



BRIEF ON CLIMATE & SUSTAINABILITY (6.12)

DEVELOPMENTS IN CONGRESS

- ***Upcoming Senate Hearing: Responding to the Challenges Facing Recycling in the United States.*** The Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works will hold an oversight hearing entitled “*Responding to the challenges facing recycling in the United States*” on June 17th at 10:00 a.m. in Room 106 of the Dirksen Senate Office Building.
- ***Pandemics and Pollution House E&C Hearing:*** On Tuesday, June 9, 2020, the House Energy and Commerce Environment and Climate Change Subcommittee held a hearing entitled “*Pollution and Pandemics: COVID-19’s Disproportionate Impact on Environmental Justice Communities,*” where witnesses encouraged members of the Committee to think holistically and consider environmental justice issues into their responses to the COVID-19 crisis.
- ***Senate Moves Towards Conservation Bill Vote.*** The Senate moved forward with a procedural vote this week on the Great American Outdoors Act.
 - Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-KY) filed for cloture on the bill after the vote, starting the process for final passage of the measure early next week. Sen. Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI), said on the floor he would vote for the legislation with “a heavy and frustrated heart” because the measure doesn’t do enough for coastal states.
 - The bill would permanently fund the Land and Water Conservation Fund at its \$900 million annual, authorized level. LWCF funds federal, state, and local conservation projects and land acquisition across the country.
- ***Udall Calls for Urgent Action to Protect Marine Ecosystems In Virtual Keynote Launching Capitol Hill Ocean Week.*** Udall spoke about his *Thirty By Thirty Resolution to Save Nature* in the Senate, a bold national goal to protect 30 percent of U.S. land and oceans by 2030 to save biodiversity from the dual climate and nature crises at Capitol Hill Ocean Week (CHOW) 2020, sponsored by the National Marine Sanctuary Foundation.
- ***Democrats’ Clean Energy Push.*** The clean energy industry is increasingly leaning on Democratic allies in Congress to deliver assistance after previous proposals to help the struggling sector have fallen through.
 - Rep. Earl Blumenauer (D-Ore.), a senior member of the Ways and Means Committee, is circulating a letter to allow renewable energy tax credits to be received as a direct payment, a key change sought by the industry since the tax credits have little value as companies rack up losses during the economic downturn.
- ***Groups Push for Clean Energy Jobs Fund.*** A broad array of clean energy, trade and environmental groups are pressuring congressional leaders to provide \$35 billion for a nonprofit clean energy jobs fund. Nearly 100 groups sent a letter to lawmakers today urging them to build

on legislation [S. 2057 \(116\)](#)/[H.R. 5416 \(116\)](#) from Sens. Ed Markey (D-Mass.) and Chris Van Hollen (D-Md.) and Rep. Debbie Dingell (D-Mich.).

- **Bill Opens Up Carbon Markets to Agriculture.** Bipartisan senators introduced a bill Thursday to create a new certification program at USDA to help carbon markets function better.
 - The Growing Climate Solutions Act, introduced by Sens. Mike Braun (R-Ind.), Debbie Stabenow (D-Mich.), Lindsey Graham (R-S.C.) and Sheldon Whitehouse (D-R.I.), would make it easier for farmers and other landowners to participate in carbon markets, and could position agriculture as a more prominent player in the battle against climate change.

TRUMP ADMINISTRATION ACTIONS

- **Florida's No-Drill November.** The Trump administration is again considering a proposal — sought since the early days of the Trump era — to open up oil and gas drilling off Florida's coast, according to four contacts interviewed by Bloomberg. But it won't be revealed until after the election in order to avoid causing controversy in the state, where opposition to opening up the coastal waters is strong.
 - Florida lawmakers in recent weeks have taken their concerns directly to President Donald Trump, Ben reports. They have also spoken to Senate leadership on possibly including a bill, [S. 13 \(116\)](#), from Republican Sens. Scott and Marco Rubio to extend the eastern Gulf's existing drilling moratorium, in upcoming legislation, according to one Senate aide.
- **Forest Service Plans Review of Atlantic Coast Pipeline Impacts.** The U.S. Forest Service will study the environmental impacts of building the 42-inch Atlantic Coast Pipeline across 21 miles of the Monongahela and George Washington national forests in Virginia and West Virginia.
 - The service is preparing a draft environmental impact statement, which would supplement the 2017 FERC environmental review of the Atlantic Coast Pipeline, for the natural gas pipeline in response to a federal appeals court ruling that required the agency to conduct an additional environmental review of the pipeline.
- **EPA Didn't Consult Wildlife Agencies on Enforcement Plan: Groups.** Environmental groups say the EPA violated the Endangered Species Act by adopting a looser approach to enforcement during the coronavirus pandemic without consulting federal wildlife agencies.
 - The Center for Biological Diversity, Waterkeeper Alliance, and Riverkeeper notified the EPA Wednesday that they're poised to go to court to challenge the move. The supplemental notice follows a similar lawsuit threat the center lodged in April.
- **Democrats Hold Conversation on Trump Water Rule.** Democrats and environmental groups are gearing up to topple the recently published Navigable Waters Protection Rule because it narrows Clean Water Act protections over water bodies and wetlands.
 - Rep. Peter DeFazio (D-Ore.), who leads the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, is incensed by the rule because it leaves more than three-fourths of the streams flowing in Oregon, California, and Arizona without any federal protection. DeFazio introduced legislation (H.R. 6745) last month that would repeal the rule.
- **Interior Proceeds with Oil Leasing Close to Utah National Parks.** An oil and gas lease sale near three Utah national parks will proceed in September after a delay, according to the Bureau of Land Management. The land in the lease sale and the public comment period were to have been announced in May, but were delayed without explanation.

