



BRIEF ON CLIMATE & SUSTAINABILITY

December 6, 2020

DEVELOPMENTS IN CONGRESS

- ***Senate Confirms Democratic, GOP FERC Nominees.*** The Senate approved by voice vote President Donald Trump's picks of Allison Clements and Mark Christie for the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission. The energy regulator now has a full five-member roster, with three Republicans and two Democrats. The White House formally nominated Clements and Christie in July after senators pressed the administration for months to send a Democratic nominee to Capitol Hill for consideration.
- ***What Made the NDAA Cut?*** Provisions that would have created new wilderness areas, boosted nuclear energy and carbon capture technologies, and taken aggressive measures to tackle toxic "forever" PFAS chemicals were ultimately stripped from the final version of the National Defense Authorization Act released Thursday.
 - The 3,700-plus page bill does include expanded and clarified sanctions language for the Nord Stream 2 and TurkStream pipeline projects. Some PFAS provisions also made the final measure, including one to increase funding for a CDC study on the health effects of PFAS exposure among service members and one to establish an interagency body to coordinate federal research on the chemicals. The bill also mandates once again that Defense determine its agency-wide greenhouse gas emissions.
 - But left on the chopping block were bipartisan bills like the USE IT Act, S. 383 (116), which would increase carbon utilization and direct air capture research, and the Nuclear Energy Leadership Act, S. 903 (116), which would fund innovation in the nuclear industry. Also absent from the compromise bill were the most significant provisions relating to PFAS, including a provision that would have required the Defense Department to clean up its contaminated sites to levels at least as stringent as state standards.
- ***Senate Energy Bill Lives.*** Negotiations are moving in the right direction for the Senate and House to reach a compromise on a year-end energy innovation action, according to multiple people tracking the negotiations.
 - The base bills for talks are H.R. 4447 (116), which House Democrats passed in September, and the Senate Energy innovation bill. The final version is likely to be narrower but multiple people said it is likely to include a compromise to phase down the use of hydrofluorocarbons, a potent greenhouse gas, though they cautioned negotiations are ongoing.
- ***Senate Passes Save Our Seas 2.0 Act.*** On Tuesday the Senate by unanimous consent passed S.1982, the Save Our Seas 2.0 Act, to combat marine debris. The legislation passed the House in October.

- ***Democrats Challenge NEPA Changes.*** Senate Environment and Public Works ranking member Carper, House Transportation and Infrastructure Chairman Peter DeFazio (D-Ore.), and House Natural Resources Chairman Raúl Grijalva (D-Ariz.), submitted an amicus brief to the U.S. District Court for the Western District of Virginia regarding the Trump administration’s revisions to National Environmental Policy Act regulations in the case of *Wild Virginia v. Council on Environmental Quality*.
 - The new NEPA rules tighten the timeline and narrow the scope of environmental reviews for federal actions and project approvals. *Wild Virginia*, the Congaree Riverkeeper, and other groups sued, saying the Council on Environmental Quality violated federal law in crafting the new rules.
- ***Global Ocean Panel Mirrors Dem Plans.*** The Ocean Panel, a group of 14 world leaders, launched a new ocean action agenda that includes sustainability pledges for their own countries, and a global target to protect 30% of the Earth’s oceans by 2030. The countries involved are Australia, Canada, Chile, Fiji, Ghana, Indonesia, Jamaica, Japan, Kenya, Mexico, Namibia, Norway, Palau, and Portugal. New Mexico Democratic Sen. Tom Udall and Rep. Deb Haaland—both of whom are being considered for Interior secretary by Biden—have introduced resolutions in their respective chambers to protect at least 30% of the country’s lands and waters by 2030.
- ***Nuclear Infrastructure Bill Advances in Senate.*** The Environment and Public Works Committee approved on a bipartisan 16-5 vote a substitute amendment to S. 4897, the 2020 American Nuclear Infrastructure Act.
 - The substitute amendment crafted by Chairman Barrasso and ranking member Carper will serve as the text of the legislation after the two sides worked over the last six months to reconcile differences. The legislation aims to aid struggling nuclear reactors as a tool to combat climate change.
 - While some Democrats supported the measure, Sen. Ed Markey (D-Mass.) said during the business meeting that the legislation amounted to a bailout for nuclear power plants. He also complained that the assistance comes at the expense of providing more resources for wind and solar power.
- ***Gulf Coast Senators Aim to Protect Offshore Drilling.*** Senator John Kennedy (R-LA), along with five other Gulf Coast Republicans, unveiled legislation that would require at least two annual area-wide lease sales in the Western and Central Gulf of Mexico. Current law directs Interior to establish a lease schedule but does not stipulate how many the department is required to hold. The National Ocean Industries Association and Consumer Energy Alliance praised the legislation and said it is critical to protecting funding for conservation projects.
- ***Carper: EPA’s Draft National Recycling Plan Is A Wasted Opportunity.*** Senator Tom Carper (D-Del.), top Democrat on the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee, submitted comment on EPA’s draft plan imploring the agency to “seize the opportunity to reimagine our nation’s crumbling recycling system and re-envision and revise its draft National Recycling Strategy.”
 - He wrote, “As it is currently drafted, the draft National Recycling Strategy fails to convey bold and visionary structural changes that would help the United States – at the national, state and local level – adapt to challenging new international policies and the burgeoning plastic pollution crisis.”

