

[Subscribe](#)[Past Issues](#)[Translate ▼](#)[View this email in your browser](#)

Issue 16 May 2026



Good morning,

For many in the UA community, the beginning of June means the beginning of summer and a period of rest after a challenging school year. For natural resource stakeholders, however, it is a pivotal month marking the start of the hottest, driest period of the year, placing increasing demands on farmers, ranchers, fire professionals, and water managers. It is also an active period of rulemaking and policy change. The *Regulatory Roundup* summarizes key regulatory and policy developments from the last month affecting natural resource users across Arizona. Drawing from the Federal Register and other state and federal actions, it provides a clear snapshot of the evolving regulatory and policy landscape for stakeholders, researchers, and students.

In this issue, we cover proposed reforms to BLM grazing regulations and public lands management, USDA initiatives to support cotton farmers and stop the spread of New World Screwworm, and evolving federal policies affecting water quality, national forests, and agriculture. We also highlight Arizona's continued efforts to navigate state budget negotiations, wildfire preparedness, and ongoing debate on the future of Colorado River management.

If you have questions about how these developments may affect you, please don't hesitate to reach out. Please contact Evan Nye at enye@arizona.edu with any comments, questions, or suggestions for future issues.

Sincerely,
Evan Nye

Community Outreach Manager, Forestry Policy

At A Glance

[Subscribe](#)[Past Issues](#)[Translate ▼](#)

- USDA issues the [“Great American Cotton Plan”](#) to strengthen the cotton farm economy.
- The first U.S. case of [New World Screwworm](#) is confirmed in South Texas after 60 years.
- Over [100 National Wildlife Refuge Areas](#) are opened to hunting, sport fishing, and other uses.
- BLM proposes sweeping changes to [grazing regulations](#) to support landscape health.
- Competing proposals are issued by Lower Basin States and the Bureau of Reclamation to manage short term water sharing along the [Colorado River](#).
- New research illustrates that forest treatment activities for wildfire risk mitigation generates [\\$3.78 in expected benefits](#) for every \$1 spent.



Source: KNAU / Devin Ford, Flickr

Environment

Notice of Proposed Rule - Extending Compliance Date for Maximum Containment Level of PFOA and PFOS

- The Environmental Protection Agency is [proposing a federal exemption](#) that would extend the compliance deadlines for the Maximum Containment Levels (MCL) of perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA) and perfluorooctane sulfonic acid (PFOS) from April 26, 2029 to April 26, 2031.

[Subscribe](#)[Past Issues](#)[Translate ▼](#)

and resistance to degradation. Elevated exposure to PFAS and its variants, including PFOA and PFOS, have been linked to adverse health outcomes. In 2024, the EPA established Maximum Containment Level Goals for both chemicals in drinking water at 0 and the MCLs at 4.0 nanograms per liter or parts per trillion.

- Comments are due by July 30, 2026

Notice of Proposed Rule - Rescission of Regulation Determinations for Four PFAS Substances

- The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is [proposing to rescind](#) its regulatory determinations and all associated regulatory provisions for four per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS)—perfluorohexane sulfonic acid (PFHxS), perfluorononanoic acid (PFNA), hexafluoropropylene oxide dimer acid and its ammonium salt (HFPO-DA, commonly known as GenX chemicals), and mixtures of these three PFAS plus perfluorobutane sulfonic acid (PFBS)—under the Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA).
- The agency is making this rescission as it determined that it promulgated an unlawful drinking standard under the SDWA after a review of its rulemaking record and recent litigation, including the Supreme Court's intervening decision in *Loper Bright Enterprises v. Raimondo*.
- At an international level, PFHxS are currently regulated by the [Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants](#), which attempts to prohibit, restrict, and reduce the amount of widespread, persistent, and harmful chemicals.

