

Concerned Scientists' Weekly News Bulletin

[January 25, 2020]



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

NEWS ITEMS AND ARTICLES

Salt Lake Tribune: [President Joe Biden's order to review Utah monuments leaves options open, but expansion all but certain](#)

An executive order issued Wednesday instructs the Interior Secretary, a post likely to be filled by Rep. Deb Haaland of New Mexico, to submit findings and recommendations for moving forward on the future of these landscapes that have been ground zero in Utah's public lands battles going back nearly a century.

New York Times: [Biden cancels Keystone XL Pipeline and rejoins Paris Climate Agreement](#)

In a burst of climate orders, the president also ordered federal agencies to begin the process of reinstating environmental regulations reversed under the Trump administration.

Washington Post: [Tracking Biden's environmental actions](#)

President Biden placed climate change squarely at the center of his White House agenda on Wednesday, using his first hours in office to rejoin the Paris climate accord and begin overturning more than 100 environmental actions taken by the Trump administration.

The Guardian: [John Kerry commits US to climate crisis fight but warns world is way off pace](#)

Kerry recently addressed business leaders at a G20 forum as Biden's new international climate envoy, acknowledging the US's recent failures to curb emissions and stating that the world as a whole needs to phase out coal 5x faster than current trends, increase the planet's tree cover 5x faster, increase renewable energy use 6x faster, and transition to electric vehicles 22x faster than current trends in order to reach net zero carbon emissions by 2050.

Center for Public Integrity: [Climate change contributed to more than 70 natural disasters since 2015](#)

According to a report published in The Lancet, climate change played a role in 76 natural disasters from 2015 to 2020, from Hurricane Harvey's unprecedented flooding in Texas to extreme heat that played a role in the catastrophic Australian bushfires.

The Hill: [Fauci describes "chilling" pressure on scientists in Trump era](#)

Anthony Fauci, the federal government's leading infectious disease expert, said it was "chilling" to see the pressure put on scientists during the Trump administration by officials seeking to project rosy messaging about the coronavirus.

Politico: [Deborah Birx: "Parallel set of data" on Covid-19 was delivered to Trump](#)

While Deborah Birx served as the White House coronavirus response coordinator under President Donald Trump, "outside advisers" were bringing him "parallel" sets of data on the Covid-19 pandemic, she said in an interview that aired on Sunday. "I saw the president presenting graphs that I never made."

The Hill: [Internal watchdog to probe Trump officials who cast doubt on climate science](#)

Two Trump administration officials, David Legates and Ryan Maue, were on detail at the White House when their names appeared on papers in a series that cast doubt on the science behind climate change and its impacts.

Nature: ["Inspired choice": Biden appoints sociologist Alondra Nelson to top science post](#)

Nelson is the president of the Social Science Research Council and studies societal impacts of new technology and racism in science and medicine. She is also a professor at the Institute for Advanced Study at Princeton and an elected member of the National Academy of Medicine. Under the Biden administration, she will act as the deputy director for science and society within the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy. Nelson is an addition many hope will aid in the new administration's efforts to fight inequality in medicine as well as science and technology-related disciplines.

Science: [Trump downplayed the costs of carbon pollution. That's about to change](#)

The "social cost of carbon" is a figure representing impacts of carbon emissions on future generations in the form of floods, droughts, farming losses, and deaths, and how these will impact GDP. The Trump Administration set this cost at an extremely low \$1 per ton of carbon emitted, allowing them to loosen emissions rules and efficiency standards. Biden has created an interagency group to reevaluate this number, with economists expecting it to increase to \$125 per ton of carbon next month and be even higher by the end of the assessment next year.

American Institute of Physics: [Science Policy in 2021: 10 stories to watch](#)

1) The pandemic and how it will affect public health and scientific research moving forwards; 2) The role of science in informing policy decisions; 3) Post-Trump science activism; 4) R&D funding for artificial intelligence, microelectronics, and quantum information science; 5) Appointments of new science policy leaders across the federal government; 6) Climate research and policy initiatives; 7) Advancement of energy technology; 8) Space science; 9) Immigration policy and international research impacts; 10) Less emphasis on research security.

