

Concerned Scientists' Weekly News Bulletin

[September 20, 2021]



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

Contributions welcome.

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NEWS ITEMS AND ARTICLES

New York Times: [In a first, Washington will draft rules on workplace heat dangers](#)

The Biden administration is opening an effort across federal agencies to address the health impacts from heat, including the first ever labor standard aimed at protecting workers from extreme heat, as part of a growing recognition of the dangers posed by warming temperatures caused by climate change.

SciTechDaily: [Droplets loaded with coronaviruses last far longer than previously thought](#)

Previous models assumed that only large droplets pose a relevant risk of infection because small droplets evaporate quickly. At TU Wien (Vienna), however, in cooperation with the University of Padova, it has now been shown that this is not true: Due to the high humidity of the air we breathe, even small droplets can remain in the air much longer than previously assumed.

AP News: [US panel backs COVID-19 boosters only for seniors, high-risk](#)

A Food and Drug Administration panel overwhelmingly rejected a plan to give Pfizer COVID-19 booster shots across the board, instead endorsing the extra dose for those who are 65 or older or run a high risk of severe disease. The recommendation is nonbinding, however, and both the FDA and CDC are expected to continue the discussions next week.

Inside Higher Ed: [A win for pandemic-impacted PIs](#)

The National Institutes of Health on Friday revised its early-stage investigator, or ESI, policy to allow those working on previously granted extensions to request more time as ESIs, due to COVID-19 or other “life events.” Prior to the policy adjustment, many women said they’d been denied pandemic-related extension requests because they’d

already been granted extensions due to childbirth. This raised questions about the NIH's stated commitment to supporting women in science.

AIP: [Democrats seek billions for R&D at minority-serving institutions](#)

President Biden has proposed allocating tens of billions for research infrastructure upgrades and R&D projects across MSIs (minority-serving institutions) within special spending packages he is urging Congress to pass.

E&E News: [Dems' clean electricity plan could leave out big utilities](#)

The Tennessee Valley Authority and several other major utilities may be exempt from a \$150 billion clean electricity plan under consideration in Congress, stoking concerns that the proposal contains significant loopholes and would hit the sector unevenly. The policy aims for a 4% annual increase in clean electricity resources, but smaller, downstream plants may be forced to make more changes than larger power producers.

United Nations News: [Most agricultural funding distorts prices, harms environment: UN report](#)

Approximately \$540 billion in total annual government support is given worldwide to agricultural producers. However, the report finds that current tariffs and subsidies: "are inefficient, distort food prices, hurt people's health, degrade the environment, and are often inequitable, putting big agri-business ahead of smallholder farmers, many whom are women."

Washington Post: [Cow pee is an environmental problem. But now scientists say calves can be potty-trained](#)

Cows' frequent urination produces 55 to 110 gallons of methane each day and contains nitrogenous components that pollute Earth's streams and rivers, make the waters dangerous for people to swim in or drink from, and pose a risk to wildlife. The University of Auckland joined forces with scientists at a research laboratory in Germany for an experiment that would allow the cow's urine to be collected, treated and neutralized—so it poses less of a risk.

SciTechDaily: [Judge acquits nanotechnologist as pressure mounts on DOJ China initiative](#)

A federal judge has acquitted nanotechnologist Anming Hu on charges that he defrauded NASA by failing to disclose contracts with a Chinese academic institution. The judge found Department of Justice prosecutors presented unconvincing evidence of malign intent, echoing broader criticisms that many DOJ 'China Initiative' cases are ill-founded.

REGIONAL NEWS

The Herald-Times: [EPA removes 3 Bloomington waste sites from Superfund list. Why that matters](#)

A limestone quarry pit at the former Bennett Stone Quarry, Lemon Lane Landfill and Neal's Landfill have been removed from the Environmental Protection Agency's National Priority cleanup lists. Work to remove the hazardous organic chemicals found in these 3 sites began in 1985. Many Hoosiers consider the completion of the cleanup project to be a great success. The EPA will continue to monitor the levels of the chemicals to ensure "the remedies continue to protect human health and the environment."

Indiana Environmental Reporter: [Hoosiers can resume feeding birds](#)

Community efforts helped the Indiana Department of Natural Resources monitor the spread of a mysterious disease among birds. Now, the DNR has announced that Hoosiers across the state can reinstall their bird feeders. Bird feeders should be cleaned at least every two weeks to prevent future outbreaks and residents should continue to report any ill or dead birds on the DNR fish and wildlife page.

IndyStar: [Lilly gives \\$5M to diabetes program targeting Indianapolis' least healthy neighborhoods](#)

In Indianapolis, there is a 17-year gap in life expectancy between the longest and shortest living zip codes. Eli Lilly & Co. recently increased funding for their Diabetes Impact Project: an effort that provides support to 3 Indianapolis neighborhoods through public exercise infrastructure, community health workers, and nutrition access plans.

WFYI: [12 more named to Governor's Public Health Commission](#)

The Governor's Public Health Commission consists of health officials from across the state working to make recommendations to the Indiana General Assembly in the 2023 legislative session. The twelve new members include Marion County Health Officer Dr. Virginia Caine and president of the Indiana Hospital Association Brian Tabor, among others.

OPINION AND ANALYSIS

The New Yorker: [How to talk about climate change across the political divide](#)

Katharine Hayhoe, an atmospheric scientist and evangelical Christian, has written a book that lays out strategies for discussing the climate crisis in a divided country.

Thomson Reuters: [As nature shifts, climate change forces rewrite of U.S. conservation strategy](#)

The effects of climate change are causing a "sea change" from traditional conservation practices that seek to maintain ecosystems or help restore them to a historical ideal. Conservationist will have to decide not only where to resist change but also where to try to direct it in a way that could, for instance, help control invasive species—and where to simply accept it.

SciTechDaily: [Startup Colossal Biosciences wants to bring woolly mammoths back from extinction. It might not be such a bad idea](#)

Colossal proposes to use CRISPR gene editing technology to modify Asian elephant embryos (the mammoth's closest living relative) so their genomes resemble those of woolly mammoths. The aim is to release herds of these mammophants into the Arctic, where they will fill the ecological niche mammoths once occupied.

Popular Science: [The Brilliant 10: The most innovative up-and-coming minds in science](#)

The annual roster of early-career scientists and engineers developing ingenious approaches to problems across a range of disciplines. To find those innovators, Popular Science vetted hundreds of researchers from institutions of all stripes and sizes to find the ones poised to navigate current and future challenges.

Mongabay: [Sea turtles: Can these great marine migrators navigate rising human threats?](#)

For millions of years, countless sea turtles navigated the world's oceans, migrating vast distances between foraging sites and natal nesting beaches. But today, those long journeys repeatedly expose them to harmful anthropogenic impacts and disruptive environmental changes. And despite worldwide conservation efforts, all seven sea turtle species are endangered or critically endangered at global or regional levels.

TAKE ACTION AND RESOURCES FOR ACTIVISTS

Hispanic Access Foundation: [Hispanic Access Foundation's conservation program](#)

It's Hispanic Heritage Month until October 15th. If you are interested in supporting members of the Hispanic community in ongoing environmental efforts, consider exploring the HAF. Their primary focus areas are in public lands, the land and water conservation fund, greenhouse gases, heat and drought, wildfires, and the antiquities act. "Hispanic Access Foundation's conservation program seeks to elevate diverse Latino voices and leaders to support Latino communities to advocate for the environmental issues that directly affect their daily lives."

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