- ***Trump Officials Move to Relax Rules on Bird Deaths.*** The Trump administration published an analysis last week that a rule change easing companies' liability for killing birds would not cause unacceptable environmental harm. The administration can now publish a final rule modifying the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's interpretation of the 1918 Migratory Bird Treaty Act.
 - The act prohibits unauthorized "take" of protected bird species — regulatory-speak for hunting, killing, capturing, selling or otherwise hurting the animals. For three years, officials at the Interior Department have sought to exclude accidental deaths from the "take" definition, shielding energy companies, construction firms and land developers from prosecution if their operations "incidentally" kill birds.
 - But the administration's claim is contradicted by the rest of the analysis, said Audubon Society policy manager Erik Schneider. The document suggests that the preferred version of the rule would "likely result in increased bird mortality," because companies would have less of an incentive to adopt precautions to prevent birds from becoming ensnared or colliding with their operations.
- ***Trump Banking Proposal on Fossil Fuels Sparks Backlash from Libertarians.*** A new Trump administration proposal that could push more banks to finance fossil fuel activities is creating divisions in conservative circles as free market groups decry the move as government overreach. The proposed rule puts limitations on banks that try to exclude entire industries like oil and gas from financing.
 - Libertarian groups argue the rule is inconsistent with free market principles and could backfire in the long run by forcing conservative bank owners to provide financing for abortion providers and other groups they don't like.
 - The Office of the Comptroller of the Currency (OCC) put forth the rule last week, billing it as a measure to ensure fair access to financing while singling out the unwillingness of some banks to finance certain fossil activities.
- ***Trump Admin Denies Pebble Mine Permit.*** The Trump administration officially denied a permit for the Pebble Mine in Alaska last week, effectively killing plans to build the copper and gold project that opponents warned could wipe out the world's largest sockeye salmon fishery.
 - The Trump administration — which had reversed course several times on the issue — issued a 29-page formal record of decision last week.
 - The company seeking the permit recently filed a plan to mitigate the ecological damage from the Bristol Bay project, but it reportedly did not satisfy the Army Corps of Engineers.
- ***EPA to Track PFAS in Wastewater Via New Guidance.*** A group of EPA staffers began meeting in February to determine how to address the presence of per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances, or PFAS, at facilities with EPA-issued permits for discharged wastewater.
 - The group recommended that permit writers include requirements to monitor PFAS in places the chemicals are expected to appear.
 - The EPA doesn't have enforceable limits for PFAS in drinking water and hasn't recognized the family of chemicals on its Clean Water Act Priority Pollutant List. But states have started setting limits for the chemicals in water in the absence of federal regulations.
- ***Small Refineries Sue Over EPA Denying Renewable Fuel Exemptions.*** The EPA should be ordered to reconsider its denial of renewable fuel exemptions for small refineries for

several years in the mid-2010s even though the refineries didn't then seek them, according to petitions for review filed in the Tenth, Ninth, and Fifth circuits.

