

# Concerned Scientists' Weekly News Bulletin [September 27, 2021]



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

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## **NEWS ITEMS AND ARTICLES**

*Nature:* [Closest known relatives of virus behind COVID-19 found in Laos](#)

*Scientists have found three viruses in bats in Laos that are more similar to SARS-CoV-2 than any known viruses. Researchers say that parts of their genetic code bolster claims that the virus behind COVID-19 has a natural origin — but their discovery also raises fears that there are numerous coronaviruses with the potential to infect people. David Robertson, a virologist at the University of Glasgow, UK, calls the find “fascinating, and quite terrifying.”*

*API:* [Biden names President's Council of Advisors on science and technology](#)

*President Biden announced the members of the President's Council of Advisors on Science and Technology. The roster has significant representation from the physical and biomedical sciences and areas such as climate and information technology. Former National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration head Kathy Sullivan, former Defense Secretary Ash Carter, and former National Renewable Energy Lab Director Dan Arvizu are three of the new members.*

*The White House:* [President Biden appoints commissioners of U.S. Arctic Research Commission](#)

*The United States depends upon the USARC Commissioners to provide guidance on and assessments of scientific research goals and objectives for the Arctic. One-third of the appointed commissioners are Indigenous, half are women, and two-thirds are residents of Alaska.*

*E & E News:* [Biden picks Trump critic to lead EPA science office](#)

*Chris Frey, whose pending nomination as EPA assistant administrator for research and development was announced by the White House yesterday, was a caustic detractor of how the Trump EPA handled a review of the standards for airborne particulate matter, commonly known as soot.*

*New York Times:* [Biden promised to follow the science. But sometimes, he gets ahead of the experts](#)

*Biden's public embrace of booster shots has rankled many in the public health sector, including those working inside the government, who say it could have the effect of putting undue pressure on scientists to make a recommendation they do not believe is supported by the evidence.*

*Washington Post:* [Philanthropies pledge billions during UN meeting](#)

*As world leaders gathered in New York for the annual United Nations General Assembly, a coalition of nine foundations said they would collectively spend \$5 billion by 2030 to protect at least 30% of the planet's land and sea, known as 30x30. The pledge from former New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg's Bloomberg Philanthropies, the Washington D.C.-based Wyss Foundation and others is believed to be the largest private pledge to protect biodiversity.*

*Counterpunch:* [A little radiation is not good for you](#)

*After six years of deliberation and in a rare pushback against the radioactive pollution industry, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission — well known as a rubber stamp for the nuclear lobby—voted unanimously to reject formal petitions urging the agency to adopt a cost-cutting scheme known as “hormesis” which claims that “a little radiation is good for you.”*

*CNN:* [Sleeping Beauty's forest is dying. It's not the only climate crisis facing Germany's next chancellor](#)

*Germany's next chancellor will face a hefty list of climate challenges as they steer Europe's largest economy toward its goal of carbon neutrality by 2045, including the transition from fossil fuels to renewables; replacing combustion-engine cars with electric ones; and the completion of the controversial Nord Stream 2 pipeline, which brings gas from Russia to Germany under the Baltic Sea.*

## **REGIONAL NEWS**

*Indiana Environmental Reporter:* [Governor signs Pollution Prevention Week proclamation](#)

*Gov. Eric Holcomb declared September 19-24 as Pollution Prevention Week in Indiana. The Indiana Department of Environmental Management hopes that the week will encourage business, citizens, and government to implement pollution prevention practices.*

*Journal & Courier Online:* [Sen. Alting, students confront climate change by drafting legislation together](#)

*Last Friday, the West Lafayette-based student group Confront the Climate Crisis held a climate strike. They were joined by Indiana State Sen. Ron Alting, who announced the two pieces of legislation that he had created in collaboration with the group. Alting plans to introduce the climate change resolution and bill in the 2022 legislative session.*

*14 News:* [Indiana to begin offering Pfizer COVID booster shots to eligible Hoosiers](#)

*Indiana will offer the Pfizer COVID-19 booster shot to individuals ages 65 and older following CDC recommendation on Thursday. Eligible individuals can schedule their*

shots through [www.ourshot.in.gov](http://www.ourshot.in.gov). Individuals who received the Moderna or Johnson & Johnson vaccines are not eligible at this time.

**IndyStar:** [How do carbon fee policies work, and do Hoosier lawmakers support them?](#)

*Indiana is one of the largest contributors to energy-related CO<sub>2</sub> emissions in the nation, but lawmakers are working to change that. Two economy-based tactics have garnered support from Hoosier lawmakers. The Baker-Schultz Carbon Dividends Plan has support from State Sen. Ron Grooms, State Rep. Cindy Ziemke and others, while the Energy Innovation and Carbon Dividend Act attracts Jim Brainard, Emily Styron, State Sen. Shelli Yoder, and State Reps. Matt Pierce, Chris Campbell, Rita Fleming and Mike Andrade.*

## **OPINION AND ANALYSIS**

**Mongabay:** [Bridge the North-South divide for a UN Biodiversity Framework that is more just](#)

*Eminent activist Subhankar Banerjee on why the 30X30 biodiversity plan pushed by the global North will not work for the poorer nations in the Global South. Scientists and conservation leaders living in Europe and the United States have never considered building global biodiversity proposals that would be rights-based, inclusive and justice-attentive.*

**The Scientist:** [Scientists must combat scientific dogmatism](#)

*It is no secret that a significant slice of the American political spectrum harbors anti-science sentiments, and this segment largely overlaps with the political right. This is certainly an impediment to the formation of evidence-based policies. But the politicizing of science by the right has induced a natural reaction from the left: to blindly trust scientists. This subtle form of scientific dogmatism could inadvertently undermine the credibility of scientific institutions and could similarly challenge rational policymaking.*

**Phys.org: Study:** [Unite solutions to climate and biodiversity crises to save life on Earth](#)

*A new, landmark study led by conservation and science charity ZSL (Zoological Society of London) and published in the Journal of Applied Ecology states that treating the global climate change and biodiversity crises separately is, in many situations, ineffectual, and at worst, could deepen the problem.*

**Popular Science:** [There is only one country doing its Paris Agreement homework](#)

*Of the 90 or so entities that have submitted an updated action plan for the 2015 agreement, only Gambia's pushing hard enough to hit the goals by 2030. The West African nation of about 2.3 million people has a per capita carbon emissions rate of around 0.25 tons (compared to 16.06 tons per person in the US) and adheres to an ambitious conditional emissions reduction target.*

**Washington Post:** [Why it's a mistake to teach climate change only in science class](#)

*Climate change is also a social, political, and economic issue, and it brings fresh urgency to reimagining how we teach young people to participate in civic life. Growing awareness of the threats of inequality, racial injustice, and misinformation have generated long-overdue calls for a new approach to civics and history education. But current proposals ignore a crucial fact: We cannot have a flourishing society without a healthy planet.*

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

USA National Phenology Network: [Track changes in plants and animals](#)

*The USA-NPN brings together volunteer observers, government agencies, non-profit groups, educators, and students of all ages to monitor the impacts of climate change on plants and animals in the United States. Track things like invasive species, insects, and flowering plants via their online portal.*

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