New York Times: [Biden inherits a vaccine supply unlikely to grow before April](#)

Despite the Biden Administration's hopes to dramatically increase the vaccine supply, experts say there is not enough manufacturing capacity to do so before April. They say

the administration should instead focus on organizing current vaccine distribution efforts across the country, as many state and local distribution centers are struggling to manage current inputs of the vaccine, with some administering only 46% of the doses they receive from the federal government. Biden plans to expand vaccination centers and hire 100,000 health care workers to help with distribution efforts.

New York Times: [F.D.A. approves monthly shots to treat H.I.V.](#)

A set of two shots given monthly, together called Cabenuva, provides a new alternative to daily pills used to suppress HIV. The use of daily pills often comes with societal and psychological stigmas and missing a dose of one of the pills can help the virus become resistant to the medications. Despite this, there is some concern as to how practical the shots are outside of clinical trials. They are high cost and injections cause low levels of the drugs to persist for longer amounts of time in the body –increasing their long-term effectiveness but also providing conditions in which the virus can develop resistance to the drugs.

REGIONAL NEWS

Energy News Network: [Indiana lawmakers to vote on bill to ban local heating electrification initiatives](#)

Indiana legislators are expected to vote this week on a bill that could prohibit municipalities from following in the footsteps of Berkeley and San Francisco in prohibiting natural gas hookups for home heating in new construction. Proponents of the bill (HB 1191) in Indiana — and similar legislation proposed in other states, including Kansas and Missouri — have framed it as a way to preserve consumers' choice to use natural gas for heating, cooking and hot water, which is typically cheaper than electricity.

IndyStar: [“Last line of defense”: New bill would strip protections for many of Indiana's wetlands](#)

Indiana has already lost 85% of the wetlands it once had a century ago, many drained for farming and development. Now, environmentalists, engineers and residents are concerned that the few wetlands that remain are under threat. Lawmakers passed SB 389 out of the Senate Environmental Affairs Committee, and the bill will now head to the Senate floor.

IndyStar: [Does DNR have any future plans for more wildlife recoveries like the bald eagle?](#)

As Hoosiers all over the state have taken to the outdoors during the pandemic, they have become more interested in Indiana's forests, rivers, and wetlands — and the animals that call them home. The article addresses the questions: Why are wildlife reintroductions important? And what, if any, species is the DNR thinking about bringing back in the future?

OPINION AND ANALYSIS

Sierra: [What does it mean to restore Bears Ears, in words and in spirit?](#)

David Gessner on why he hopes tribes and the government will co-manage Bears Ears, and that Secretary Haaland and President Biden will understand this, and not just restore, but improve Bears Ears.

E & E News: [Hometown pollution shaped the next EPA chief](#)

Michael Regan, the first Black man to lead the EPA, grew up in what Biden has called a "fence-line" community — a city, town, neighborhood, or rural area where residents live close enough to a pollution source to feel its effects but have little or no voice about its impacts. Fence-line communities exist in every state, experts say, and most share one or more common traits: social, economic, or racial disadvantage.

Scientific American: [Eric Lander is not the ideal choice for Presidential Science Adviser](#)

President Biden has made clear his desire for a progressive science agenda for Lander and his team to execute. As his administration brings science to the table, one cannot overlook who still isn't.

Chemical & Engineering News: [Will public trust in science survive the pandemic?](#)

A lack of trust seems tied to everything that has gone wrong with the pandemic response in the US. The rapid evolution of COVID-19 science, mixed messaging from leaders, a torrent of misinformation, political interference in federal science agencies, and peak levels of polarization threaten to disintegrate public trust in science.

TAKE ACTION AND RESOURCES FOR ACTIVISTS

Environmental Action: [Send a message to President Biden calling for critical protections for wolves](#)

History has shown how devastating removing federal protections for gray wolves can be. After gray wolves near the Great Lakes lost their protections in 2011, more than 1,500 wolves were killed in just three years. And there's a chance this history will repeat itself if we don't act. Wisconsin has already set a date for the return of wolf hunting season.

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