

# Concerned Scientists' Weekly News Bulletin

## [February 15, 2021]



*Our weekly bulletin collects and digests news of the past week.  
Contributions welcome.*

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### **NEWS ITEMS AND ARTICLES**

*Guardian: [“A clear danger”: Oil spill in California city revives calls to cut ties with Chevron](#)*

*600 gallons of oil spilled from the Chevron Wharf in Richmond, California during a two-hour period last Tuesday. The oil refinery is one of the state's largest polluters, with a long history of environmental violations and accidents resulting in releases of gases and toxic smoke. Located about 12 miles from San Francisco, 80% of Richmond citizens are people of color and deal with cancer and asthma rates dramatically higher than the national average.*

*New York Times: [C.D.C. draws up a blueprint for reopening schools](#)*

*CDC guidelines state schools should be the first to open and the last to close in instances of high community transmission, especially elementary schools. They recommend masks, distancing, handwashing, cleaning, and contact tracing as methods that should be employed for schools to safely open. They also recommend for teachers to be included early in states' vaccine rollouts but say that getting teachers vaccinated is not a pre-requisite for schools to open in an area.*

*San Francisco Chronicle: [Health experts say CDC school reopening guidelines miss the mark](#)*

*The CDC finally outlined its much-anticipated guidance for returning for K-12 students to in-person instruction in the coming year. Experts say the guidelines are based on flawed assumptions about how the coronavirus spreads, with excessive restrictions slowing down reopening at a time when schools are desperately trying to address the mental health consequences—and the academic losses—of distance learning.*

*Politico: [Biden administration finalizes purchase of 200M additional vaccine doses](#)*

*The Biden administration has purchased 100 million additional doses from both Moderna and Pfizer that will be available by May, making a total of 600 million doses – enough for 300 million Americans to be vaccinated, which officials hope to accomplish by the end of July.*

*Science: [Should you mix and match COVID-19 vaccines? Scientists are seeking answers](#)*

*Trials testing the effectiveness of using Russia's Sputnik V vaccine with a booster dose of the AstraZeneca-Oxford vaccine, and the Astra-Zeneca-Oxford vaccine with the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine, have begun. The Sputnik and AstraZeneca vaccines are similar, but the AstraZeneca and Pfizer vaccines use two different technologies. Until results are available, the CDC has strongly discouraged mixing any vaccine dosages in anything but "exceptional situations."*

*New York Times: [On W.H.O. trip, China refused to hand over important data](#)*

*The team sent to China by the World Health Organization conducted an independent investigation into the origins of COVID-19 amidst strong geopolitical tension. Members of the team felt research into the early days of the virus was still lacking, with no concrete evidence of the disease before December 2019, but with the possibility it could have been spreading as early as October 2019. A full report from the trip is expected to be released in the upcoming weeks.*

*New York Times: [Covid vaccines for kids are coming, but not for many months](#)*

*Moderna and Pfizer have started vaccine trials on children 12 and older and are hoping for results by late summer. If the trials go well, they plan to test them on younger children. While children are at much a lower risk for developing a severe case of the disease, people under 21 years of age make up a quarter of the US population, and scientists estimate that 70-90% of the population will need to get vaccinated to reach herd immunity and stop the spread.*

*Guardian: [The Chicago plant that sparked a hunger strike amid environmental racism claims](#)*

*Community activists from the Southeast side of Chicago are protesting the opening of a new metal recycling plant by Reserve Management Group after their plant in a wealthier, predominantly white area got shut down for environmental violations. The plant will include machinery that releases dust particles that can lead to severe heart and respiratory problems, adding to the 1 million pounds of toxins already released by other industries in this area of the city. Community leaders have started a hunger strike in response.*

## **REGIONAL NEWS**

*IndyStar: [Other states are making utilities dig up toxic coal ash. Indiana is letting it sit there.](#)*

*Indiana has more than 80 pits holding the cancer-causing coal byproduct. That's more than any other state in America. The vast majority of them are unlined, in contact with groundwater and at risk of being washed into rivers or streams because they sit in floodplains.*

*Indiana Environmental Reporter: [Bills on local watershed development, DNR regulations and animal contact pass committee](#)*

*Several bills with potential environmental effects have made their way through the Indiana House Natural Resources Committee and will now be considered by the full House of Representatives.*

*IndyStar: [Animal welfare group blasts hunt that it says killed roughly 60 coyotes in Indiana](#)  
An animal welfare group is blasting a two-day wildlife killing contest in Warren County in December, when it says contestants killed coyotes for cash and prizes. “Wildlife killing contests have no place in Indiana,” said Samantha Morton, Indiana state director for the Humane Society of the United States.*

