

# Senate GOP questions Biden oil and gas pipeline review

By Mike Soraghan

04/20/2022 04:06 PM EDT

Congressional Republicans are protesting that the Biden administration's review of a fast-track permitting process will slow development of oil and gas pipelines.

They said the Trump-era "reform" of the Army Corps of Engineers policy, known as Nationwide Permit 12, increased the efficiency of getting permits for pipelines.

"Your decision to formally review NWP 12 is yet another example of creating unnecessary obstacles and uncertainty for development of critical energy projects," wrote the group of 10 senators, led by Sen. Shelley Moore Capito (R-W.Va.). The [letter](#) also called the decision "purely political."

Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works Michael Connor announced the review March 24, saying it was needed because of President Joe Biden's climate change executive orders, which called for a review of Trump-era regulations.

"We must embark on a review of Nationwide Permit 12 for oil or natural gas pipeline activities to ensure consistency with these and other administration priorities," Connor said in a statement at the time.

The nationwide program speeds up wetland permitting for projects that are deemed to have minimal environmental impact. It relieves developers of the need to get numerous individual clean water act permits.

Environmental groups say the program masks the overall impact of pipelines and other infrastructure and say it has been improperly applied to oil and gas pipelines ([Energywire](#), Feb. 8).

The embattled Mountain Valley pipeline project got a nationwide permit, as did the now-canceled Atlantic Coast pipeline and Keystone XL projects, along with other hotly contested pipeline initiatives.

The Trump administration reissued the permit program during his last days in office. A federal judge had blocked its use for new pipeline projects.

Also signing the letter were Republican Sens. Jim Inhofe of Oklahoma, Kevin Cramer of North Dakota, Cynthia Lummis of Wyoming, Richard Shelby of Alabama, John Boozman of Arkansas, Roger Wicker of Mississippi, Dan Sullivan of Alaska, Joni Ernst of Iowa and Lindsey Graham of South Carolina.