

Concerned Scientists' Weekly News Bulletin

[April 12, 2021]



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

[Click here](#) to view this weekly news bulletin on a web page. Previous weeks' bulletins are archived [here](#).

NEWS ITEMS AND ARTICLES

Science: [Biden's first budget request goes big on science](#)

Biden released a list of spending priorities ahead of a detailed budget request that includes large increases in civilian agencies and domestic spending. Budgets for the NIH, NSF, DOE, NASA, NIST, NOAA, EPA, USDA, CDC, and USGS are all expected to see significant funding increases. Defense spending, in contrast, would rise only 2%. There is expected to be opposition in Congress to these measures.

Grist.org: [Clean energy bonanza: Biden's budget tries to undo Trump's damage](#)

The EPA lost nearly 1,000 employees during the Trump years; the Biden administration plans to restore those positions and boost EPA funding by 21 percent. If the budget is enacted, the EPA will receive \$11.2 billion in total — more federal funding than ever before.

Science: [Biden wants \\$6.5 billion for new health agency to speed treatments](#)

The Biden Administration released a proposal for a new agency, the Advanced Research Projects Agency, Health (ARPA-H), that would operate under the NIH and research new medical treatments for diseases such as cancer, diabetes, and Alzheimer's. Funding for the agency is intended to allow the development and success of projects deemed financially risky, with hopes of speeding developments of new treatments. Biden proposed \$6.5 billion to be allocated to the new agency.

Bloomberg: [EPA watchdog to probe alleged retaliation against scientists](#)

The Office of Inspector General investigation is an attempt by the Biden administration to ensure that the EPA is meeting its mission to let scientists speak freely and air their

conclusions, even if their findings and opinions don't match up with agency policy goals.

The Hill: [Documents show Trump officials helped suppress coronavirus CDC reports](#)

Top former Trump administration advisers helped suppress scientific information from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) they felt was harmful to President Trump, and attacked the agency's credibility, according to documents obtained by House Democrats.

New York Times: [More contagious virus variant is now dominant in U.S., C.D.C. chief says](#)

The B.1.1.7 variant of the coronavirus, which was first discovered in Britain, is now the leading source of new infections in the US. The variant is estimated to be 60% more contagious and 67% more deadly than the original strain. After a steep decline followed by a plateau, the average number of new cases in the US is once again rising, with 65,000 per day as of last week. Despite the 19% increase in infections, death rates continue to drop, potentially indicating the effectiveness of vaccines at protecting vulnerable populations.

Science: [Hard choices emerge as link between AstraZeneca vaccine and rare clotting disorder becomes clearer](#)

The European Medicines Agency has announced that the AstraZeneca vaccine has been deemed the probable cause of blood clots and low platelet counts in a small percentage of people who receive the vaccine. There have been at least 222 suspected occurrences in Europe out of the 34 million people who have received the first dose of the vaccine. Over 30 of these 222 have died. Scientists are working to find the mechanism behind these responses, but most say the benefits of receiving the vaccine outweigh the risks.

Washington Post: [A vaccine study in college students will help determine when it's safe to take masks off](#)

Volunteers at 20 college campuses are taking part in a study to determine how well the Moderna vaccine prevents vaccinated individuals from carrying and passing on the virus. Half of the participants received the vaccine and the other half must wait four months to get vaccinated. Using daily nose swabs, researchers aim to learn how much virus people contain and for how long, and if this differs between vaccinated and unvaccinated participants. Using identified close contacts of the participants, scientists hope to determine at what level the virus becomes a transmission risk.

Guardian: [France to ban some domestic flights where train available](#)

Members of the French Parliament have voted to eliminate domestic flights between locations in which a direct train trip would take less than 2.5 hours. This has been reduced from their climate commission's original recommendation of eliminating flights between locations less than 4 hours apart but represents a step toward enacting a series of planned environmental measures. The commission found that planes emit about 77x more CO₂ per passenger than trains on these routes.

