Today, the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) proposed reforms to regulations that implement the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), which stand to improve the permitting and approval processes for energy and other infrastructure projects across the U.S. By streamlining federal regulations, businesses and government agencies can develop new infrastructure that generates good-paying jobs, spurs economic growth and protects the environment. America’s robust, state-of-the-art energy infrastructure allows natural gas and oil producers to safely and seamlessly deliver affordable fuels to consumers. The nation’s complex and extensive network of pipelines, roads, railways, ports and export terminals is fundamental to our energy and environmental progress. Expanding and upgrading this system ensures that abundant, homegrown energy will continue to reach American households, businesses and trading partners – but unnecessary, expensive and time-consuming regulations have delayed this critical build-out.

API President and CEO Mike Sommers commented:

“Endless and repetitive reviews for infrastructure, renewable energy, natural gas and oil projects have been misused to delay and derail development, which hurts job creation, reduces tax revenue and saps investments in communities across the country. Reforming the NEPA process is a critical step toward meeting growing demand for cleaner energy and unlocking job-creating infrastructure projects currently stuck in a maze of red tape.”

Over the past five years, liquids pipeline mileage increased by nearly 12% to accommodate America’s energy production growth, and studies show that, through 2035, more than $1 trillion in infrastructure investments is needed to keep pace with rising demand. But outdated NEPA guidelines have prevented the private-sector investment required to meet our need for affordable, reliable and cleaner energy.

The 50-year-old statute has not seen its regulations updated since the 1980s, and while the commitment to sustainability and conservation remains, the increasingly complicated and contentious review processes have disrupted key projects, slowed environmental progress and threatened jobs for American workers.

Terry O’Sullivan, General President of the Laborers’ International Union of North America, explained the challenges of NEPA for U.S. tradesmen and women during a panel discussion at API’s annual State of American Energy event. O’Sullivan highlighted several projects across the country that have been held up – for decades in many cases – due to burdensome NEPA reviews. Watch his remarks from earlier this week:
NEPA provisions have also obstructed the development of lower-carbon energy options, like natural gas and renewables, and many of the “green” projects proposed by current presidential candidates might not reach completion under the outdated framework.

There has been longstanding, bipartisan support for common-sense improvements to enhance collaboration and streamline decision-making related to environmental reviews. In fact, the Obama Administration introduced several reforms aimed at advancing domestic infrastructure development, including the FAST Act to increase surface transportation funding and a 2012 Executive Order to improve the performance of federal permitting. And experts at the Bipartisan Policy Center agree, citing the importance of simplifying NEPA for the uptake of low-carbon energy resources:

“*The environmental review and permitting process is necessary and important...It requires policymakers to holistically consider the environmental impacts of their decisions. But we have a fundamental problem when the process becomes unnecessarily lengthy and costly, even for projects with clear environmental benefit...*”

NEPA is intended to help policymakers assess the environmental impacts of U.S. infrastructure and enable economic progress for future generations. Understanding this, regulatory reform is a win-win-win – benefitting U.S. businesses, protecting the environment and delivering ever-cleaner energy to American consumers. The CEQ’s proposal to reform duplicative requirements and inconsistencies across federal agencies strengthens U.S. energy security and the sustainability of our industry’s operations.

**About The Author**

Sam Winstel is a writer for the American Petroleum Institute. He comes to API from Edelman, where he supported communications marketing strategies for clients across the firm’s energy and federal government practices. Originally from Dallas, Texas, Sam graduated from Davidson College in North Carolina, and he currently resides in Washington, D.C.

**RECENT POSTS**

**TAGS**

Stay informed: [Sign-up for our weekly newsletter](#)