- The agency previously said such hardship exists when a refinery shows it suffers both disproportionate impacts “and” conditions that could affect its viability.
- However, Congress in 2016 made that showing easier, saying instead that hardship can exist if a refinery is experiencing either disproportionate impacts “or” viability impairment. Wyoming Refining Co., Wynnewood Refining Co., and others filed petitions for exemptions with the EPA for one or more compliance years between 2011 and 2016.
- ***Trump Taps Loan Program to Help Mineral Mining.*** The Trump administration is tapping an Energy Department clean-energy loan program it tried to kill to help uranium producers as well as miners of other minerals deemed critical by the administration.
 - The Energy Department announced that it will issue guidance giving preference to projects involving critical minerals within an existing loan program housed within the agency that provides both direct loans as well as loan guarantees.
 - Other minerals that have been deemed “critical to U.S. national security and the economy” include lithium, chromium, cobalt, helium, vanadium, according to a list maintained by the Interior Department.

BIDEN TRANSITION AND 2021 OUTLOOK

- ***Environmental Justice Crusader Eyed for White House Council.*** Biden's transition team is considering recommending environmental justice champion Mustafa Santiago Ali to lead the White House Council on Environmental Quality, as the incoming administration seeks to prioritize the damage pollution takes on poor and minority communities. The deliberations, part of an effort to refocus the obscure White House agency into a hub for promoting environmental justice, was described by two people familiar with the matter who asked not to be named discussing personnel recommendations. Neither Ali nor representatives of the Biden-Harris transition immediately responded to requests for comment. Another environmental justice advocate, Cecilia Martinez, is also being considered to lead the agency. She now heads Biden's agency review team focused on CEQ.
- ***Obama Energy Adviser Up for Biden Economic Post.*** President-elect Biden has appointed Brian Deese, an executive at investment firm BlackRock and former economic adviser to President Barack Obama, to lead his National Economic Council. Deese worked on Obama's 2008 campaign and joined his administration in 2009. He was part of the task force charged with restructuring the automobile industry and later became deputy director of the Office of Management and Budget.
 - Progressive groups have been critical of Deese for a range of reasons, including that they see his role at BlackRock as evidence that he was willing to trade his Obama-era reputation on economic and climate issues for a big paycheck. But Gene Karpinski, president of the League of Conservation Voters, praised the pick.
 - “The importance of naming Deese, a longtime climate policy expert, to the key role of NEC director cannot be overstated,” he said in a statement. “From his success in helping rebuild the American auto industry with stronger clean car standards, advancing the Paris Climate Agreement, protecting our lands and ocean and much more, he is exactly the experienced climate leader we need at President Biden's side as they rebuild our economy.”

