting America Back to Work**

SFAA released an overview document of economic data from S&P and other sources on how Federal investment would restart green-lighted projects immediately – fueling our economic recovery and putting America back to work. This overview outlines short and long-term impacts and urges Congress and the Administration to come together on a bipartisan solution for infrastructure investment. See the enormous benefits here - [https://cdn.ymaws.com/www.surety.org/resource/resmgr/covid/InfrastructureInvestment0715.pdf](https://cdn.ymaws.com/www.surety.org/resource/resmgr/covid/InfrastructureInvestment0715.pdf)
The Surety & Fidelity Association of America (SFAA) is a trade association of more than 425 insurance companies that write over 98 percent of surety and fidelity bonds in the U.S. SFAA is licensed as a rating or advisory organization in all states and it has been designated by state insurance departments as a statistical agent for the reporting of fidelity and surety experience.