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Trump to set new executive orders on environment, energy this week



U.S. President Donald Trump speaks to reporters following a signing ceremony with Treasury Secretary Steve Mnuchin at the Treasury Department in Washington, U.S., April 21, 2017. REUTERS/Aaron P. Bernstein


 By **David Shephardson** and **Valerie Volcovici** | WASHINGTON

U.S. President Donald Trump this week will sign new executive orders before he completes his first 100 days in office, including two on energy and the environment, which would make it easier for the United States to develop energy on and offshore, a White House official said on Sunday.

"This builds on previous executive actions that have cleared the way for job-creating pipelines, innovations in energy production, and reduced unnecessary burden on energy producers," the official said on condition of anonymity.

On Wednesday, Trump is expected to sign an executive order related to the 1906 Antiquities Act, which enables the president to designate federal areas of land and water as national monuments to protect them from drilling, mining and development, the source said.

On Friday, Trump is expected to sign an order to review areas available for offshore oil and gas exploration, as well as rules governing offshore drilling.

The new measures would build on a number of energy- and environment-related executive orders signed by Trump seeking to gut most of the climate change regulations put in place by predecessor President Barack Obama.

A summary of the forthcoming orders, seen by Reuters, say past administrations "overused" the Antiquities Act, putting more federal areas under protection than necessary.

Obama had used the Antiquities Act more than any other president, his White House said in December, when he designated over 1.6 million acres of land in Utah and Nevada as national monuments, protecting two areas rich in Native American artifacts from mining, oil and gas drilling.

The summary also says previous administrations have been "overly restrictive" of offshore drilling.

Late in Obama's second term, he banned new drilling in federal waters in parts of the Atlantic and Arctic Oceans using a 1950s-era law that environmental groups say would require a drawn out court challenge to reverse.

Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke said during his January confirmation hearing that Trump could "amend" Obama's monument designations but any move to rescind a designation would immediately be challenged.

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Last month, Trump signed an order calling for a review of Obama's Clean Power Plan, and reversed a ban on coal leasing on federal lands.

In addition to the energy-related orders, Trump is also expected this week to sign an order to create an office of accountability in the Veterans Affairs department.

He is also expected to create a rural America interagency task force to recommend policies to address issues facing agricultural states.

(Reporting by David Shephardson and Valerie Volcovici; Additional reporting by Doina Chiacu; Editing by Phil Berlowitz and Chris Reese)



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