- ***Biden Names John Kerry Climate Envoy.*** Last week Biden named former Secretary of State John Kerry as Special Presidential Envoy for Climate, the highest-ranking U.S. official ever to have a portfolio exclusively devoted to climate change.
 - While Biden’s transition team offered few specifics about Kerry’s role, he’ll be the first climate official ever with a seat on the National Security Council.
 - And “presidential” in his title suggests Kerry will report directly to Biden, while “envoy” marks him as a senior diplomat. His appointment also affirms Biden’s commitment to climate change as a foreign policy issue, despite focusing on domestic aspects of his plan on the campaign trail.
- ***EDF’s Clean Energy Advertising Campaign.*** The Environmental Defense Fund is launching a six-figure digital and TV advertising campaign to press the incoming Biden administration and Congress on their clean energy effort.
 - The campaign will run in December in Florida, Nevada, Colorado, Arizona, and Ohio, the group said in a statement. EDF is pushing for 100% clean electric power by 2035, all new cars to be zero-emissions by 2035, and all new trucks and buses to be zero-emissions by 2040.
- ***Trump EPA could kick biofuel blending to Biden.*** EPA missed Monday’s legal deadline for issuing next year’s biofuel blending requirements under the Renewable Fuel Standard.
 - This could create an issue for Biden’s EPA, which will have to make quick decisions on biofuel blending requirements for a compliance year already in progress, as well as how to deal with the 41 requests for exemptions from small refiners that have been struggling with fuel demand because of the pandemic.
- ***Former California Governor Says the First Task Should be Working with China on Climate.*** Writing in the Los Angeles Times, former Californian governor Jerry Brown argues that Joe Biden must commit to the following four goals: “Zero-emission transportation, zero-emission buildings, zero-emission electric grid and zero-emission industry.” He adds that “America is only part of the problem and must enlist other nations to combat climate change”.
 - That is where China comes in, he argues, before concluding: “Both countries need to reestablish the US-China Climate Change Working Group, which was a crucial framework for joint climate actions and mutual understanding, launched during secretary of state John F Kerry’s visit to China in April 2013.
 - It led directly to joint climate commitments by Xi and Obama that served as the major catalyst for the success of the 2015 Paris Agreement...Despite the real and profound differences dividing China and the US, Biden and Xi can rise to the challenge and embark together on a path of global transformation.”
- ***Biden Interior Role Said to Be Turned Down by Grisham.*** New Mexico Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham (D), who is under consideration to be Health and Human Services secretary under Biden, has already been offered—and turned down—the Interior secretary job, two people familiar with the matter said.
- ***Biden to Announce Domestic Climate Policy Chief.*** Biden is expected to soon unveil a domestic White House policy chief central to his climate change agenda. By creating a climate office within the White House, Biden would please both environmental groups and the former government officials who are calling for the administration to take a “whole of government” approach to addressing climate change.
 - Among the most likely candidates: Former Michigan Gov. Jennifer Granholm, who would bring experience with unions, manufacturing and knowledge of the auto industry, and Washington Gov. Jay Inslee, who made climate change the

central issue of his short presidential bid. Ali Zaidi, who was a key Biden campaign climate adviser, is a favorite of environmental activists for the job.

- The Congressional Black Caucus is also pushing Rep. Donald McEachin (D-Va.) for a top environmental role, such as EPA administrator or head of the White House Council on Environmental Quality, according to a person with knowledge of the CBC's efforts.

ENERGY ECONOMY NEWS

- ***Biggest U.S. Solar Manufacturer Wants to Keep Trump's Tariffs.*** America's biggest solar manufacturer wants Biden to preserve the Trump administration's tariffs on imported panels or add other measures to help compete against China. First Solar is working with firms in Washington to make it clear to Biden's transition team that it wants help from the White House on trade. U.S. solar installations have boomed in recent years, but many of the panels come from Asia. President Trump imposed the tariffs in 2018 to encourage solar companies to open U.S. factories. While the duties have helped First Solar and a handful of others, they've driven up costs for companies that build solar farms and install rooftop panels.
- ***Energy Efficiency Slows.*** Countries are expected to post slow progress on energy efficiency across the globe this year due to the coronavirus pandemic, according to the International Energy Agency's latest energy efficiency report released Thursday morning. "As a result of the crisis and continuing low energy prices, energy intensity is expected to improve by only 0.8% in 2020, roughly half the rates, corrected for weather, for 2019 (1.6%) and 2018 (1.5%)," the report said — well below the level needed to achieve global climate and sustainability goals. Investments in new energy-efficient buildings, equipment and vehicles are also expected to decline this year, mostly because of declines in economic growth and income uncertainty among consumers and businesses.

CORPORATE SUSTAINABILITY UPDATES

- ***Ford Urges Automakers to Prepare for Biden, Support Cali Standards.*** Ford is prodding other automakers to embrace more stringent automotive clean air standards set by California in another blow to President Donald Trump's efforts to limit the state's ability to set tougher emissions rules as the industry prepares for the Biden administration.
 - A day before an industry trade group meeting, a top Ford executive encouraged his competitors to unify in supporting the California standards to prepare for more stringent rules expected from Biden.
 - The plea comes a week after General Motors dropped its support for Trump's efforts to strip California of its authority on auto emissions.
- ***Shell CEO Hopeful Biden Will Speed Up Climate Change Fight.*** The change in the U.S. presidency will bring the collaboration and set of progressive policies needed to tackle the energy transition, Royal Dutch Shell's chief executive officer said. President Donald Trump pulled the U.S. out of the Paris Agreement on global warming and railed back environmental protections while promising to keep the coal industry alive.
- ***Bank of America Says It Won't Finance Arctic Oil and Gas Exploration.*** The bank announced it after facing opposition from environmentalists. Earlier this month, the Sierra Club singled out Bank of America as "the only major U.S. bank not to rule out financing for the destruction of the Arctic refuge" after its five biggest competitors updated their policies this year.

