The president signed off on an executive order to help dismantle an Obama-era rule meant to protect American waterways.

President Trump locked in his crusade against the punch-drunk Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) today, signing an executive order aimed at unraveling the expansive 2015 rule known as the Waters of the United States rule, put in place by former President Barack Obama.

The executive order has no immediate legal effect, but instructs the new EPA administrator Scott Pruitt to begin proceedings to question the expansive rule that is designed to protect...
This is reportedly the first of two executive orders expected to come out of the White House this week targeting EPA rules. The other is set to take aim at President Obama's landmark climate change rule, the Clean Power Plan.

The 2015 Waters of the United States rule was the result of an extensive effort by the Obama administration to expand the federal government's authority to protect the nation's rivers, lakes, streams and wetlands from pollution. For decades, authorities struggled to protect larger bodies of water like the Chesapeake Bay, Mississippi River and Puget Sound, because they had muddled authority over many of the small water bodies flowing into them. As a result, these tributaries carried fertilizer discharges and other kinds of pollution from agriculture and fossil fuel extraction into the larger bodies.

By stretching out the umbrella of the 1972 Clean Water Act, Obama and former EPA administrator Gina McCarthy were able to secure protection of almost 60 percent of the nation's bodies of water. But it happened without the approval of a Republican-controlled Congress. The rule would require farmers or companies to obtain federal permission before they used certain fertilizers, for example, if their land was near a stream or wetland.

The rule provoked the ire of the fossil fuel industry, pesticide and fertilizer makers, and farmers who contended that it would stifle economic growth. The American Farm Bureau Federation led a lawsuit against the rule in 2015 arguing that it puts an extra burden on farmers to have to get a permit to use certain fertilizers if they're near water. It has been log jammed in the legal process since. A federal court has delayed the rule while judges review the legal challenges against it.

President Trump's executive order today instructs EPA administrator Scott Pruitt, and the Army Corps of Engineers to review the rule and to "rescind or revise" it, as "appropriate and consistent with the law." It also directs newly appointed Attorney General Jeff Sessions to ask the Supreme Court to put the case on hold.

The president's order, however, has no legal authority over the rule itself, and is simply a nod to Pruitt to begin the circuitous legal process of dismantling it, which could take more than one term to see through. To get rid of it, the administrator would have to go through
For his part, however, Pruitt may enjoy the legal labyrinth he must navigate to successfully undo the rule. The ex-attorney general of Oklahoma has been a longtime adversary of the EPA and has taken part in over 14 lawsuits against the agency on behalf of the fossil fuel industry.
THE INTERNET OF HACKABLE THINGS

How This Internet of Things Stuffed Animal Can Be Remotely Turned Into a Spy Device

LORENZO FRANCESCHI-BICCHIERAI
Feb 28 2017, 2:45pm
More bad news for toymaker Spiral Toys, which left customer data from its "CloudPets" brand exposed online.

An internet-connected teddy bear that allows parents and kids to exchange heartfelt audio messages sounds like a great idea—until the parents' emails and passwords, as well as the message recordings themselves, are left exposed online to hackers.

That's what happened to an Internet of Things teddy bear made by Spiral Toys, as Motherboard reported on Monday. The company left a database containing customer data completely insecure. And as it turns out, the teddy bears themselves, part of the company's CloudPets brand, were insecure too, and could have been easily hacked.

Read more: When the Internet of Things Starts to Feel Like the Internet of Shit

"Anyone within range—10 meters with a normal smartphone—can just connect to it," Paul Stone, a security researcher who studied how CloudPets' toys work, told Motherboard in an email. "Once you're connected you can send and receive commands and data."

In other words, the teddy bears could be turned into a remote surveillance devices, or used to harass toddlers much like some insecure baby monitors were used to terrorize toddlers children in the past.
Stone, a researcher with the UK-based security firm Context, said the CloudPets' toys don't use any standard Bluetooth security features such as pairing encryption, when communicating back to their owner's smartphone's app. Anyone within range, Stone said, can connect to the toy, upload a message to the toy, "silently" trigger the toy's recording functionality, and "download the audio that the toy has recorded.

So if you have a smartphone with Bluetooth you can just connect to it and start sending audio messages to it. You don't even need to be within 10 meters (approximately 32 feet) if you use a directional antenna, according to Stone.

"Someone standing outside your house could easily connect to the toy, upload audio recordings, and receive audio from the microphone," Stone wrote in a blog post explaining his findings on Tuesday.

The researcher showed how he made the toy play whatever message he wanted in a video.
"Exterminate, annihilate, destroy," the unicorn-shaped pet toy says in the video.

To be fair, Stone said these toys are not "the perfect bugging device" because one can only record five messages of 40 seconds of audio with them, and you have to be within Bluetooth range. But it might be possible to change the time limit because the toys' firmware is not signed or encrypted so it can be overwritten by anyone, according to Stone.

"It would be possible to modify the firmware to make it into a better spying device," Stone told me.

The researcher said he had made multiple attempts to warn Spiral Toys of these issues since October, but didn't receive a response. I myself have had trouble talking to anyone at the company, including its CEO Mark Meyers, whom I called and messaged on Linkedin. Calls to the company's telephone numbers also went unanswered, and so did emails to its public addresses.

Meyers denied the data breach in an interview with Network World. Meyers also said he saw our attempts to get comment, but he never reached back because "you don't respond to some random person about a data breach."

Get six of our favorite Motherboard stories every day by signing up for our newsletter.
THE INTERNET OF HACKABLE THINGS

Internet of Things Teddy Bear Leaked 2 Million Parent and Kids Message Recordings

THE INTERNET OF HACKABLE THINGS

Police Have Arrested a Suspect in a Massive ‘Internet of Things’ Attack

THE INTERNET OF HACKABLE THINGS

A New Type of Malware Can Lock Power Plant Computers For Ransom