Public Comment Opportunity - Interim PFAS Destruction and Disposal Guidance

- Pursuant to the FY 2020 NDAA, the EPA is issuing its 3 year update to the [Agency's interim guidance on the destruction and disposal of PFAS](#). It builds on technologies that may be feasible and appropriate, and identifies key data gaps and uncertainties that must be resolved before more definitive recommendations can be issued.
- PFAS are characterized by a strong, stable covalent Carbon-Fluorine bond which makes them resistant to biodegradation, and renders most traditional technologies ineffective in removing or breaking down PFAS.

- The EPA issued a [final rule](#) which concluded that no reasonably available control technology (RACT) requirements are needed in the Gila County portion of the Phoenix-Mesa ozone nonattainment area to meet the 2015 ozone standard. The action incorporates ADEQ's analysis and negative declarations into AZ's State Implementation Plan.

Proposed Rule - EPA reopens comment period on federal permit program for disposal of coal combustion residuals

- The EPA has [reopened the public comment period](#) on a proposed rule establishing a federal permitting program for coal combustion residuals (coal ash), which includes permit requirements for facilities in Indian Country and states without approved programs. The EPA has requested comments on specific topics, including electronic permitting, application deadlines, and the implementation of recent ash disposal and groundwater protection requirements.
- Comments are due by June 29, 2026.



Source: USDA

Agriculture and Rural Development

Subscribe

Past Issues

Translate ▼

- On May 28 in Marana, Arizona, US Secretary of Agriculture Brooke Rollins announced the [Great American Cotton Plan](#), a comprehensive initiative to “support the cotton farm economy”.
- The cotton industry has faced [5 consecutive years of negative returns](#), driven by rising costs, trade disruptions, and increasing competition with synthetic materials.
- The plan elevates the “Plant, not Plastic” initiative to encourage consumption of products produced with cotton fibers, rather than plastic-based materials.
- Broadly, the plan seeks to promote domestic cotton consumption, improve the affordability of cotton products, improve cotton trade, and mitigate risk facing cotton farmers.
- Cotton is one of Arizona’s historic “5 Cs”, generating nearly [\\$322 million in total sales and supporting nearly 1,500 jobs](#).

USDA confirms the first U.S. case of New World Screw worm in more than 60 years

- On June 3, the first case of New World Screwworm was [confirmed by USDA’s Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service](#) in South Texas. Screwworm is a livestock pest that lays their eggs in open wounds. Once hatched, the flesh-eating larvae burrow into the living tissue of the livestock, causing expanding wounds that often result in infection and even death. In a single year in 1976, it was estimated that the NWS resulted in \$329,598,000 in economic losses for the Texas economy, roughly \$1.8 billion in today’s dollars.
- In response, the USDA and Texas officials have launched the [NWS Response Playbook](#) to contain and eradicate the pest from spreading further, which includes the establishment of a quarantine zones, increased fly trapping, targeted outreach, and the increased targeted release of [sterile NWS flies](#).
- As NWS has slowly spread up through Mexico towards the U.S., USDA has been implementing a [5-pronged strategy](#) to enhance domestic readiness and response.

Final Rule - FSIS streamlines Swine Inspection Requirements

- The Food Safety Inspection Service (FSIS) published a [final rule](#) that eliminates mandatory incision of mandibular lymph nodes and palpation

[Subscribe](#)[Past Issues](#)[Translate ▼](#)

- The rule is effective July 20, 2026

Request for Information - Modified Organisms Subject to the Plant Protection Act

- USDA has issued a [request for information](#) to determine whether its regulatory framework for genetically engineered plants and microorganisms should be modernized to reflect advances in biotechnology and differences with conventional plants and microorganisms.
- Comments are due no later than June 15.

Notice - Restrictions of Importation of Live Poultry, Poultry Meat and Other Poultry Products

- USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspect Service (APHIS) is seeking [public comment](#) on a proposal to extend for 3 years an existing information collection associated with poultry import restrictions. The information helps APHIS prevent the introduction of livestock disease within the US, including avian influenza and Newcastle disease.
- Comments are due no later than July 13.