- “There’s been misunderstanding around our position, but we have not historically participated in project finance for oil and gas exploration in the Arctic,” Larry Di Rita, the bank’s head of public policy and strategy in Washington, said Monday in an interview. “But given that misinterpretation, we’ve determined that it’s time to codify our existing practice into policy.”
- Bank of America has said it aims to position itself as a leader in environmental, social and governance matters in the financial industry through underwriting green bonds, reducing carbon emissions and supporting global climate initiatives. It has a goal of achieving net-zero emissions by 2050.
- ***Biden Win Is Pressuring Carmakers to Unite on Tailpipe Emissions.*** Carmakers that signed up for President Donald Trump’s war with California over auto emissions are now being pressured to join a peace plan brought on by the election of Joe Biden.
 - Automakers had split a year ago over a plan by the Trump administration to roll back gas mileage rules put in place by President Barack Obama and revoke California’s permission to set its own standards on tailpipe greenhouse gas emissions.
 - General Motors, Toyota, and Fiat Chrysler backed Trump, while Ford and Volkswagen worked with California on higher standards.
 - On Monday, a top Ford executive urged his company’s competitors to join the California agreement in a letter sent ahead of a board meeting on Tuesday of the Alliance for Automotive Innovation.
- ***Exxon to Slash Spending.*** In an acknowledgment that its plunge into natural gas has not been as profitable as expected, Exxon Mobil said Monday it will slash its spending and write down up to \$20 billion in assets in the fourth quarter.
 - Exxon said it will take an asset impairment between \$17 billion and \$20 billion in dry gas assets — which lack the liquids that can be turned into chemicals or sold as separate fuels — in the Appalachian and Rocky Mountains, Oklahoma, Texas, Louisiana and Arkansas, as well as regions in Canada and Argentina.
 - The oil giant will try to sell some of those assets and instead focus on drilling in Guyana in South America and the Permian Basin region of Texas and New Mexico.

NEW CLIMATE CHANGE STUDIES

- ***Affordable Housing in U.S. Faces Higher Risk of Future Flooding.*** A new research paper released Dec. 1 offers the most detailed account to date of the risk affordable housing faces from rising seas. “[Sea level rise and coastal flooding threaten affordable housing](#),” published in the journal Environmental Resource Letters, examines how climate change will slowly drown a significant part of the nation’s already inadequate stock of subsidized and market-driven affordable housing.
 - The number of units exposed to frequent flooding from 2000 to 2050 will triple. By mid-century, the report finds, the U.S. will lose 24,519 units due to repeated flooding, mostly concentrated in northeastern and mid-Atlantic states such as Virginia, Massachusetts and New Jersey.
 - Peer-reviewed by Climate Central and the National Housing Trust, the paper paints a disturbing future where many cities will lose a critical percentage of housing units due to floods, water damage and rising tides.
- ***Temperature Analysis Shows UN goals Within Reach.*** New [analysis](#) from Climate Action Tracker (CAT) finds that new climate promises from China and the carbon plans of US president-elect Joe Biden make it possible that “the rise in world temperatures could be held to 2.1C by the end of

this century.” For more than a decade, CAT has been monitoring global pledges and that “previous estimates indicated up to 3C of heating, with disastrous impacts”.

- Notable developments in recent months include pledges of net-zero emissions by China, Japan and South Korea, as well as the election of Joe Biden in the US. However, BBC News notes that “the experts are worried the long-term optimism is not matched by short-term plans to cut CO2.”
- ***Temperatures Inch Closer to Paris Agreement Threshold.*** Global temperatures from January to October were around 2.2 degrees Fahrenheit above pre-industrial levels, putting 2020 on track to being one of the three warmest years on record. This decade will be the hottest on record, with the warmest six years all happening since 2015, according to the World Meteorological Organization’s annual State of the Global Climate 2020 report.

