

Concerned Scientists' Weekly News Bulletin [October 5, 2020]



NEWS ITEMS AND ARTICLES

Science: [“Try to be serious.” Climate policy gets rare notice in chaotic presidential debate](#)

Between crosstalk and insults, climate change got more attention in the first presidential debate than in any other U.S. presidential debate in history. The candidates presented starkly different climate agendas. But their policies were buried under a night's worth of inflammatory statements.

NPR: [California wildfires have burned 4 million acres and the season isn't over yet](#)

4 million acres is double California's previous record of 2 million acres burned in a single season. There are currently 23 major fires in the state, with a total of over 8,200 so far this year. They have resulted in 31 deaths and destroyed over 8,400 structures.

New York Times: [After wildfires stop burning, a danger in the drinking water](#)

Benzene and other harmful chemical compounds have been leaching into California's water systems following the devastating wildfires. A study in 2018 found that over 50% of service lines coming from burned structures were contaminated. Ash runoff ending up in reservoirs and other water sources is also a concern. Local governments argue current regulations do not account for results of wildfire damage.

Washington Post: [Long-delayed Trump administration study finds that climate change threatens polar bears](#)

After stalling for months, U. S. Geological Survey Director James Reilly official released a polar bear study that highlights the endangered animals' vulnerability to climate change and the fact that proposed oil drilling in Alaska would probably encroach on their habitat, causing more stress.

E & E News: [Department of energy study: Solar-hydro projects could power 40% of world](#)

Linking floating solar panels with hydropower could produce the equivalent of 40% of the world's electricity, according to a new study by researchers at the Department of Energy. Published by a team at the National Renewable Energy Laboratory, the study provides the first global look by federal researchers at the technical potential of the hybrid concept.

New York Times: [Biotech industry pushes Trump administration to release new vaccine guidelines](#)

A trade organization representing most of the vaccine makers is calling for the release of new FDA guidelines regarding a potential vaccine, which are awaiting White House approval. The guidelines aim to restore public faith in a vaccine by requiring specific criteria for clinical trial and safety data.

New York Times: [White House blocked C.D.C. order to keep cruise ships docked](#)

The order recently passed by the CDC would ban cruise ship travel until mid-February. Trump's coronavirus task force overruled the order and will allow cruise ships to sail starting in November. The cruise ship and tourism industry have significant political power in the swing-state of Florida, but task force representatives stated the decision was not politically motivated.

Science: [HHMI, one of the largest research philanthropies, will require immediate open access to papers](#)

The Howard Hughes Medical Institute will start to require all its scientists to make publications in which they played a leading role immediately free, open-access to the public, as opposed to being allowed to wait twelve months before doing so.

Science: [“A brutal blow”: A bill threatens dozens of trust funds that support Mexican science](#)

The Mexican government intends to pass a coronavirus relief and recovery bill that would terminate 109 trust funds run by public research centers and government institutes, one-third of them devoted to science and technology. The government plans to divert the roughly 68 billion pesos (\$3 billion) in funds to help cope with the coronavirus pandemic.

REGIONAL NEWS

IndyStar: [Environmental issues loom large in 2020 election. Here's what they could mean for Indiana](#)

IndyStar hosted a discussion with four experts (including Janet McCabe of Indiana University's Environmental Resilience Institute) to discuss climate change, air and water pollution, energy policy and the role of government in protecting the environment. The article provides examples of their answers.

OPINION AND ANALYSIS

Nature: [How Trump damaged science—and why it could take decades to recover](#)

The US president's actions have exacerbated the pandemic that has killed nearly 200,000 people, rolled back environmental and public-health regulations and undermined science and scientific institutions. Some of the harm could be permanent.

Guardian: [What does the first climate question at a US debate in 20 years reveal?](#)

Prior to Tuesday's debate, the last presidential candidate asked a climate-related question was Al Gore in 2000. The phrasing of Tuesday night's question: “What do you believe about the science of climate change and what will you do in the next four years to confront it?” reflects a population still debating the validity of human-cause climate change, despite overwhelming global scientific consensus.

Nature: [What a Joe Biden presidency would mean for five key science issues](#)

Biden plans to increase coronavirus testing and pandemic-readiness programs, as well as address disparities in COVID-19 infection and death rates among different racial and ethnic populations. He also hopes to restore faith in organizations such as the CDC and the FDA, as well as support the WHO. Biden has a \$2 trillion climate plan aimed at promoting clean energy research and development and addressing environmental justice issues. He also plans to rejoin the Paris climate accords. Biden wants to increase international research cooperation, reversing Trump-era travel bans and visa restrictions. Little is known about his research priorities or plans for space exploration.

Grist.org: Worry Wards: [Climate change could tip the scales in these 6 toss-up House races](#)

Grist looked at the Cook Political Report's assessment of the most competitive House races and combined it with data from Yale's Program on Climate Change Communication that measures

the level of climate concern in each district and decided to focus on six races where voters have higher-than-average levels of climate concern.

The Intercept: [In key election for climate, Sen. Steve Daines deceives Montana on his public lands record](#)

Much has been made of how important the presidential election will be in determining whether the scientific guidelines on the climate crisis will be followed. But the contest for who controls the U.S. Senate is hugely important as well, since only Congress can pass ambitious climate legislation needed to confront the problem, and, so far, only Democrats have shown an openness to follow scientists' urgent appeals.

UCS: [Celebrate the Nobel Prize winning immigrant Scientists--but not at the expense of the greater immigrant community](#)

The community of immigrant scientists includes refugees who have to work multiple jobs while taking classes to support their families. Immigrant scientists are also students whose parents have limited English proficiency or science background. Immigrant scientists drop out because they lack the resources to get through weed-out courses and never have a role model in these fields.

TAKE ACTION

NRDC: [Tell the Army Corps: Deny the Keystone XL permit](#)

The Trump administration and TC Energy are attempting to move forward with construction on the disastrous Keystone XL tar sands pipeline yet again. TC Energy has just reapplied for a permit that will allow them to construct the KXL pipeline across hundreds of U.S. waterways — jeopardizing clean water access for rural, urban, and Indigenous communities and putting nearly one-third of U.S. crops at risk. The Army Corps of Engineers is accepting public comments on this new permit request.

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