A gigantic piece of legislation lands on Congress’ plate this week.

It’s known as the farm bill, but the sprawling measure actually sets policy for a broad range of programs and research, including forests, water, biofuels, and other environmental areas. The House Agriculture Committee is scheduled to meet Wednesday to start marking up the measure.

The current version of the farm bill expires at the end of September, and the legislation always sparks protracted fights on Capitol Hill. Battle lines already are being drawn over federal forest management provisions that would reduce the extent of environmental review and endangered species analyses for projects.

WATER WEEK: The push to make water—and the systems that collect and deliver it—a national priority “has reached a critical stage,” a coalition of groups says in promoting a series of lobbying and public-education efforts about water in Washington this week.

Those groups are sponsoring Water Week, which features a “policy fly-in” Tuesday and Wednesday with speakers including David Ross, who heads the EPA water office, and Arkansas Sen. John Boozman, who heads the Senate environment committee’s panel on fisheries, water, and wildlife.
In the recent tax overhaul law, the groups welcomed Congress’ decision to maintain the tax-exempt status of municipal bonds—a critical tool for financing water projects. But they were dismayed by the repeal of advance refunding bonds, which allow municipal issuers to take advantage of lower interest rates by refinancing an existing bond issue with a new one. Amena H. Saiyid and David Schultz are monitoring.

OTHER STORIES WE’RE COVERING

- Five years after a fertilizer plant caught fire and exploded in West, Texas, injuring more than 160 people and killing 15, federal and state policy changes have been limited, Nushin Huq writes in a story being published today.
- The American Bar Association’s environment, energy, and resources section is holding its spring conference Wednesday through Friday in Orlando, Fla. Bloomberg Environment is among the sponsors of the event, which will feature a speech Thursday from Bill Wehrum, head of the EPA Office of Air and Radiation. Sylvia Carignan will be on the ground.
- The Space Weather Workshop, being held this week in Westminster, Colo., explores the variable conditions on the sun and in space that can influence the performance of technology on Earth, including the electricity grid. Bloomberg News is covering.
- The Energy Storage Association holds its annual conference in Boston on Wednesday through Friday, with speakers including Massachusetts Gov. Charlie Baker and Bruce Walker of the Energy Department’s electricity office. Rebecca Kern is covering.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

“This is a ground-breaking agreement—a Paris Agreement for shipping.”
— Peter Hinchliffe, secretary general of the London-based International Chamber of Shipping, hailing a mandatory deal that for the first time will limit greenhouse gas emissions from the global shipping industry.

AROUND THE WEB

- The EPA’s internal watchdog is expected today to issue a “management alert” on a special hiring authority under the Safe Drinking Water Act that was used to give big raises to two aides.
- Coal baron-turned-convict-turned-candidate Don Blankenship is growing more confident of his chances of unseating West Virginia Democratic Sen. Joe Manchin in November.