STATE & LOCAL GOVERNMENT NEWS

- ***New York to Cut Carbon Emissions By 9 Million Tons by 2030.*** State regulations adopted on Tuesday align with the nine other Northeastern states participating in the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI), a cap-and-trade program, which have agreed to reduce the cap on emissions by 30% over the next decade. They further align with the state’s climate action plan, codifying its goal of getting all its electricity from emission-free sources by 2040, and an 85% reduction in economywide emissions from 1990 levels by 2050.
- ***Kerry Lauds Maine Governor’s Plan to Curb Climate Change Effects.*** Maine Gov. Janet Mills laid out a broad slate of new climate targets for the state on Tuesday, drawing praise from John Kerry, President-elect Joe Biden’s special envoy for climate.
 - Mills (D) proposed expanding incentives for people to buy electric cars, installing more charging stations, purchasing more renewable energy, creating energy efficiency incentive programs for businesses, doubling the pace of home weatherization, and more than doubling its clean energy and energy efficiency jobs to 30,000 by 2030.
 - Mills also plans to introduce legislation to advance clean energy development, enact official sea-level-rise projections, create incentives for small woodlot owners to support sustainable forestry management and sequester carbon emissions, and launch a pilot program for community-level climate resiliency planning.
- ***California Tests Mileage Fee Plan as Answer to Gas Tax.*** California is looking at new ways to pay for road and other transportation projects, as officials brace for falling gasoline and diesel taxes due to the transition to zero-emission vehicles.
 - The California Department of Transportation is launching four pilot programs in early 2021 to examine how to charge drivers based on the miles they drive, rather than the gasoline their vehicles consume.
 - Less than half of the current revenue from gas and fuel taxes will be available by 2030 as vehicles become more fuel-efficient and zero-emission models become more popular, state officials estimate.
- ***San Jose, Oakland Pump Up Natural Gas Bans in New Buildings.*** Two San Francisco Bay Area cities have adopted or expanded restrictions on natural gas hookups in buildings with few exceptions, joining a growing number of California municipalities that are putting the clamp on gas.
 - The San Jose City Council late Tuesday amended an ordinance to prohibit gas hookups in all types of construction, except for hospitals, starting in June 2021. Establishments with food preparation equipment, accessory dwelling units, and industrial and manufacturing facilities, will get a limited hardship exemption though Dec. 31, 2022.

- Meanwhile, Oakland on Tuesday barred new natural gas hookups with an ordinance requiring all-electric construction in new buildings. California now has 40 cities that have banned natural gas hookups, according to the Sierra Club.

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

- ***Japan Said to Plan Phase-Out of New Gasoline Cars by Mid-2030s.*** All new vehicles sold in Japan by the mid-2030s will be hybrid or electric as the government begins to unveil concrete steps for reaching its goal of becoming carbon neutral by 2050, broadcaster NHK said. Japan's economy ministry is targeting "100% electrification" over approximately 15 years, a move that would gradually bump gasoline-engine cars out of the new car market, NHK reported.
 - A new vehicle market consisting of only hybrid and electric automobiles would be a significant shift, given they only make up about 29% of Japan's 5.2 million new motor vehicle registrations, according to Japan's Automobile Manufacturers Association.
- ***Climate Ranking for China's Belt and Road May Limit Coal Plants.*** Coal-fired power plants and metal smelters would require more stringent supervision and face tougher financing under a plan to improve evaluation of the environmental and climate impact of projects in China's Belt and Road Initiative.
 - A color-coded classification mechanism going from green to red would help China's government, financial institutions and companies to make better assessments on risks associated with investments overseas, according to a report released Tuesday by the Belt and Road Initiative International Green Development Coalition.
- ***U.K. Sees Carbon Cut as High as 69% to Show Climate Ambition.*** Boris Johnson is mulling stricter U.K. greenhouse-gas cuts of as much as 69% by 2030, which would make it one of the most ambitious developed nations in the world when it comes to fighting climate change. A final decision hasn't been taken, and targets in the range of 65% to 68% reductions from 1990 levels are also being considered, according to a person familiar with the matter, who asked not to be identified because the policy has yet to be finalized.
 - A target of that magnitude would put the U.K. at the vanguard of global efforts to fight climate change, eclipsing the 55% reduction over the same period envisaged in the European Union's Green Deal.
 - It will also mark a key waypoint in the country's plan to eliminate net emissions altogether by 2050 as part of efforts to contain global warming to at least 2 degrees Celsius.
- ***New Zealand Declares Climate Emergency as Ardern Pledges Action.*** New Zealand's parliament declared a climate emergency Wednesday, passing a motion tabled by Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern that calls on the nation to take responsibility for future generations and its South Pacific neighbors.
 - While the declaration is a symbolic statement, it shows that tackling the climate crisis is an important part of the government's agenda. It records "our intent as a nation" and "acts as a catalyst for change," Ardern said in a speech in parliament. A number of countries have already declared climate emergencies, including the U.K. and Japan.
 - Ardern warned Wednesday of the threat that rising sea levels pose to small Pacific nations, saying the declaration is grounded in a sense of responsibility to

