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Trump Infrastructure Push Rolls Back Environmental Rules.

WASHINGTON/NEW YORK (Reuters) – U.S. President Donald Trump on Tuesday rolled back rules regarding environmental reviews and restrictions on government-funded building projects in flood-prone areas as part of his proposal to spend \$1 trillion to fix aging U.S. infrastructure.

Trump's latest executive order would speed approvals of permits for highways, bridges, pipelines and other major building efforts. It revokes an Obama-era executive order aimed at reducing exposure to flooding, sea level rise and other consequences of climate change.

"It's going to be quick. It's going to be a very streamlined process. And by the way, if it doesn't meet environmental safeguards, we're not going to approve it – very simple," Trump said at a press conference at Trump Tower in New York.

President Trump promised in his election campaign to press for widespread deregulation to spur business spending. The former New York real state developer has complained that it takes too long to get permits for big construction projects.

Business groups praised the streamlining of regulations, while environmental groups and others criticized the order, saying it would lead to riskier projects, waste taxpayer dollars and result in a "climate catastrophe."

The American Petroleum Institute said in a statement that the order reflects recommendations the oil industry lobby group submitted to the Commerce Department in March. The National Association of Home Builders also praised the Trump administration's move, saying the flood rules had raised the cost of housing.

But the environmental group Oil Change International said the order would silence local communities that have safety and environmental concerns about major projects like pipelines.

"If Trump has his way, we'll be facing a fossil fuel buildout that locks America into climate catastrophe," said Janet Redman, U.S. Policy Director at Oil Change International.

The order would set a two-year goal for completing permits needed on major infrastructure plans, and create a "one Federal decision" protocol that would appoint a lead federal agency to work with other agencies to complete the environmental reviews and permitting for infrastructure projects.

The Trump administration has issued dozens of rules and orders to reverse Obama-era regulations addressing climate change and its consequences such as rising sea levels and more severe storms.

The administration proposes \$200 billion in government funding over 10 years as part of a goal of getting \$1 trillion in public and private infrastructure spending.

The Obama-era standard required that builders factor in scientific projections for increased flooding and ensure projects can withstand rising sea levels and stronger downpours.

It required all federal agencies apply the standard to public infrastructure projects from housing to highways.

Rafael Lemaitre, former director of public affairs at FEMA who worked on the Obama-era order, said Trump is undoing “the most significant action taken in a generation” to safeguard U.S. infrastructure.

“Eliminating this requirement is self-defeating; we can either build smarter now, or put taxpayers on the hook to pay exponentially more when it floods. And it will,” he said.

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