

Concerned Scientists' Weekly News Bulletin [September 28, 2020]



NEWS ITEMS AND ARTICLES

Guardian: [World leaders pledge to halt Earth's destruction ahead of UN summit](#)

Leaders from 64 countries signed the UN's Leader's Pledge for Nature, ahead of the upcoming UN Summit on Biodiversity later this week. The pledge focuses on addressing overfishing, deforestation, and unsustainable food and economic practices, including environmentally harmful subsidies.

Science: [WHO unveils global plan to fairly distribute COVID-19 vaccine, but challenges await](#)

Countries representing nearly two-thirds of the world's population have agreed to WHO's plan for fairly distributing coronavirus vaccines. Both the US and China did not agree to the plan. The plan sets up two phases of vaccine distribution. The first phase involves distributing enough vaccine for 20% of a country's population, to cover healthcare workers and those at high-risk from the virus. The second phase would assess individual countries' needs by how fast the virus is spreading and how capable the health system is at handling the spread, then determine which countries receive priority for additional doses.

Science: [COVID-19 data on Native Americans is "a national disgrace." This scientist is fighting to be counted](#)

The CDC initially denied COVID-19 data made available to states to tribal epidemiology centers. Despite documentation of its disproportionate effect on marginalized communities, there is still a lack of data about how the coronavirus is affecting indigenous populations across the country. This reflects a broader exclusion of indigenous people from national data reporting and scientific studies.

Politico: [Campus life sans Covid: A few colleges write the playbook for pandemic success](#)

A combination of low infection rates in communities that surround schools and multimillion-dollar pandemic management strategies appear to slash the opportunities for the disease to enter campus and fester among students and staff.

New York Times: [California Plans to Ban Sales of New Gas-Powered Cars in 15 Years](#)

California's governor issued an executive order requiring regulators to develop a plan that will gradually increase the amount of zero emission vehicles sold by automakers, with the sale of gasoline-powered cars being banned by 2035. The plan also aims to make mass transit and biking more accessible and have 100% zero emission heavy-duty trucks by 2045. Transportation currently accounts for 40% of the state's greenhouse gas emissions.

Science: [Trump White House recruited climate science critics to work at National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration](#)

The revelation that administration officials approached multiple researchers with long records of casting doubt on human-caused climate change points to a political campaign to undermine mainstream science at one of the world's leading climate agencies, experts and observers said. The changes symbolize a coordinated effort to reshape NOAA's senior leadership in the dusk of Trump's first term. Until now, the agency has remained relatively unscathed by the president's embrace of conspiracy theories about climate change.

New York Times: [E.P.A. to promote lead testing rule as Trump tries to burnish his record](#)

An EPA rule that updates the 1991 Lead and Copper Rule requires lead testing in all schools and daycares and requires water utility companies to inventory and report all locations with lead piping. However, the rule does not mandate the replacement of lead service pipes, going against recommendations from scientists and medical experts. The rule also gives utility companies double the amount of time to replace systems heavily contaminated with lead compared to the 1991 version.

American Institute of Physics: [Space weather preparedness bill clears Congress](#)

The House recently passed the PROSWIFT Act, Promoting Research and Observations of Space Weather to Improve the Forecasting of Tomorrow. The act creates space weather advisory panels and gives federal agencies specific responsibilities regarding research, forecasting, and preparedness relating to solar activity and space weather events.

Smithsonian: [Out of names, National Hurricane Center calls new storms by Greek letters](#)

The World Meteorological Organization names hurricanes using 21 letters of the alphabet, excluding uncommon letters Q, U, X, Y and Z. For the second time, the only other occurrence being in 2005, WMO has ran out of letters and is moving onto the Greek alphabet, recently naming storms Alpha and Beta. This transition to Greek letters is one month ahead of the transition that occurred in 2005.

InsideClimate News: [The Trump Administration moves to open Alaska's Tongass National Forest to logging](#)

Despite opposition from environmental and indigenous groups, the Trump administration took a major step on Friday toward exempting the Tongass National Forest in southeast Alaska from a 2001 rule preventing commercial logging and other development.

Grist.org: [Why hasn't California banned fracking yet?](#)

In the first half of 2020, the Newsom administration issued 190 percent more oil and gas drilling permits than it had during the governor's first six months in office. And from April to July of this year — as the COVID-19 pandemic was taking off — the state's Geologic Energy Management Division (CalGEM) approved nearly 50 new permits for fracking projects.

Colorado Public Radio: [Why did birds fall out of the sky in September? Wildlife experts are closer to an answer](#)

Ornithologists believe they are getting closer to understanding why thousands of migratory songbirds literally fell out of the sky across the Southwest earlier this month, including in areas of Colorado. The deaths hit several species seemingly without warning, including sparrows, warblers and thrushes, which were heading south to their winter homes.

REGIONAL NEWS

IndyStar: [What public health experts say about Indiana's move to Stage 5: "Not out of the woods"](#)

Local and state health officials will have to work to clarify the message that wearing masks, watching one's distance and washing hands are as important as ever to control a virus that has led to more than 3,300 deaths in Indiana and over 114,200 cases.

OPINION AND ANALYSIS

The Hill: [Five environmental policy questions that should be asked in the presidential debates](#)

Seven public health experts who research the environmental impacts on human health urge anyone participating in debates to ask specific questions about the environmental policies of both candidates and to demand clear answers and provide are examples of questions that are important and would help educate the American people about how each candidate would approach challenges to our health and wellbeing.

Scientific American: [How a more conservative Supreme Court could impact environmental laws](#)

Judge Amy Coney Barrett has a relatively slim record on climate and environmental matters. But if she is confirmed to the high court, she would likely lock up a conservative coalition there, legal experts said. That bloc could smooth the path for future environmental rollbacks or make it more difficult to expand emissions regulations through a broad reading of statutory authority.

Debunking Denial: [Ten false narratives about the coronavirus](#)

These tensions surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic have been accompanied by a rapid rise in misinformation and intentionally promoted disinformation about the disease and the best ways to combat it. The post discusses at length ten different false narratives regarding the COVID-19 pandemic, tracing their origins and the spread of these ideas and provides data that demonstrating why these stories are false.

Grist.org: [Meet the climate expert running to be the first female scientist in the Senate](#)

The Israeli-born wildlife ecologist and Democrat Merav Ben-David is running for U.S. Senate in Wyoming, hoping to fill the vacancy left by Mike Enzi, who is retiring this year. In the most Republican state in the country, where oil, gas, and coal still form the bedrock of the local economy, Ben-David is campaigning on a platform of “future-proofing” Wyoming for the transition to clean energy.

Nature: [China’s researchers have valuable experiences that the world needs to hear about](#)

China has decades of experience of studying how to—and how not to—balance economic development with controlling species and ecosystems loss.

TAKE ACTION

UCS: [Scientists’ Statement in Defense of Democracy](#)

Many scientists are watching news and events in our country with real concern about the state of our constitutional democracy. Recognizing that the science community cannot hold itself separate and apart from democratic society, we invite like-minded scientists to join us in signing on to the following statement.

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 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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