those countries. Failure to respond “means consigning our region to a devastating reality,” she said.

- ***Deforestation in Brazil's Amazon Skyrockets to 12-Year High Under Bolsonaro.*** Several publications cover data from Brazil’s national space agency INPE shows that levels of deforestation in the Brazilian Amazon have reached a 12-year high. Reuters says that destruction has been “soaring since President Jair Bolsonaro took office and weakened environmental enforcement”, and reports that from August 2019 to July 2020 “destruction of the world’s largest rainforest rose 9.5% from a year earlier to 11,088 sq km (2.7m acres)” – an area roughly 7 times the size of London.
- ***UN Leader Warns that Humanity on ‘Suicidal Path.’*** U.N. Secretary General António Guterres summarized the findings of Wednesday’s [U.N. State of the Climate](#) report as “the state of the planet is broken.”
 - “Dear friends, humanity is waging war on nature. This is suicidal,” Guterres said. “Nature always strikes back, and it is already doing so with growing force and fury.”
 - He cited reductions in biodiversity, the bleaching of coral reefs, the fact that the past decade was the hottest in human history and other indicators to emphasize that time is running out to limit the harms from global warming by reining in greenhouse gas emissions. In addition, Guterres ticked off extreme-weather events that occurred this past year, including Siberian fires and the record active Atlantic hurricane season. The climate report, which is a product of the World Meteorological Organization and other U.N. agencies, found that the past six years, including 2020, are likely to be the six warmest on record.
- ***Japan PM Pledges \$19B to Promote Ecological Businesses.*** Japanese Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga pledged a 2 trillion yen (\$19 billion) fund on Friday to promote ecological businesses and innovation to achieve his goal of zero net carbon emissions by 2050.
 - Suga, who took office in mid-September, set climate change as one of his main policy goals along with promoting a digital transformation of Japanese society — issues which were left behind by his predecessor, Shinzo Abe, who resigned because of ill health.
- ***Johnson Commits U.K. to Deepest Greenhouse Gas Cuts in G-20.*** Boris Johnson pledged the deepest cuts in greenhouse gas emissions in the Group of 20 nations, aiming to put the U.K. in the vanguard of the fight against climate change.
 - The prime minister’s goal to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 68% in the four decades through 2030 represents the fastest cut in heat-trapping pollution by any major economy, according to a statement from Johnson’s office in London. It would put Britain on track to deliver net-zero emissions by the middle of the century.
- ***Carbon Emissions Push Toward Record Price Ahead of EU Summit.*** The price of [European Union](#) carbon emissions hit 30 euros a metric ton for the second time this week as traders prepare for stricter measures from the bloc to address climate change.
 - Breaching the 30-euro mark is seen as a key trigger that could usher in a new era for the pollution market, as Europe looks to speed up its decarbonization plans and reach net zero by 2050.
 - Next week the EU leaders will gather for a summit to potentially agree an emissions plan that could push carbon through a 14 year high.

