

Concerned Scientists' Weekly News Bulletin

[August 30, 2021]



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

Contributions welcome.

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NEWS ITEMS AND ARTICLES

New York Times: [Ida strengthened quickly into a monster. Here's how.](#)

Hurricane Ida, which struck the Louisiana coast on Sunday with winds of 150 miles an hour, gained power faster more than most storms. Because of climate change, such rapid strengthening is happening more often as hurricanes pick up more energy from ocean water that is warmer than before. But in a summer of extreme weather, Ida's intensification was extreme.

Nature: [US COVID origins report: researchers pleased with scientific approach](#)

Intelligence agencies were divided on whether the pandemic most likely began because of a laboratory accident, or because of human contact with an infected animal. The report's only strong conclusion is that the coronavirus was not developed as a biological weapon; most agencies thought, with low confidence, that it was unlikely to have been genetically engineered.

E & E News: ["Seriously flawed": Experts clash over social cost of carbon](#)

Last week, a prominent group of economists published a paper in Science titled "Keep climate policy focused on the social cost of carbon," a rebuke of a recent recommendation by two prominent climate economists, Nicholas Stern and Joseph Stiglitz, that climate policy should focus on a specific policy goal, such as reaching net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050, and then evaluate the most cost-effective methods of reaching that target. The feud comes as a federal court is slated to hear oral arguments in a lawsuit brought by Republican state attorneys general over President Biden's plans to increase the social cost of carbon.

Atlas Obscura: [Ghostly satellite image captures the Arctic "losing its soul"](#)

Following a mid-August heatwave that led to the first-ever recorded rainfall at Summit Camp, at the Greenland Ice Sheet's highest point, torrents of meltwater streamed across its surface. Climatologists recorded daily melt rates seven times higher than normal. The Greenland Ice Sheet, like the rest of the Arctic, is trapped in a feedback loop caused by climate change: As more ice melts, it creates conditions for even faster, more extreme melt events.

REGIONAL NEWS

Indiana Business Journal: [Indiana health officials: "Things are going to get much worse"](#)

Only 46% of Indiana's population was fully vaccinated as of Thursday morning, ranking it 36th among all states, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Dr. Box, the state's health commissioner, pointed out that the vast majority of people showing up at hospitals needing treatment for COVID-19 are unvaccinated. Out of 1,300 people admitted to Indiana hospitals in recent days, only seven were vaccinated.

Indiana Environmental Reporter: [South Bend, DOJ to seek public comment on amended E. coli treatment agreement](#)

Prior to 2012, approximately 2 billion gallons of untreated, E. coli-rich sewage entered the St. Joseph River in South Bend each year. In 2012, South Bend came to an agreement with the state of Indiana to prevent future contamination. Now, the US Department of Justice is seeking public comments on a proposed amendment to the agreement that would decrease the cost of the water infrastructure improvements and give the city more time to implement the Smarter Alternative for a Greener Environment plan.

BioPharmaDive: [FDA restarts distribution of Lilly's COVID-19 drug in 22 states](#)

Use of Eli Lilly's COVID-19 antibody drug combination was halted in June due to concerns about its efficacy in treating the beta and gamma coronavirus variants. On Friday, the Food and Drug Administration announced that the treatment could be used in areas in which beta and gamma variants account for less than 5% of cases.

OPINION AND ANALYSIS

The Wire: [Climate change: The new normal is not yet here](#)

The latest report from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) indicates that what used to be predictions of "what could happen in a warmer world" are now our lived reality. Some of the worst effects of climate change will come not from severe weather but from the irreversible loss of species and ecosystems. If we delay action, within a few decades we will be looking back at today's extremes as "the good old days."

Outside: [Why Biden's NPS Director nominee matters more than ever](#)

President Biden has nominated Charles "Chuck" Sams, a Navy veteran, conservationist, and member of the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, for director of the National Park Service. If confirmed, Sams will be the first Native American to lead the NPS, an agency that has gone without a director for four years. A conversation with former NPS director Jon Jarvis.

Vanity Fair: [“When virologists are in demand, it’s a sign of the apocalypse”](#)

For the past year and a half, perhaps no experts have been more in demand and omnipresent than those steeped in the science and policy of the pandemic, a once-in-a-lifetime (hopefully!) pestilence that has consistently dominated the headlines in ways never seen before.

Scientific American: [YouTube’s plan to showcase credible health information is flawed, experts warn](#)

When someone searches YouTube for a health-related term such as “COVID-19,” most results will now prominently feature content from government agencies and health care organizations that the platform trusts to provide reliable information. Experts worry the recent changes fail to fully address the complexity of health behavior and the contested nature of medical knowledge.

SciDev.net: [COVID-19 impact on science journalism will have lasting effects](#)

The COVID-19 pandemic threw science journalists around the world into a frenzied, non-stop scrum of a news story that still has not relented. For the wider public, the pandemic also shone a bright light on the importance of science journalists.

The Guardian: [“Making a vaccine in a year is like landing a human on the moon”](#)

An oral history of Oxford/AstraZeneca, which has shipped more than a billion doses, saved countless lives--and faced controversy over its safety and supply. Some of those who created the vaccine tell the story of their epic race against the virus.

TAKE ACTION AND RESOURCES FOR ACTIVISTS

UCS: [Tell the CDC: Collect better data on breakthrough infections & emerging variants](#)

Despite the Delta variant circulating in other countries for months, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and many Americans were caught off guard by how contagious the new viral strain is, even for fully vaccinated people. The CDC's continued failure to collect necessary data continues to put people at risk.

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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 Irmscher of IU’s Department of English and by ASIU member ad biology sophomore Rose Schnabel, an aspiring science writer. 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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