- The bureau said Tuesday it plans to auction more than 114,000 acres of federal land near Arches, Canyonlands, and Capitol Reef national parks in its September quarterly lease sale.
- **Trump Pick for Deputy Energy Secretary Clears Senate Panel.** A Senate panel Tuesday gave nearly unanimous support for President Donald Trump's choice of Mark Menezes to be No. 2 at the Energy Department, voting to send his nomination to the full chamber. The Energy and Natural Resources Committee reported Menezes by voice vote, with one Democrat voting against his appointment as deputy assistant secretary.
- **Trump Opens New England Marine Monument to Commercial Fishing.** President Donald Trump said he would allow commercial fishing in protected waters off New England, doing away with Obama-era safeguards meant to conserve deep-sea corals and endangered whales.
 - The action comes after years of lobbying and legal challenges by commercial fishermen eager to plumb the Northeast Canyons and Seamounts Marine National Monument established by former President Barack Obama in September 2016.
- **EPA Says It Lacks Duty to Impose Cross-State Pollution Limits.** The EPA has no mandatory duty to impose cross-state pollution limits by a statutory deadline, and therefore, a New York federal court lacks jurisdiction over several Northeast states' claim that it is failing to act, the agency says in seeking a summary judgment.
 - New York, New Jersey, three other states, and New York City sued the agency in February, saying it hasn't worked to replace federal implementation plans for states that contribute to downwind ozone pollution since an appeals court vacated the previous plans in October.
- **Judges Weigh Trump's Bid to Reopen Parts of Arctic to Drilling.** Federal judges appeared torn on Friday over the legality of the Trump administration's effort to reopen millions of acres of Arctic waters for oil and gas development. The U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit heard virtual oral arguments to review whether a lower court was right to reinstate Obama-era protections for Alaska's Beaufort and Chukchi seas, as well as parts of the Atlantic Ocean.
- **Environmentalists Opposing Trump Infrastructure Order Eye Courts.** The Center for Biological Diversity yesterday notified the White House and several federal agencies that it plans to sue over the June 4 executive order directing government officials to invoke emergency powers to bypass standard environmental review requirements amid the coronavirus pandemic. The environmental group says the approach violates the Endangered Species Act by ordering agencies to take actions that harm protected wildlife and plants.

2020 PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN NEWS

- **Energy Industry Curbs Trump Donations.** The oil and gas industry, long one of the most reliable sources of campaign cash for Republican candidates at all levels, is turning a cold shoulder to President Donald Trump.
 - Reeling from the worst oil-price crash on record and wary of Trump at the best of times, energy companies and their employees are donating far less to his re-election campaign than they did to his first run, and also much less than they've showered on Republican presidential candidates in the past.

ENERGY ECONOMY NEWS

- ***New Green Power Installations Set to Plummet This Decade.*** New renewable power capacity is set to plummet globally this decade, just as more investment is needed in clean technology to slow down the worst effects of climate change.
 - Installations of technology like wind turbines and solar panels will fall by about 31% in the 2020s compared with the previous 10 years, according to research from BloombergNEF for the United Nations Environment Program and Frankfurt School's UNEP Center published Wednesday. The total spent on new renewable sources will still total \$1 trillion by 2030 compared with \$2.7 trillion in the last decade.
- ***Fossil Fuel's Answer to Climate Change Just Got Less Expensive.*** Carbon capture, the fossil-fuel industry's favorite weapon against climate change, has never really caught on because of the expense. That may be about to change. The Internal Revenue Service recently issued crucial guidance to help developers take advantage of tax credits for the systems, and supporters say it could usher in a new era for the controversial technology.
- ***Gas Demand Crashes at Twice Financial Crisis Pace, IEA Says.*** The global natural gas market is poised for the biggest-ever drop in demand as a result of the Coronavirus crisis, an event that's likely to hamper the industry's growth for years to come.
 - Consumption is set to slump by 4% this year, or twice the amount lost after the 2008 financial crisis, according to the International Energy Agency's Gas 2020 report. Global demand is expected to rise by just 1.5% annually to 2025, compared with a previous forecast of 1.8%.
- ***U.S. Oil Production Drops.*** President Trump is in Dallas today, where the White House says he will announce a plan for "holistic revitalization and recovery" — one day after the [Federal Reserve's grim outlook](#) for the U.S. economy.
 - And despite a remarkable bounce back to prices around \$40 a barrel, U.S. oil markets are getting mixed signals about whether they will reach levels that can sustain most U.S. companies. Government data released Wednesday showed U.S. crude oil producers continued to curb output — even as some companies begin [to restart idled wells](#)— and demand is showing signs of recovering as more states reopen their economies.