Notice - Federally Recognized State Managed Phytosanitary Program

- USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspect Service (APHIS) is [seeking public comment](#) on extending an existing information collection that supports federal recognition of state-managed plant pest control programs, such as those managed by Arizona's Plant Services Section. These programs prevent the spread of agricultural pests and facilitate interstate and international trade.
- Comments are due no later than July 13.

Funding Opportunity - Rural Business Development Grant Program

- The Rural Business-Cooperative Service has announced the [acceptance of applications](#) under the [Rural Business Developmental Grant](#) program for FY2026.
- The grant program is open to public bodies, government entities, federally recognized Indian Tribes, or Nonprofit entities serving rural areas. The program is intended to promote economic development and job creation



Source: U.S. Forest Service, USDA

Forestry

Proposed Rule - Expanded Hunting and Fishing on National Wildlife Refuge Systems

- The [proposed rule](#) grants the Secretary of the Interior the ability to open refuge areas to any use, including hunting or sport fishing, provided the use “is compatible with the purposes of the refuge and Refuge System mission”. Under the National Wildlife Refuge Systems Administration Act of 1966, the NWRs are closed to all uses until opened.
- In Arizona, the following National Wildlife Refuge Systems will be opened to hunting and sport fishing: Havasu, Cibola, and Imperial
- Comments are due no later than June 26.

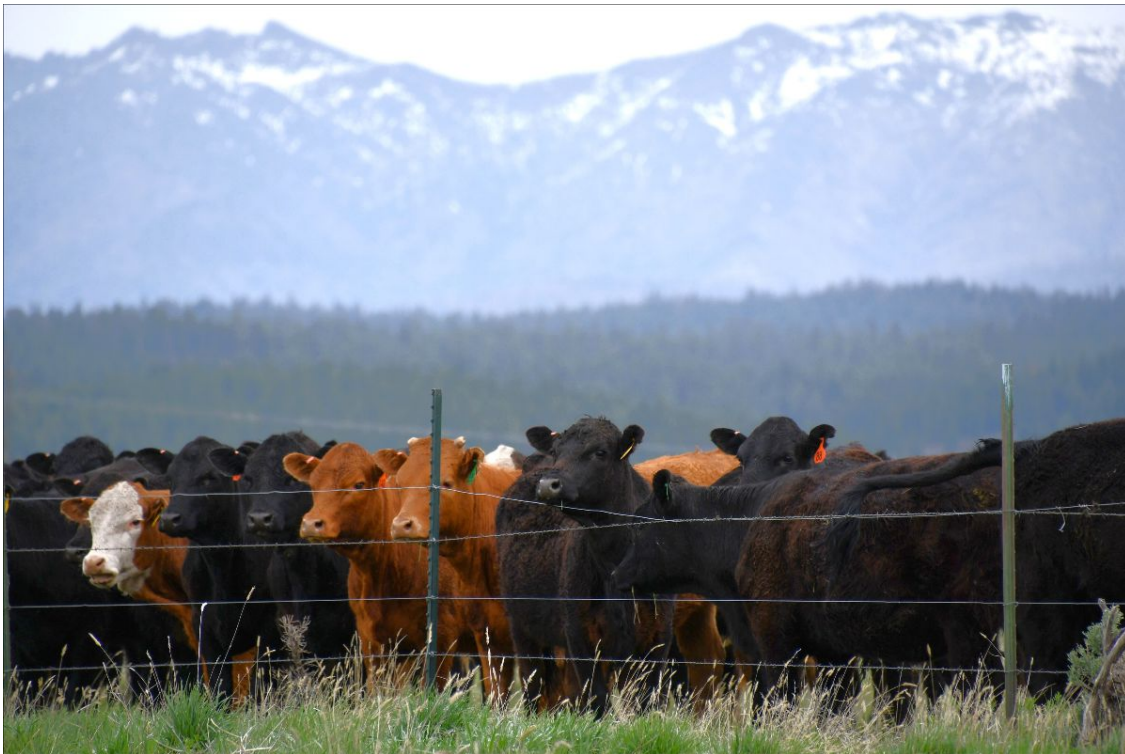
USDA issues Wildfire Readiness Memorandum

