



Concerned Scientists' Weekly News Bulletin [September 7, 2020]

NEWS ITEMS AND ARTICLES

New York Times: [C.D.C. tells states how to prepare for Covid-19 vaccine by early November](#)

The CDC released vaccine distribution guidance to state and city public health officials. The guidance included specific directions regarding the administration of two vaccine candidates referred to as "A" and "B" but thought to be versions developed by Pfizer and Moderna. Both required two doses spaced a few weeks apart. Health care, essential, and national security workers will receive priority, followed by vulnerable populations including the elderly, incarcerated, and racial and ethnic minorities.

Science: [Leader of U.S. vaccine push says he'll quit if politics trumps science](#)

Moncef Slaoui, an immunologist with vaccine development expertise, is the head of the Trump Administration's Operation Warp Speed. In an interview, Slaoui discusses the emphasis on science over politics in an operation that has received criticism for a lack of transparency in its decision-making and investments.

New York Times: [Trump administration will redirect \\$62 million owed to the W.H.O.](#)

The remaining amount from the World Health Organization's annual dues of \$120 million are being redirected towards influenza surveillance, immunizations, and other health-related causes. However, the US plans to participate in some WHO meetings and will reconsider its withdrawal if the organization follows the reforms required by the Trump Administration.

New York Times: [Russians publish early coronavirus vaccine results](#)

A report published by Russian scientists found that the Sputnik V vaccine caused moderate antibody production and only mild side effects. It has not yet been determined whether the vaccine prevents infection. The scientists who made the vaccine recently received approval for Phase-3 trials, joining seven other vaccines in this stage.

Physics World: [Nobel laureates endorse Joe Biden for US president](#)

Over 80 US Nobel laureates have issued an open letter endorsing Democrat presidential candidate Joe Biden in the US election scheduled for 3 November. The signatories of the open letter include 26 physics laureates, 31 medicine and physiology awardees and 24 chemistry Nobel winners.

Politico: [Green groups press for climate focus at presidential debates](#)

The effort, led by Evergreen Action and the collection of green groups working together in the independent organization Climate Power, is calling on debate moderators to press President Donald Trump and Democratic nominee Joe Biden to lay out their plans to fight climate change.

New York Times: [Wildfires hasten another climate crisis: Homeowners who can't get insurance](#)

Many insurance companies have begun to pull their services from areas of California at risk from increasingly common wildfires. Last year, California banned insurance companies from cancelling policies in such areas, but the ban is set to expire, and renewal plans fell through following disputes between consumer advocates and insurance companies.

Guardian: [Trump cuts oil and gas drillers' rent on public lands, as state budgets suffer](#)

The Bureau of Land Management suspended leases and reduced paid royalties associated with drilling on public lands for large energy companies such as ExxonMobil and BP. Royalties, which are received by the federal government and the state containing the public land, have decreased from 12.5% to 0.5% for the next two months. Fossil fuel companies have also received over \$3 billion in coronavirus aid and benefited from recent rollbacks of environmental regulations.

Washington Post: [EPA chief criticizes Democratic governors, vows to concentrate on cleaning up vulnerable communities in a second Trump term](#)

The head of the Environmental Protection Agency argued that the Trump administration, which has aggressively rolled back environmental regulations in recent years, has done more to help vulnerable communities deal with pollution than the “misdirected policies” and “misused resources” of its predecessors.

Montana Standard: [EPA begins ambitious effort to accelerate mining cleanups in the West](#)

The EPA announced the creation of an “Office of Mountains, Deserts and Plains”—a Woody Guthrie-esque name for an operation that surprisingly cuts across the rigid bureaucratic lines that have always controlled the agency’s work. The aim is to improve the agency’s response to hard-rock mine pollution in the west.