NEW CLIMATE STUDIES

- ***Taking COVID-19 Tests has Broad Support—Especially Among Adults Concerned About Climate Change.*** Americans who are unconcerned about climate change are less likely to be willing to undergo diagnostic and antibody testing for COVID-19 than those who are, new Morning Consult data shows. But majorities of both groups expected they would take the tests if they were potentially exposed to the virus.
- ***U.S. Emissions Set for Record Dive With Factories and Cars Idled.*** Greenhouse gas emissions in the U.S. are poised for a record plunge this year, the result of coronavirus lockdown orders that have shuttered factories, closed stores and left cars and jets sitting idle.
 - Energy-related carbon dioxide emissions, which include electricity generation and transportation fuel, will fall 14%, according to data released yesterday by the Energy Information Administration.
- ***Heat-trapping Carbon Dioxide in Air Hits New Record High.*** The world hit another new record high for heat-trapping carbon dioxide in the atmosphere, despite reduced emissions because of the coronavirus pandemic, scientists announced Thursday.
- ***Climate agency reports May was hottest on record worldwide.*** May 2020 was the hottest May on record globally, according to data from the European Commission's [climate monitoring](#)

organization. The Copernicus Climate Change Service found that May of this year was 0.05 degrees celsius warmer than the previous warmest May, which was in 2016. This May was also 0.63 degrees celsius warmer than the average May between 1981 and 2010.

- Last month, the most above-average temperatures were found over parts of Siberia, where they were as much as 10 degrees celsius above average. Copernicus noted that temperatures over western Alaska were also “much above average.”

STATE & LOCAL GOVERNMENT NEWS

- ***New Florida Law Requires Electric Vehicle Charging Stations Plan.*** Florida must develop a plan for expanding electric vehicle charging infrastructure along the state’s highways, under an infrastructure bill signed by Gov. Ron DeSantis (R). The plan must be presented to DeSantis and the Florida Legislature by July 1, 2021. It will be produced by the Public Service Commission in coordination with Florida’s departments of transportation and agriculture.
 - According to U.S. Department of Energy [statistics](#), Florida has about 4,400 public and private charging outlets and roughly 16,600 registered electric vehicles.
- ***Looser EPA Restrictions Harm Low-Income Residents, States Say.*** Nine states are invoking potential harm to low-income and minority communities as a reason that a federal court should block the EPA from easing enforcement during the coronavirus. The states argue the EPA didn’t consider how increased pollution caused by industry noncompliance will affect the public, particularly minority and low-income communities.
- ***New York, Others Move to Block Pandemic-Era EPA Enforcement Plan.*** Nine states are urging a New York federal court to block the EPA from using a light touch on environmental enforcement during the coronavirus pandemic. New York, California, and others on Monday asked the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of New York to issue a preliminary injunction barring the agency’s “enforcement discretion” policy.
 - Leaving the approach in place while the states and the Environmental Protection Agency debate its legality in court will cause irreversible harm, the states said. The states, in a brief, said they’re likely to succeed because “the policy exceeds EPA’s statutory authority and is arbitrary and capricious.”
- ***US Outlines \$4.6B Plan to Protect Miami From Climate Impacts.*** The federal government is proposing a \$4.6 billion plan to protect the low-lying Miami area from the effects of climate change, including the construction of miles of sea walls.
 - The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers released a draft plan Friday calling for walls to protect the area from sea level rise that could reach about 13 feet (4 meters) in height. The Miami Herald reported Saturday that the plan is designed to protect tens of thousands of homes and businesses from flooding.

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

- ***Coal’s Death Greatly Exaggerated as Fuel Lives Large in Asia.*** Demand for electricity plunged -- and with it the need for coal -- as factories around the world sat dormant and people spent months at home. In the U.S. and Europe, that’s expected to accelerate the shift away from the fuel. But in Asia, which makes up three-fourths of global consumption, the appetite for coal is roaring back and expected to continue growing after briefly being tripped up by the virus.
- ***Europe Goes All-In on Climate with Its Virus Recovery Plans.*** On Dec. 11, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen outlined a plan to steer the European Union onto a new path

that combined economic growth, social justice, and the fight against climate change—a Green Deal. “This is Europe’s ‘man on the moon’ moment,” said the newly installed leader of the EU’s executive branch.

- Within three months the Green Deal had become something else entirely: a way out of the worst economic crisis in a generation, if not ever. In May the commission proposed a €750 billion (\$826 billion) recovery package that redoubles its commitment to the Green Deal.