- On April 29, 2026, U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Brooke Rollins issued a [Secretarial Memorandum](#) and [letter](#) to enhance U.S. Forest Service Readiness ahead of the 2026 fire season.
- The memorandum directs the Forest Service to employ a full suppression strategy, expand hazardous fuels treatment, enhance coordination with intergovernmental partners, and enhance workforce readiness.

resulted in historic low snowpack.

Proposed Rule - Forest Service amends land use regulations for administrative site leases

- The [proposed rule](#) removes administrative site leases from special-use permitting regulations, aligning leasing activities with private real estate market practices. The special use classification can discourage private investment, and the Forest Service argues the proposed rule eliminates financing and investment barriers.



Source: Climate Hubs, USDA

Public Lands

Proposed Rule - Revise grazing regulations for land health management

- The [proposed rule](#) is a sweeping reform that seeks to modernize the Bureau of Land Management's livestock grazing regulations by creating a new Part 1700 for land health management, updating grazing permit administration to reduce regulatory burden for ranchers, and revising

[Subscribe](#)[Past Issues](#)[Translate ▼](#)

[and management responsibilities across all BLM programs](#), requiring the agency to identify the actual causes of degraded conditions and take appropriate corrective actions where those causes are within BLM's control.

- Comments are due no later than July 13, 2026.
- BLM is hosting a [virtual information session](#) on June 11, 2026 from 5 - 7pm MT.

Final Rule - BLM rescinds the Conservation and Landscape Health Rule

- BLM issued a [final rule](#) that rescinds the 2024 Conservation and Landscape Health Rule, which elevated conservation as a discrete use of public lands, thereby eliminating mechanisms like restoration and mitigation leasing that "restrict productive use" of public lands. Additionally, the rule rescinds land-health requirements established by the 2024 rule and restores the pre-2024 regulatory framework for Areas of Critical Environmental Concern.
- The rule takes effect on June 11, 2026

Notice - BLM Revises NEPA Implementing Guidance Handbook

- The BLM issued a [notice](#) that it was establishing a new categorical exclusion for geothermal resource exploration operations on BLM lands. The categorical exclusion applies to operations that do not include the direct testing of geothermal resources and do not exceed 10 acres of total surface disturbance, allowing them to proceed without preparing an Environmental Assessment or Environmental Impact Statement.

Executive Order - Removing Restrictions on Access to Federal Lands

- President Trump issued an [Executive Order](#) on May 29th to rescind two executive orders (EO 11644 & EO 11989) issued by President Richard Nixon and President Jimmy Carter. The executive orders guided the management of ATVs, dirt bikes, snowmobiles, jet skis, and other off-road motorized vehicles on federal lands to minimize their impact on habitats, wildlife, and other recreational uses. Additionally, President Trump's executive order directs agencies to revise or rescind regulations that implement the prior EOs.



Source: U.S. Bureau of Reclamation

Water

Notice - Bureau of Reclamation revises NEPA Implementing Guidance Handbook

- The [notice](#) informs the public that Reclamation added to its handbook of NEPA implementing procedures two categorical exclusions for project implementation activities and operation and maintenance activities. According to the new handbook text, project implementation activities include the “issuance of a lease of power privilege or alternative authorization by Reclamation, approving non-federal hydropower development which merely augments or supplements existing Reclamation facilities”.
- The categorical exclusions are intended to improve the efficiency of NEPA compliance for hydropower activities and support the implementation of the administration’s Hydropower Action Plan.

Short term proposals submitted by Lower Basin States and Reclamation for managing Colorado River water

- As Colorado River negotiations continue between the 9 basin states, Arizona joined California and Nevada in [submitting a proposal](#) to the U.S.

