

Trump taps Dow lawyer to head EPA unit; data shows coal ash polluting groundwater



Washington, March 7 (RHC)-- In environmental news, U.S. President Donald Trump has nominated Dow Chemical lawyer Peter Wright to head up an Environmental Protection Agency unit tasked with overseeing the disposal of hazardous waste and chemical spills at toxic Superfund sites.

Meanwhile, new data says coal ash -- the residual byproduct of burning coal -- has contaminated groundwater with arsenic and radium and other toxic chemicals near coal-fired power plants across the United States. The new data was released only one day after EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt said the EPA would weaken federal regulations on coal ash disposal.

And in related news, The New York Times reports that e-mails sent by Utah Senator Orrin Hatch show oil extraction was central in the decision to shrink the Bears Ears National Monument in southeastern Utah last year, despite fierce opposition from Native Americans and environmentalists.

One of the e-mails sent by Senator Hatch's office to the Interior Department reads: "The new boundary depicted on the map would resolve all known mineral conflicts ... within the Bears Ears." This e-mail directly contradicts Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke's statements last year in which he claimed: "Bears Ears isn't really about oil and gas."

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