

Concerned Scientists' Weekly News Bulletin [September 21, 2020]



NEWS ITEMS AND ARTICLES

Scientific American: [Scientific American endorses Joe Biden](#)

In their 175 history, Scientific American has never backed a presidential candidate. They cite President Trump's rejection of science and evidence in terms of the coronavirus pandemic and medical care, climate change and other environmental regulations, and attacks on research agencies as reasons to endorse Joe Biden. They state that Biden's fact-based proposals on public health, environmental, and economic issues make him the stronger candidate to lead the US.

Guardian: ["Too late to stop it": California's future hinges on managing megafires](#)

Climate Change is causing temperatures to continually increase in California, leading to more widespread and devastating fires each year. Scientists predict that the number of extreme fire days will increase by 20% over the next 15 years, and the area impacted by fire will increase 77% by the end of the century. Scientists are suggesting ways to live with the wildfires through various community planning and management adaptation strategies.

Aljazeera: ["Scale and speed": Firms urge governments to boost climate action](#)

Some of the world's biggest companies have backed growing calls for governments to do more to reverse the accelerating destruction of the natural world and support broader efforts to fight climate change. More than 560 companies with combined revenues of \$4 trillion, including Walmart, Citigroup, IKEA and Microsoft, signed on to a statement calling for action over the next decade.

Guardian: [Charleston aims to force fossil fuel companies to pay \\$2bn to combat climate crisis](#)

Charleston is suing large oil firms for rising sea levels threatening the city on the basis that the companies knew the devastating global impacts they would have on coastal cities but concealed this information from the public. The city argues that companies obscured findings from as early as the 1960s that showed that burning fossil fuels would cause an increase in global temperature and subsequent sea level rise.

E&E News: [Wildfires expose major research and regulatory gaps](#)

Wildfires on the West Coast bring attention to the lack of research concerning long-term effects of smoke pollution. Air quality standards that once considered wildfires "exceptional events" in terms of regulations are having to reevaluate their plans of action.

The Hill: [CDC says revised guidance on airborne coronavirus transmission posted in error](#)

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) clarified that revised guidance quietly posted on Friday that said airborne transmission was thought to be the main way the virus

spreads was “posted in error.” The revised guidance has now been removed from the CDC's web site. Public health experts were pleased with the updated guidance, saying evidence shows COVID-19 can be spread through the air and that the public should be made aware of that fact.

New York Times: [When will you be able to get a coronavirus vaccine?](#)

Despite the Trump Administration claims of getting a vaccine approved by November, most experts and vaccine makers agree that, if everything goes as planned, some high-risk citizens or some from vulnerable populations may be vaccinated by the end of the year. The vaccine will likely be available to the general public by July or August 2021.

New York Times: [AstraZeneca, under fire for vaccine safety, releases trial blueprints](#)

AstraZeneca has made details from its vaccine trials public, likely as a result of pressure from health experts to do so. Moderna and Pfizer released information concerning their trial procedures earlier in the week. Drug companies generally wait until the completion of trials to release this information but have made exceptions in hopes of increasing public trust in an eventual vaccine.

American Institute of Physics: [Universities make case for pandemic relief funds](#)

The Research Investment to Secure the Economy, or RISE, act recently developed by the House Science Committee aims to allocate \$25 billion for research recovery, especially at universities across the country that have had to limit or postpone many research efforts due to the current pandemic.

Science: [Pandemic inspires new push to shrink jails and prisons](#)

Decarceration efforts have increased due to exacerbated crowding fears as a result of the pandemic, with jail populations decreasing 25% nationwide. However, a majority of this drop is due to decreases in holdings of those charged but not convicted, whereas populations of those convicted dropped just 8%, and overcrowding remains a threat in many jails and prisons across the country.

The Washington Post: [The fitness industry is trying to lure gym members back—but experts say it's using flawed data](#)

A top fitness industry trade association and some of its member gyms are promoting the message that health clubs nationwide are “safe and are not contributing to the spread of covid-19” based on the conclusions of a study that experts in public health and research methods say was methodologically flawed and open to conflicts of interest.

REGIONAL NEWS

Indiana Environmental Reporter: [IDEM closes door on ephemeral stream protection](#)

The Indiana Department of Environmental Management (IDEM) will no longer regulate ephemeral streams as part of its water quality certification, removing one of the only protections left in the state for the rain-dependent streams. IDEM said it must abide by the EPA's Navigable Waters Protection Rule, finalized in June, which specifically excludes the streams from being recognized as a “water of the United States.”

Indy Star: [‘It's unprecedented’: Environmental advocates prepare for a divisive election year](#)

Indiana environmental advocates are gearing up for November's elections, with some planning to hit harder than ever before. They say issues such as climate change, pollution, and environmental justice are directly tied to the wildfires raging through California and Oregon, the severity of COVID-19 in highly-polluted areas and to public outcry against police brutality.

OPINION AND ANALYSIS

*The Intercept: [As the West burns, the Trump administration races to demolish environmental protections](#)
With less than seven weeks until the election, and the wildfires and flooding continuing to spread along with the recognition that they are part of a larger climate apocalypse, the Trump administration is still scrambling to finish the deadly destruction of some of the rules and processes that were put in place to protect human health.*

*Nature: [The US National Academy of Sciences can now kick out harassers. So why hasn't it?](#)
Last year, the US National Academy of Sciences (NAS) voted overwhelmingly to amend its by-laws so that it could expel members for harassment or other types of misconduct. Nearly 16 months later, no one has been ousted and no one has used the new system to report known harassers within the NAS's membership.*

*Politico: [Ginsburg left a long environmental legacy](#)
Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg helped establish critical Supreme Court precedent that empowered EPA to address the greenhouse gas emissions driving climate change. The landmark ruling she joined in 2007 that affirmed EPA's power set up the Obama administration to issue rules limiting carbon pollution from cars, power plants and other sources.*

*Scientific American: [Ruth Bader Ginsburg's death is one more terrible blow in a year of loss](#)
Ginsburg was a champion of equality under the law and would have played a crucial role in key cases likely to come before the Supreme Court that bear on environmental protection.*

*Scientific American: [When politics distorts science](#)
Shocking levels of interference at the CDC and HHS threaten public faith in our most reliable public health institutions.*

*National Geographic: [Why misinformation about COVID-19's origins keeps going viral](#)
On the reasons why the "Yan report," which claimed that genetic evidence showed that the SARS-CoV-2 coronavirus was made in a lab, rather than emerging through natural spillover from animals, and whipped up wild conspiracy theories went viral.*

TAKE ACTION

*NRDC: [Election 2020: Are you voter ready?](#)
Make sure you are registered and ready now, with a plan to vote safely during what promises to be a high-turnout election. Request your mail-in ballot and send it back as soon you can after you receive it or take advantage of early in-person voting to avoid crowds on Election Day. Use the NRDC tool to check instantly whether you are ready 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 Irmischer 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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