



Concerned Scientists' Weekly News Bulletin [August 17, 2020]

NEWS ITEMS AND ARTICLES

Physics.org: [Warming Greenland ice sheet passes point of no return](#)

Nearly 40 years of satellite data from Greenland show that glaciers on the island have shrunk so much that even if global warming were to stop today, the ice sheet would continue shrinking.

Washington Post: [Quoting "To Kill a Mockingbird," judge strikes down Trump administration rollback of historic law protecting birds](#)

In a blistering ruling that cited Harper Lee's "To Kill a Mockingbird," U.S. District Judge Valerie E. Caproni ripped the administration's interpretation of "takings" and "killings" of birds under the century-old Migratory Bird Treaty Act as applying only if the animals are specifically targeted.

E & E News: [White House to withdraw William Perry Pendley's BLM nomination](#)

Yet Pendley, whom Interior Secretary David Bernhardt and BLM had defended vigorously, will continue "to lead the Bureau of Land Management" as its deputy director of policy and programs who is also "exercising the authority of director," the Interior Department confirmed in a statement.

New York Times: [Trump eliminates major methane rule, even as leaks are worsening](#)

The Trump Administration has weakened an Obama-era climate regulation, eliminating the requirement for oil and gas companies to install technology to detect and repair methane leaks in wells, pipelines, and storage sites. The EPA estimates the rule change will save \$100 million a year through 2030, but release about 850,000 tons of methane. Climate scientists argue that methane leaks from oil and gas companies are two to three times higher than EPA estimates.

American Institute of Physics: [Biden and Harris envision ambitious R&D and climate action](#)

Joe Biden's recent campaign proposals focus on clean energy and technological advancement. Kamala Harris has sponsored legislation promoting diversity in STEM fields and drafted a climate equity bill with Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez last year. She also sponsored an environmental justice act introduced to the Senate last week.

New York Times: [Russia approves coronavirus vaccine before Completing Tests](#)

Last Tuesday, Russia became the first country to approve a coronavirus vaccine. Public health experts around the world are concerned about the lack of large-scale clinical trials performed prior to the vaccine's approval. The Gamaleya Institute, which developed the vaccine, has yet to perform Phase 3 trials which test the effectiveness of the vaccine compared to a placebo in tens of thousands of participants.

Guardian: [US allows killing of hundreds of sea lions to save struggling salmon](#)

New permits allow Oregon, Washington, Idaho, and nearby Native American tribes to kill sea lions in the Columbia River basin to help struggling salmon and steelhead trout populations. Migrating fish are easy prey for sea lions when they bottleneck at dams or tributaries.

Guardian: [US proposes change to shower rules after Trump's hair-washing moan](#)

The Trump Administration proposed a rule change that would ease shower pressure and washing machine regulations, with claims the rollbacks could save citizens \$3,100 per year. However, consumer and conservation groups fear the changes would increase costs by raising water and fuel consumption.

Science: [Georgia Tech scientist gets lighter sentence in grant violation case because of her work on coronavirus](#)

Eva Lee, a suspended professor at the Georgia Institute of Technology, is a mathematician who has developed computer models to improve health care. She recently pleaded guilty to misrepresenting information pertaining to her NSF grant, and prosecutors requested Lee be charged with 8 months of home confinement. A district court judge instead sentenced her to 60 days of home confinement starting in Spring 2021, stating "Society would not benefit from [you serving] 8 months of home confinement now," and instead hopes she will aid the fight against coronavirus.

Science: ["We're losing an entire generation of scientists." COVID-19's economic toll hits Latin America hard](#)

Latin America accounts for nearly one-third of coronavirus deaths while containing only 10% of the global population. The region is facing economic problems as a result of the pandemic, and many researchers are facing dramatic budget cuts. Relationships between scientists and politicians are being strained in many countries across the region.

REGIONAL NEWS

Indiana Environmental Reporter: [A question of scale: Farmers, environmentalists debate impact of confined animal feeding operations](#)

Indiana environmentalists argue that factory farms (about 85 % of Indiana livestock are maintained through CFOs, or confined feeding operations) are bad for the land and for the local food system that keeps traditional family farms alive. Their protest may be headed for the Supreme Court.

OPINION AND ANALYSIS

Guardian: [The plastic we use unthinkingly every day is killing our planet – and slowly but surely killing us](#)

Researchers have been shocked to find the most remote depths of the Pacific Ocean polluted by our plastic. It will outlive us all.

Nature: [Universities scrub names of racist leaders—students say it's a first step](#)

Princeton University, University of Southern California, and University College London are among many universities to remove names of leaders with discriminatory views and actions from buildings and academic programs following recent Black Lives Matter protests. Stanford University and Indiana University are both still reviewing namings associated with David Starr Jordan, a marine biologist and eugenicist. Many of these changes, aided by faculty support, come after numerous failed attempts in previous years.

Environmental Health News: [Veeps and the Environment](#)

As Indiana governor and as Vice President, Pence stuck to the GOP's twin themes of climate denial and regulatory rollbacks, earning a 4 percent rating from the League of Conservation Voters. In her first four years as a U.S. Senator, the League rated Sen. Harris—who has pressed on environmental justice and clean energy—at 91 percent.

Grist.org: [Apple's Lisa Jackson on leadership, justice, and generations of change](#)

From 2009 to 2013, Lisa Jackson, Apple's current vice president of environment, policy, and social initiatives, headed the Environmental Protection Agency, where she led programs around reducing greenhouse gas emissions and made environmental justice a top priority. At Apple, Jackson has already helped the company hit net-zero emissions for its global corporate operations.

Mother Jones: [Donald Trump, Kanye West, and a weird western bird are all somehow involved in a major conservation battle](#)

The rapper has a green light to build a White House-sized mansion on key sage-grouse habitat. The episode illustrates how a lack of protection under the Trump administration—which has aggressively sought to dismantle safeguards for the species—has further threatened the already vulnerable bird.

Civil Eats: [USDA moves forward with sweeping plans to prevent fraud in organics](#)

Unlike many issues that have divided the organic community in recent years—such as certifying hydroponic farms—cracking down on fraud is a matter on which many in the industry appear to agree. Still, advocates said it will take more than a USDA rule to end fraud in the industry, including concerted efforts within private companies.

TAKE ACTION

UCS: [We need comprehensive racial data to protect vulnerable communities from COVID-19](#)

Due to pre-existing health disparities, socioeconomic inequality, and structural racism, communities of color are disproportionately affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Early reporting on racial disparities in COVID-19 testing and treatment suggest that Black and Latinx communities have been among the hardest hit. In order to protect our most vulnerable communities from the worst impacts of COVID-19, we need comprehensive racial data. We need your voice as a public health professional in this conversation. [Note: This letter is open to individuals holding doctorate or master's degrees, and with academic or professional experience that is relevant to medicine, public health, and/or epidemiology].

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 ASIU and IU biology major Emma Hand and CSIU member Christoph Irmscher 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.

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