- Under the proposal, the three states would accept a reduction of 1.25 million acre-feet annually for 2027 and 2028, and Arizona would accept a reduction of 760 cubic acre feet annually
- The proposal also creates a Tribal Pool of around 280 cubic acre feet in Lake Mead to ensure the federal government can meet trust commitments to Indian Tribes in Arizona.
- At the same time, amidst a failure to reach agreement between Upper and Lower Basin states, the [Bureau of Reclamation released a Preferred Preliminary Proposal](#), representing a 10 year framework with operational guidance released every 2 years.
 - Under the proposal, the Lower Basin would be subject to reductions of up to 3 million acre feet per year, more than double the amount proposed by the Lower Basin States.



Source: South32

Mining and Minerals

Proposed Rule - Utah amends its program under SMCRA

Mining Control and Reclamation Act, requiring plaintiffs who obtain an injunction or administrative stay in an “environmental action” to post a bond with the court to compensate each defendant opposing the action for damages they may sustain as a result of the injunction or administrative stay. If the plaintiff does not succeed, the court executes the bond and awards damages to each defendant.

- The public comment period ends on June 8.



Source: Wikimedia Commons

U.S. CONGRESS

On Thursday, May 21 the House Natural Resources Committee held a hearing to discuss a package of forest management bills:

[H.R. 7695 \(Rep. Hageman\)](#) “To provide that the final rule titled "Special Areas; Roadless Area Conservation" and issued on January 12, 2001 (66 Fed. Reg. 3244) shall have no force or effect and require the Secretary of Agriculture to construct certain roads on National Forest System lands, and for other purposes.”

- This bill would nullify the 2001 Roadless Rule and require the Secretary of Agriculture to construct roads on National Forest System lands for forest

[Subscribe](#)[Past Issues](#)[Translate ▼](#)

future.

- The Bill follows regulatory action taken by the USDA, including [a public notice](#) posted on August 29, 2025 indicating the Department's intent to rescind the roadless rule.

[H.R. 8688 \(Rep. Hurd\)](#) "Forest Health and Wildlife Risk Reduction Act"

- A bill allowing BLM to apply categorical exclusions to tree density modification projects on areas under 5,000 acres, and excludes the use of clear cutting and other activities to prevent conversion of forests to non-forest uses. Tree density modification projects are often used.
- The bill would codify [NEPA implementing guidance](#) adopted by BLM on April 6, 2026.

[H.R. 184 \(Rep. McClintock\)](#) "Action Versus No Action Act"

- A bill that would narrow NEPA environmental reviews for certain forest management activities to just two alternatives, either the proposed action or no action, and evaluate the no-action alternative on forest health, potential losses of life and property, habitat diversity, wildfire potential, timber production, and other economic factors.

[H.R. 8682 \(Rep. Downing\)](#) "Accelerating Forest Management Act"

- A bill allowing BLM to expand the application of categorical exclusions for salvage timber from dead or dying trees from 250 to 5,000 acres.

