

# Concerned Scientists' Weekly News Bulletin [November 30, 2020]



## **NEWS ITEMS AND ARTICLES**

Grist.org: [The UN canceled its 2020 climate summit. Youth held one anyway](#)

*Since November 19, 18 student staff, 216 volunteers, and more than 350 youth delegates from 146 countries have been convening virtually for Mock COP26, a virtual summit meant to fill the void created by COP26's postponement.*

The New York Times: [E.P.A.'s final deregulatory rush runs into open staff resistance](#)

*With two months left of the Trump administration, career E.P.A. employees find themselves where they began, in a bureaucratic battle with the agency's political leaders. But now, with the Biden administration on the horizon, they are emboldened to stymie Mr. Trump's goals and to do so more openly.*

Washington Post: [Trump officials move to relax rules on killing birds](#)

*A rule change easing companies' liability for killing birds would not cause unacceptable environmental harm, the Trump administration said in an analysis published Friday, clearing the way for it to finalize a major rollback before the president's term ends on January 20. The administration, which is racing to lock in a series of regulatory changes before President-elect Joe Biden takes office, can now publish a final rule modifying the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's interpretation of the 1918 Migratory Bird Treaty Act.*

Washington Post: [The Energy 202: What the Janet Yellen pick for Treasury means for climate policy](#)

*Yellen is a former head of the Federal Reserve who has cited the effects of climate change as "a risk to banking organizations" and discussed the need for public policy action aimed at mitigating climate change. Her position as Treasury Secretary would make her the chair of the Financial Stability Oversight Council, which identifies emerging market risks (such as climate change) and coordinates financial regulation. She could also alter tax break policies for fossil fuel companies and increase benefits for clean energy, a likely move considering her support of climate treaties since the 1990s and support for taxing carbon emissions and encouraging companies to set targets to reduce their emissions.*

Guardian: [Government blocks proposed mine that threatened Alaska salmon fishery](#)

*The Trump Administration denied a permit needed for a gold and copper mine planned near a large salmon fishery in Bristol Bay, Alaska, citing violations of the Clean Water Act and the Rivers and Harbors Act. The move was a relief to many environmentalists and indigenous*

rights activists who strongly opposed the plan. The plan had also been opposed by prominent conservative figureheads such as Donald Trump Jr. who have fished in Bristol Bay.

L.A. Times: [Trump science advisor Scott Atlas is leaving White House job](#)

Atlas, who has no expertise in epidemiology, had broken with government experts and the overwhelming consensus of the scientific community to criticize efforts to encourage face covering to slow the spread of the virus.

Washington Post: [Fears of coronavirus jump intensify in Thanksgiving's aftermath](#)

US hospitalizations reached over 90,000 for the first time on Thanksgiving Day, followed by hitting 13 million total cases. Nine different states have rates of 1 out of 1,000 residents dying from the virus. These numbers are expected to surge in the upcoming weeks following the holiday weekend. Hospitals across the country fear they may reach maximum capacity.

New York Times: [After admitting mistake, AstraZeneca faces difficult questions about its vaccine](#)

The AstraZeneca and University of Oxford vaccine was initially met with excitement due to its publicized 90% effectiveness and low cost. However, it is unlikely to get authorized for emergency use in the US following the release of information concerning two different dosing regimens that were tested.

NPR: [Initial batch Of COVID-19 vaccines will go to states based on population, not risk](#)

Operation Warp Speed officials announced that following FDA approval, the 6.4 million initial vaccine doses will be allocated to states based on their total adult populations. The CDC advisory committee had instead suggested allocating doses based on numbers of individuals in high-risk groups such as health care and factory workers and residents in nursing homes. Many individual states plan to follow the CDC advisory committee's guidelines for distribution within their state.

Science: [Federal system for tracking hospital beds and COVID-19 patients provides questionable data](#)

HHS Protect is the main pandemic data tracking system and is run by the Department of Health and Human Services. Its records of the percentage of ICU beds filled, general hospital beds filled, and numbers of inpatients with the virus have been vastly different from state-supplied data and other federal data sources, showing differences of over 20% in 30 states. The HHS Protect data is used by officials across the country to allocate medical resources and gauge the severity of the spread.

## **REGIONAL NEWS**

The Indiana Lawyer: [McCabe: Biden will reverse Trump environmental policies](#)

Janet McCabe, the director of Indiana University's Environmental Resilience Institute and a former EPA official, on why she expects the Biden administration will quickly signal to the nation that effectively applying the nation's environmental laws matters to everyone, especially to communities that bear an unfair share of the public health burden of pollution.

Slate: [The U.S. fight against climate change has to start at its center, the Midwest](#)

Just as the Midwest became a political battleground that national candidates ignore at their peril, this region will be crucial to the success of any national climate change plan. When it comes to cutting greenhouse gases, however, what works for San Francisco or New York City is not necessarily going to fly in the middle of the country.

## **OPINION AND ANALYSIS**

UCS: [Want more science-based policies? Start by protecting the scientists](#)

*Now more than ever we need to establish scientific integrity policies and laws that prevent the suppression and distortion of scientific research and prohibit retaliations against scientists. Without this we risk future abuse and manipulation of science and harm to the public good.*

*The Hill: [Building trust in science will require democratizing evidence](#)*

*In the next era of federal policymaking, we should build trust in science by incorporating democratic principles. Those most marginalized by racism, poverty, and xenophobia will need a place at the table in shaping research priorities and the use of evidence in policymaking.*

*The Hill: [EPA's scientific integrity in question over science rule](#)*

*Thomas Sinks, the former director of the EPA Office of the Science Advisor and the Human Subjects Research Review Official, pushes back against the proposed Strengthening Transparency in Regulatory Science rule, which he never read or endorsed (though his name was used in connection with it) and which conflicts with existing legislation calling for the EPA to use the best available science.*

*WBUR: [Why wasn't climate the electoral lever we thought it would be?](#)*

*In our polarized politics, a voter's identification with a party is a stronger determinant of his or her position on climate change than is a thoughtful understanding of the subject. Now, after four lost years, there is no time left to dither about climate action.*

*Fast Company: [The 6 winners of the "Green Nobels" for environmental activism show that change is possible](#)*

*The Goldman Environmental Prize announced its 2020 winners, including an activist who used shareholder meetings to push back against financing coal mines and a beekeeper who took on Monsanto. For all the Goldman Prize winners, their environmental work is far from over. But to them, the prize is recognition that they did achieve some change, that even more change is possible, and that we can be hopeful about our climate future.*

*Nature: [The researcher fighting to embed analysis of sex and gender into science](#)*

*On 25 November, the European Commission—one of the world's largest research funders—said that it aims to make sex and gender analysis mandatory in the research it funds, through its €85-billion (US\$100-billion) Horizon Europe program, which is set to begin in 2021. This is the result of recommendations made by a committee chaired by Stanford's Londa Schiebinger, who was interviewed for this article.*

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

*NRDC: [Save the Arctic Refuge before it's too late](#)*

*President-elect Joe Biden has promised to permanently protect the Arctic Refuge, and NRDC is already suing in federal court to stop Trump's Arctic drilling push. But Trump's moves could stack the deck against both those critical efforts. So take advantage of a public comment period to rush a message to President Trump and Interior Secretary David Bernhardt, by December 17, telling them you strongly oppose their climate-busting plan for drilling in the Arctic Refuge.*

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*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](mailto:cirmsche@indiana.edu).*

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