

# Concerned Scientists' Weekly News Bulletin [January 25, 2022]



*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**

**API:** [NASA focuses on climate, naming earth-systems expert as chief scientist](#)

NASA has chosen Earth scientist Kate Calvin to serve in the dual roles of chief scientist and senior climate advisor, bringing new visibility to the agency's efforts to monitor and mitigate climate change.

**Scientific American:** [How Biden could close coal plants without carbon regulations](#)

In the coming weeks, the EPA aims to offer a power sector plan that details new rules and regulations intended to make coal-fired plants less viable and to provide economic benefits in shifting toward clean energy. This comes as the Supreme Court is working on a case that could limit how the EPA regulates carbon.

**WSJ:** [Biden administration makes visa changes to retain foreign STEM students](#)

In efforts to remain on par in terms of innovation with countries like China, the Biden administration seeks to retain foreign scholars who have studied in the US by expanding the list of disciplines that qualify them to work in the US with their student visas and by increasing the number of years they can work in the US from one year to three years. Further opportunities are also being added to improve the ease of working and studying in the US for students and professionals with J-1 and O-1 visas, and the green card application process for STEM professionals is being streamlined as well.

**NPR:** [Archaeologists launch first-ever "dig" into life on the International Space Station](#)

A group of researchers are studying life on the International Space Station, where they will observe how crew members interact with one another in efforts to learn more about the effect of factors like race, gender, and class on society and culture in space. Crew members will also be taking pictures of the International Space Station to note how

different spaces inform actions and the ways in which they change the space to make it more livable.

*New York Times:* [“In the end, you’re treated like a spy,” says M.I.T. scientist](#)

Last week, the government dismissed the case against Dr. Chen, which alleged that he had concealed seven Chinese affiliations in applications for \$2.7 million in grants from the U.S. Energy Department. Prosecutors announced that they had received new information indicating that Dr. Chen had not been obliged to disclose those affiliations, undercutting the basis of the case.

## **REGIONAL NEWS**

*Energy News Network:* [An Indiana carbon storage project wants the state to help protect it from lawsuits](#)

The House Committee on Natural Resources narrowly passed House Bill 1249, a proposal to continue a pilot Carbon sequestration project in Vigo County with special liability immunity for the pilot operator. Many Hoosier groups, including the Indiana Department of Natural Resources, opposed the Bill. The full House will now consider this Bill in addition to House Bill 1209, which lays out a process for granting permits for Carbon sequestration projects.

*Northwest Indiana Times:* [Indiana American Water Co. offering grants for community environmental projects](#)

The Greenwood-based company has opened applications for the 2022 Environmental Grant Program. The program seeks “innovative, community-based environmental projects that improve, restore or protect the watersheds, surface water and/or groundwater supplies through partnerships.”

*WFYI Indianapolis:* [Indiana firefighters could get annual blood testing for PFAS under proposed pilot program](#)

Democratic Indiana House member Maureen Bauer has introduced a bill that would create a pilot blood testing program to study the long-term effects of PFAS exposure on Indiana’s firefighters. Firefighters are faced with unusually high exposure to these “forever chemicals,” because they are often found in firefighting foam and protective clothing.

*Indiana Public Media:* [Bill paves the way for small nuclear reactors. But are they a financial and safety risk?](#)

State Senate Bill 271 aims to create incentives for the construction of modular reactors on former coal plant sites. Proponents argue that the reactors create essential job opportunities. Opponents like the Union of Concerned Scientists question the safety and disaster-preparedness of the plants.

## **OPINION AND ANALYSIS**

*Nature:* [Has Biden followed the science? What researchers say](#)

The White House is no longer questioning the threat of COVID-19 and global warming, as it did during the administration of his predecessor. But as Biden’s first year ends,

researchers also say that just because the president has embraced science doesn't mean his administration has always acted swiftly or sensibly on it.

*The Atlantic:* [Silicon Valley's new obsession](#)

Founders and investors—including tech CEOs, crypto billionaires, bloggers, economists, celebrities, and scientists—are coming together to build a fleet of new scientific labs to speed progress in understanding complex disease, extending healthy lifespans, and uncovering nature's secrets in long-ignored organisms. In the process, they're making research funding one of the hottest spaces in Silicon Valley.

*Nature:* [Build up big-team science](#)

What if researchers worked interdependently and distributed work across many laboratories? Such consortia might be able to answer questions that no individual lab could tackle alone. They are part of a broader movement towards grass-roots big-team science: endeavors in which an unusually large number of researchers—often dispersed across institutions and world regions—self-organize to pool intellectual and material resources in pursuit of a common goal.

*Grist:* [Should the world ban solar geoengineering? 60 experts say yes](#)

Unlike Mount Pinatubo's eruption in 1991—which cooled the planet by around 1 degree Fahrenheit for several years—the Tonga volcano didn't release enough sulfur dioxide to alter global temperatures. But the eruption illustrated a question that has been dogging scientific and climate experts for decades: If the world got unbearably hot, should scientists and governments opt to put sulfur dioxide or similar chemicals into the atmosphere to slow the rate of global warming?

*Mongabay:* [As animals vanish, the plants they spread can't keep pace with climate change](#)

According to a new study, the climate change and biodiversity crises are directly connected. Birds and mammals typically disperse seeds, allowing plant species to grow in different locations and remain climate resilient when the temperature of their original habitat becomes intolerable. Animal-dispersed plants play an important role not only in ecological health and biodiversity, but also in tracking climate change.

*Nature:* [Biodiversity faces its make-or-break year, and research will be key](#)

In the past, the UN has commissioned social scientists, for example in the UN Intellectual History Project, a series of 17 studies summarizing the experience of UN agencies spanning gender equality, diplomacy, development, trade, and official statistics. However, this work, which ended in 2010, did not assess what has and hasn't worked in science and environmental policy. Unless these perspectives are incorporated into biodiversity-research advice, any future plans risk going the way of their predecessors.

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

*Herald Times:* [Eagles over Monroe festivities](#)

Educational events in celebration of Monroe County's Bald Eagle population began Saturday. Visitors can participate in Eagle scavenger hunts, birding hikes, and Facebook Live presentations until January 30<sup>th</sup>. Guests may also join an established volunteer group that searches the Lake Monroe area for bald eagles and file field reports.

*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 CSIU member Christoph Irmischer of IU's Department of English and by ASIU members sophomore Rose Schnabel and (new to the team!) freshman Ana Lim. 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).*

*To join our listserv, send an email to [csiu-l-subscribe@list.indiana.edu](mailto:csiu-l-subscribe@list.indiana.edu). To unsubscribe from this list, send an email to [csiu-l-unsubscribe@indiana.edu](mailto:csiu-l-unsubscribe@indiana.edu). You can leave the subject line and message blank.*