

Budget deal takes aim, but misses on climate plans

December 11 2014, by Dina Cappiello

A congressional deal to finance the government chips away at some Obama administration energy and environmental programs, but leaves largely intact the president's plans on global warming—at least until Republicans take control of Congress next month.

Democrats successfully blocked measures to prohibit the government from regulating heat-trapping carbon dioxide from power plants for the first time and to throw out rules by the Environmental Protection Agency that expand the number of waterways that can be protected from pollution. Both efforts are likely to come back next year when Republicans are in charge.

"There are a number of riders we may not be able to hold off in future years," said Rep. Jim Moran, D-Va., the top Democrat on the subcommittee overseeing the budget for environmental programs. "But for this year, this is as good as we could have hoped for."

Even a \$61 million cut to EPA's budget that leaves the agency with the smallest staff in 25 years amounted to \$250 million more than what Obama asked for in March.

House Republicans did manage to attach measures to the \$1.1 trillion spending bill to delay a ban on energy-sucking [incandescent light bulbs](#), to bar the Environmental Protection Agency from regulating greenhouse gases belched from livestock, and to block any money from going into a global fund to help poor countries prepare for [global warming](#) that

Obama pledged \$3 billion to last month.

They said the provisions would help "rein in harmful regulatory overreach" that has tied up businesses and hindered economic growth.

Yet the EPA has repeatedly stated it has no plans to regulate the methane gas released when cows burp, and the White House's plans for the so-called Green Climate Fund did not bank on money from this fiscal year.

"There is not a lot of trust between members of Congress and what the intentions of the EPA may or may not be," said Rep. Ken Calvert, R-Calif., the head of the budget subcommittee that oversees environment.

On other matters, the GOP made some headway that angered environmental groups. The deal bars the EPA from regulating lead in ammunition, and boosts money to fight wildfires, including a \$21-million boost to programs aimed at clearing areas of forest that pose a wildfire risks.

Another measure delays protections for the greater sage grouse, a wide-ranging Western bird that's been on a collision course with the oil and gas industry.

The Obama administration faced a September 2015 deadline to propose protections for greater sage grouse, but the provision bars the government from spending money working on the issue until the deadline, likely pushing back the decision.

"It's alarming that some members are using this major appropriation process to attack America's bedrock laws protecting our clean air and water, wildlife habitat and healthy forests," said Alan Rowsome, senior director of government relations for lands at The Wilderness Society.

"These last-minute riders have not seen the light of day and have not

been properly vetted by the committees who oversee these critical public lands issues."

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