*NWITimes: [Hoosier doctors may be forced to tell women abortions can be “reversed”](#)  
An Indiana House committee agreed Monday to require doctors to tell women considering a pill-induced abortion the procedure can be “reversed” — despite no reliable medical research showing that is in fact true. House Bill 1577, sponsored by state Rep. Peggy Mayfield (R-Martinsville), adds the abortion reversal notice to the 22 other “informed consent” items state lawmakers have mandated women be told prior to obtaining an abortion.*

## **OPINION AND ANALYSIS**

*The Atlantic: [What the fear of China is doing to American science](#)  
In confronting the challenges posed by a rising China, U.S. policy makers must remember that the power of the American scientific enterprise lies not simply in the number of citations or patents it generates, but in the number of bright people from every country in the world who want to come here to do research—because of how we conduct science, speak about politics, and provide opportunity regardless of a person’s nation of origin.*

*Politico: [Biden aims to isolate China on coal—but it could blow back on the U.S.](#)  
President Joe Biden’s plan to halt U.S. funding for overseas fossil fuel projects will turn the global spotlight on China for bankrolling coal projects around the globe. But it could also push poor countries closer to Beijing — and risk ceding the United States’ position as a leading financier for developing economies.*

*The Wire Science: [Are conservative policies bad for health?](#)  
As of 2019, the US ranked 36th in the world in terms of life expectancy at birth, behind Slovenia and Costa Rica, not to mention Canada, Japan and all the rich countries in Europe. And new research published in the Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA) in December, yielded results that explain also the U.S.’s problems with COVID: Although white people living in the nation’s highest-income counties have better health outcomes than the average US citizen, even they fare worse on infant mortality, maternal mortality, and deaths after heart attacks than the average citizens of Norway, Denmark, and other developed countries.*

*Bloomberg Green: [After four years of Trump, some scientists are treading into politics](#)  
Are the newly activist scientists persuading anyone? Or in sacrificing their neutrality, are they losing legitimacy, as they feared? Either way, there may be no putting the genie back in the bottle. A broader cultural shift has taken place, making it harder to do science in a vacuum.*

Grist: [Science—especially climate research—needs a “sunshine” law](#)

*We need a “sunshine law” for science that would expose all sorts of conflicts of interest and industry manipulation that skew research on food, synthetic chemicals, pesticides, air pollution, genetic technology, and the climate.*

Chemical & Engineering News: [Nobel laureates Frances Arnold and Jennifer Doudna on prizes, pandemics, and Jimmy Page](#)

*Where do you take your career after you’ve won all of science’s biggest prizes? In this podcast (full transcript provided), C&EN executive editor Lisa Jarvis sits down with Nobel laureates Frances Arnold and Jennifer Doudna to hear about whether their career goals changed after they got that early-morning phone call in October and how the pandemic has shifted the way they approach their work.*

Medical News Today: [It’s time to change the narrative: Women in COVID-19, science, and academia](#)

*History has a habit of erasing women’s contribution to science—from NASA’s “hidden figures” and the women who propelled men into space to the many female researchers whose work won Nobel prizes for their male supervisors. We cannot give recognition to female scientists and their contributions to the fight against COVID-19 without acknowledging the barriers they have overcome.*

Lifegate: [Global warming may have contributed to the emergence of coronavirus](#)

*Global warming may have played a major role in the zoonotic origin of SARS-CoV-2, also known as the novel coronavirus, that is in the passage from animals to humans of the infectious agent responsible for the Covid-19 disease. In particular, the increase in global average temperatures has substantially changed the microclimate of certain ecosystems, providing new habitats for bats, a species that is presumed to have first passed the virus onto humans.*

## **TAKE ACTION AND RESOURCES FOR ACTIVISTS**

NRDC: [Tell NOAA to save north Atlantic right whales from extinction](#)

*Right whales are teetering on the edge of extinction and we are quickly running out of time to save them. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration has a responsibility to protect this critically endangered species. But their latest plan doesn’t just fall short—it would be a death sentence for North Atlantic right whales. Submit an official public comment calling on NOAA to immediately adopt stronger protections that will save critically endangered right whales before it’s too late.*

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*Christoph Irmischer of IU's Department of English. We're looking for volunteers! If you'd like to volunteer—or if you have additional links you'd like to share for future bulletins, send them to Christoph at [cirmsche@indiana.edu](mailto:cirmsche@indiana.edu).*

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