

Concerned Scientists' Weekly News Bulletin

[April 5, 2021]



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

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NEWS ITEMS AND ARTICLES

InsideClimate News: [Dismissing Trump's EPA science advisors, Regan says the agency will return to a "fair and transparent process"](#)

Regan said the agency would return to "a time-tested, fair, and transparent process" for selecting scientist advisers, and he invited all the current panel members to re-apply. But they would face the kind of ethics review that had been given short shrift in the Trump administration, according to a 2019 Government Accountability Report. And two new criteria would be added to the selection process: the absence of financial conflicts of interest or "an appearance of a loss of impartiality."

New York Times: [Biden's climate plan means tough choices: Which homes get saved?](#)

The \$2 trillion infrastructure plan released by the Biden Administration hopes to protect individuals from impacts of climate change by allocating money for roads, sea walls, and bridges. However, there is no plan or protocol for deciding which areas should be protected and which will need to be abandoned as sea levels rise and natural disasters such as floods and hurricanes worsen. It is estimated that up to half a trillion dollars of real estate along the coast will be underwater by 2100. Some states are dividing regions into low, medium, and high-risk zones, with hopes of transitioning infrastructure away from the areas that are most at-risk.

Politico: [Biden's green energy plans clash with pledge to create union jobs](#)

Labor Unions, along with Congressional Republicans, worry that Biden's \$2 trillion infrastructure plan designed to combat climate change will replace "steady, fixed-location jobs" at coal mines and fossil fuel plants with renewable energy jobs such as installing solar panels, wind turbines, and potential carbon dioxide and hydrogen pipelines, which will require mobility and be only temporary, as the projects will need

few maintenance workers once complete. Those in support of the plan highlight the need to transition to a clean energy economy and the manufacturing tax incentives and supply chain development outlines included in the plan that aim to benefit workers.

The Guardian: [Florida faces “imminent” pollution catastrophe from phosphate mine pond](#)

A breach in a 77-acre retention pond at an old phosphate mine threatens to add 340 million gallons of contaminated wastewater to the Tampa Bay area and potentially create “a 20ft wall of water.” As of Sunday evening, crews were pumping water out of the pond and into the Florida bay to avoid major flooding and attempting to plug some of the leaks.

Guardian: [Activists hail Massachusetts law as crucial step on environmental justice](#)

New climate legislation signed by Massachusetts’ governor emphasizes environmental justice by requiring the state to factor in how existing pollution levels have impacted residents when deciding to approve new infrastructure projects. It establishes environmental justice (EJ) communities as communities overburdened by pollution. Previous laws only required the assessment of individual projects to see if their pollution would exceed state regulations, without considering any pollution already present in an area.

New York Times: [Fully vaccinated Americans can travel with low risk, C.D.C. says](#)

CDC officials still recommend avoiding unnecessary travel but say vaccinated individuals can do so “at low risk to themselves.” Masks will still be required but travelers will no longer have to get tested and quarantine after arriving at their destination. Scientists are not yet certain as to whether vaccinated individuals can transmit the virus to others.

Smithsonian: [Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine is highly effective at preventing Covid-19 infections in adolescents](#)

Data released from a trial of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine in 2,300 individuals aged 12-15 found the vaccine to be very effective at protecting adolescents from developing symptomatic illnesses related to the coronavirus. The vaccine is currently approved for those 16 and older, and Pfizer intends to seek emergency approval from the FDA for its use in kids who are 12-15 years old.

REGIONAL NEWS

AP: [Indiana lawmakers amend environment bills as deadlines near](#)

Dozens of amendments to bills affecting Indiana environmental policy have sparked debate among lawmakers as the Legislature enters its final stretch of the session. The proposed changes arrive as members of the General Assembly decide whether the state should adopt greener initiatives or scale back current policy protecting water, energy, and other resources.

IndyStar: [After local pushback, Indiana bill on wind, solar standards takes a “180 degree turn”](#)

The bill was amended in the Senate Utilities hearing Thursday morning to include the option for counties to adopt “renewable energy districts.” Essentially, these districts would provide a space for governments to approve wind projects—if a group of property owners want the turbines on their land—while maintaining local control over their site.

OPINION AND ANALYSIS

Politico: Janet Yellen: [Climate change poses “existential threat” to financial markets](#)

Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen on Wednesday called climate change “an existential threat” and the biggest emerging risk to the health of the U.S. financial system, pledging to marshal regulatory forces to guard against its harmful effects. Yellen made the promise during her inaugural appearance as the head of the Financial Stability Oversight Council, a panel of top regulators tasked with policing Wall Street behavior that has the potential to crash the entire economy.

The Hill: [Scientific integrity, or more hot air?](#)

Apart from more executive edicts, the Biden White House should enlist Congress to strengthen the integrity of government science and enact protections for scientists. For example, scientists should not face punishment for participating in the peer-review process and Congress could confer enforceable statutory protection for both authors and reviewers.

Mother Jones: [“You need water to live”: Pete Buttigieg explains infrastructure to Republicans](#)

“I heard the governor of South Dakota recently saying, ‘This isn’t infrastructure—it’s got money for pipes,’” Buttigieg said. “Well, we believe that pipes are infrastructure, because you need water to live, and too many families now live with the threat of lead poisoning.”

The Guardian: [Rewilding our cities: beauty, biodiversity and the biophilic cities movement](#)

Nature knows how to manage flooding and weather events and is more adaptable than many of our engineered systems, yet we refuse to learn from it. As we grapple with changing the way that we live due to climate change, we have an opportunity to learn from both the natural systems and Indigenous cultures that have mastered managing and supporting the diversity of Australia for thousands of years.

Yale 360: [In Europe, a backlash is growing over incinerating garbage](#)

For years, European countries have built “waste-to-energy” incinerators, saying new technology minimized pollution and boosted energy production. But with increasing concern about the plants’ CO₂ emissions, the EU is now withdrawing support for these trash-burning facilities.

TAKE ACTION AND RESOURCES FOR ACTIVISTS

NRDC: [Protect the Endangered Species Act!](#)

With 1 million species worldwide at risk of extinction, we need President Biden to take bold steps to not only reverse the attacks on the ESA, but also expand ESA protections for more fragile wildlife and their habitats from the drilling, mining, and logging industries, and work to defend the law from future attacks. Send a message to President Biden and Interior Secretary Deb Haaland to take historic strides to restore and protect the Endangered Species Act.

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Our CSIU news bulletin is intended to provide a brief update on recent news, editorials, as well as action items related to science integrity and science policy. Note that editorial pieces and action items are assembled from a variety of sources and organizations; they do not necessarily reflect the opinions or policy priorities of Concerned Scientists @ IU. This week's news bulletin was compiled by ASIU and IU biology major Emma Hand and CSIU member 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.

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