Arizona State Government

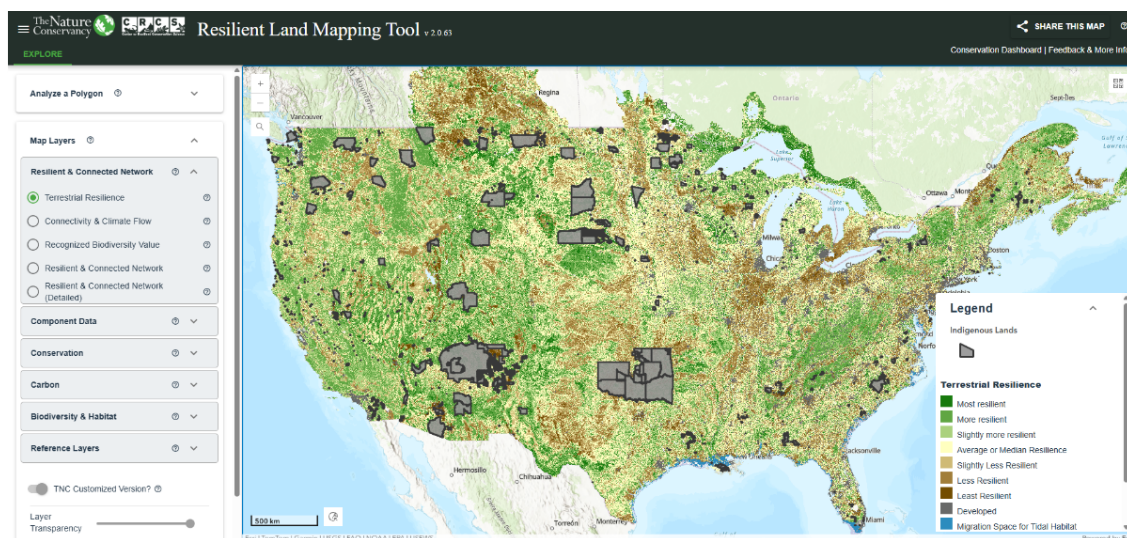
- On May 5th, the Legislature announced plans to adjourn until June 1st as budget negotiations continue between the Republican controlled legislature and Governor Katie Hobbs. To force negotiation on the budget, Governor Hobbs announced a [bill signing moratorium](#) in early April, which was only [lifted on May 14th](#) following a week of "good-faith negotiations". A budget must be passed by July 1st or the state government will shut down. The Governor had previously vetoed a Republican led budget proposal on May 5th that paid for significant tax cuts with fund sweeps and cuts to most state agencies.
- The [Governor signaled support](#) for a \$5.3 billion dollar infrastructure project, the [Desert Southwest Pipeline Expansion](#), that would bring natural gas from West Texas to New Mexico and Arizona.



Source: U.S. Forest Service

New Research

- The Environmental Working Group released new research showing that almost 1 in 5 Americans consume drinking water contaminated with [elevated nitrate levels](#), which is linked to birth defects and cancer risks.
- New research published in Science illustrates that fuel treatments to mitigate wildfire risks, such as prescribed burns and mechanical thinning, are cost effective approaches, [yielding \\$3.73 in expected benefits for every \\$1 invested](#).
- In a [May 14 report](#), the US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) estimates an [82% chance of an El Niño developing between May and July](#), and a 96% chance of it developing by December. The same report predicts a 37% of the event being categorized as a "very strong" event or a "super El Niño" in which ocean temperatures in the Pacific Ocean are more than 2 °C above average.



New Tools

- The [Nature Conservancy's Resilient Land Mapping Tool](#) is a GIS tool designed to identify lands across the United States that can support plant and animal species as they adapt to climate change, helping localities, land trusts, and agencies target conservation efforts.
- The [Reforestation Hub Map](#) helps reveal opportunities to restore forest cover by estimating potential areas for new forests and how much carbon those areas could capture. The data is updated once or twice per year, most recently on March 16, 2026.
- Operated by the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, the [Web Soil Survey](#) provides soil data and information produced by the National Cooperative Soil Survey. It allows users to define an area of interest and instantly access detailed maps, soil types, drainage capabilities, and construction suitabilities for over 95% of U.S. counties.

ABOUT THE REGULATORY ROUND-UP

The *Regulatory Round-up* summarizes recent federal and state agency rulemaking, policy, case law, funding opportunities and planning tools that may be of interest to the natural resource users community. Please visit the [NRULPC website](#) to view the newsletter past issues (*Natural Resource Briefs*), *Regulatory Round-ups* or access programs and other information.



Copyright © 2026 NRULPC, All rights reserved.

Want to change how you receive these emails?

You can [update your preferences](#) or [unsubscribe from this list](#).