NPR: [Expect more tropical storms, NOAA warns](#)

NOAA determines the average number of storms over 30-year blocks. The previous period from 1981-2010 had 12 tropical storms and 6 hurricanes per year. The new period from 1991-2020 averaged 14 tropical storms and 7 hurricanes per year. These values apply to the Atlantic Ocean, whose hurricane season starts on June 1st. Recent

hot water in the Gulf of Mexico has contributed to record-breaking rainfall and more intense storms.

REGIONAL NEWS

Indiana Environmental Reporter: [Carbon market bill now tied to legal protections for unproven carbon capture project](#)

An amendment attached to a bill originally intended to establish the foundations for a carbon market registration program in Indiana threatens to sink the bill in its current form. The amendment would allow Wabash Valley Resources LLC, a company authorized by the state Legislature to drill into the ground and inject carbon dioxide for storage, to use a rare permit issued by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency as a legal protection.

Indiana Environmental Reporter: [Pared wetlands bill removes protections for temporary streams, adds Exemptions for croplands](#)

In its original language, Senate Bill 389 sought the repeal of all state wetland protections and permitting authorized by the Indiana Legislature in 2003. An amendment passed unanimously by the House Environmental Affairs Committee preserves state protections of most wetlands and adds more exemptions for croplands, the permitting of which has often been cited by bill proponents as the main justification for the bill.

OPINION AND ANALYSIS

The Hill: [Biden offers American science a fresh chance to prove its value to society](#)

President Biden has laid out a vision for elevating the importance of science in this country, but his administration cannot do this alone. All scientists need to help find new ways to educate Americans about the benefits and the mission of science. We need to make sure they understand the scientific method and how that has led to discoveries that have changed our world.

The New Yorker: [Greta Thunberg's happy crusade](#)

Even though Biden has reversed the course set by his predecessor, who liked to call climate change "a very expensive hoax," Thunberg knows she will be disappointed. "The things that they are going to present will not be nearly enough for what science is saying will be in line with the Paris Agreement," she said.

Birdlife International: [Sustainable farming and forestry could reduce extinction risks by 40%](#)

Ensuring sustainability of crop and timber production would mitigate the greatest drivers of terrestrial wildlife decline, responsible for 40% of the overall extinction risk of amphibians, birds, and mammals, according to a paper published today in Nature Ecology & Evolution. These results were generated using a new metric which, for the first time, allows business, governments, and civil society to assess their potential contributions to stemming global species loss.

The News & Observer: [Ghost forests are creeping along NC's coast. They're big enough to be seen from space](#)

Ghost forests are families of trees sprawled across America's East Coast that are being swallowed by swarms of salty ocean water. They are becoming more common as human-driven climate change paves the way for more frequent extreme weather events that cause abrupt environmental changes nearly impossible to recover from.

*Brookings: [Rebuild with purpose: An affirmative vision for 21st century American infrastructure](#)
Simply repairing our outmoded infrastructure systems with the same traditional policies, technologies, and designs is not enough. Americans are ready for a grand reimagining of and reinvestment in our infrastructure to revitalize the transportation, water, energy, and broadband systems that power our economy.*

*The New York Times: [Are you confused by scientific jargon? So are scientists](#)
A team of researchers has analyzed jargon in a set of over 21,000 scientific manuscripts. They found that papers containing higher proportions of jargon in their titles and abstracts were cited less frequently by other researchers.*

TAKE ACTION AND RESOURCES FOR ACTIVISTS

Environmental Protection: [EPA seeks experts to serve on the National Environmental Education Advisory Council](#)

The EPA is soliciting applications for environmental education professionals to fill two vacancies on the National Environmental Education Advisory Council (NEEAC). Selected applicants will contribute to the balance of perspectives, professional qualifications, and experience of the council and be appointed by the Administrator.

The CSIU Weekly News Bulletin is now available on the web. To view this page online go to <https://csiub.org/weekly-news-bulletins>. To view archives of past bulletins, see <https://csiub.org/bulletin-archives>.

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 Irmscher 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.

To join our listserv, send an email to csi-u-l-subscribe@list.indiana.edu. To unsubscribe from this list, send an email to csi-u-l-unsubscribe@indiana.edu. You can leave the subject line and message blank.