E & E News: [Trump admin proposal could shrink critical habitats](#)

The Fish and Wildlife Service today proposed new rules that could make it easier to shrink future critical habitats designated under the Endangered Species Act. Opening a new front in the Trump administration’s multipronged bid to reshape the Endangered Species Act, the agency declared its latest proposal is intended to “articulate clearly when and how FWS will undertake” an analysis of whether to exclude certain lands from critical habitat.

Nature: [“CRISPR babies” are still too risky, says influential panel](#)

The US National Academy of Medicine, the US National Academy of Sciences, and the UK Royal Society organized an international commission with experts from ten countries which stated that the scientific state of gene editing is not advanced enough to be used on implanted human embryos. A WHO report concerning the ethics of gene editing is set to come out this year. Both respond to biophysicist He Jiankui’s 2018 experiment that resulted in two children being born with edited genomes.

REGIONAL NEWS

IndyStar: [Hoosiers support climate policies—even if they don't believe in climate change](#)

The Hoosier Life Survey, an initiative from Indiana University’s Environmental Resilience Institute, shows that a majority of Hoosiers, regardless of political party, support climate change policies such as planting trees to reduce risks from flooding and heat waves or increasing funding for emergency management services—even if they don't believe climate change is actually happening.

OPINION AND ANALYSIS

Yale Climate Connections: [Five science questions to be asked at the debates](#)

Americans want to know how the next President of the United States intends to protect them from the twin scourges of climate disruption and COVID-19. How well do the candidates understand these issues? Is their understanding grounded in science or in wishful thinking? The article offers a list of sample questions on issues related to climate, the environment, public health, and the value of science.

Grist.org: [Who's advising Joe Biden on climate? His former rivals](#)

Biden's updated climate plan is viewed as evidence of his rapid evolution on climate, even as his campaign maintains that the vice president has remained consistent in his dedication to the issue over the years. But it's clear his team has purposefully and publicly sought input from a fair number of high-profile climate and climate justice advocates — from former rivals to Obama administration alumni, union members, and activists who actively opposed his nomination.

The Scientist: [Science and policy collide during the pandemic](#)

COVID-19 has laid bare some of the pitfalls of the relationship between scientific experts and policymakers—but some researchers say there are ways to make it better and help improve interactions between scientists and policymakers and thereby pave the way to better evidence-based policy.

Scientific American: [How those bogus reports on “ineffective” neck gaiters got started](#)

What was meant as a study on the pricing and efficacy of a test turned into, at least in some journalistic circles, a definitive nail-in-the-coffin for gaiters. Scientists must not only be able to communicate their science to their peers; they must always think about nonscience audiences as the lines between science and “the public” continue to blur.

Mother Jones: [The relative abundance of bumblebees in North America is estimated to have crashed by 97 percent](#)

The sharpest decline in the bumblebee population has occurred over the past 30 years, driven by widespread pesticide use and habitat loss—byproducts of industrial agriculture. A new project aims to put a dollar value on native pollinators' contribution, helping farmers weigh the cost of investing in hedgerows and other pollinator-friendly habitats against bringing in honeybees and having more acreage under production.

National Geographic: [Racist housing policies have created some oppressively hot neighborhoods](#)

In formerly “redlined neighborhoods,” i.e. neighborhoods once subject to racial discrimination in terms of home loans and economic support and still primarily filled today with Black and brown communities, families have to grapple heat stresses now that foreshadow the ones climate scientists say will strike the more affluent parts of cities decades in the future.

KQED.org: [Poverty and racism leave people more vulnerable to wildfire smoke](#)

Studies have shown that smoky days correlate with spikes in ER visits for lung and heart problems in real time. Long-term health effects include potentially lasting damage to the immune systems of children who have been exposed to fire smoke.

TAKE ACTION

NRDC: [Help staff your local polling place](#)

If you feel comfortable with being out in your community, signing up to be a poll worker helps protect your neighbors who are elderly, immunocompromised, or otherwise high-risk. Without more poll workers, communities around the country will be forced to drastically cut the number of polling sites, especially in communities of color, who already face barriers against exercising their right to vote.

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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