

BLOG *Published August 20, 2018 · 5 minute read*

#ClimateChanged

Lindsey Walter & Jared DeWese



If you managed to unplug from the news for a bit this month, you didn't miss much—just the world bursting into flames. No, literally, 454 square miles of California have been consumed by fire, temperature records have been broken around the world, and a host of other warming-related blows are being dealt around the world. Never upstaged, President Trump has been making headlines of his own with a series of disastrous policy proposals that will actually make it *harder* to fight climate change. The press is confirming what we already knew: the climate has *already changed*.

We've pulled together some of the most concerning (and frustrating) climate headlines from the past couple weeks, along with a few steps you can take to fight back.

Want to go behind the headlines? Our staffers Josh Freed and Lindsey Walter will dive deeper into these and other recent climate stories on [FaceBook Live](#). Tune in on Thursday, August 23 at 3 p.m. EST.

Fiery Consequences

California's wildfires are hardly "natural" — humans made them worse at every step

Umair Irfan, *Vox*, Updated August 9, 2018

Human activity is exacerbating the frequency, intensity, and damages from wildfires. Population growth in fire-prone regions and inadequate preventive measures are a big part of the problem. But so is our failure to slow climate change. Though it's not always part of the headlines, we have ample evidence that "unique weather conditions" are creating stronger winds, higher temperatures, and severe drought which has fanned the flames faster and farther.

What to do about it?: A [recent analysis](#) by the watchdog group Public Citizen found that less than 13% of articles about the California wildfires mentioned climate change or global warming. We have to redouble our efforts to connect the dots from the wildfires to climate change. Other steps like smart zoning practices in at-risk areas, sustainable reduction of fuel materials from forests, and increasing wildfire mitigation budgets can help. But unless we do something about climate change, the destruction and cost of wildfires will inevitably increase.

A Time to Act

Terrified by ‘hothouse Earth’? Don’t despair — do something

Eric Holthaus, *Grist*, August 7, 2018

There was a lot of buzz about a new study showing that Earth’s climate could fall into a dangerous downward spiral, creating a planet that is literally uninhabitable. We’re normally pretty anxious about the changing climate anyway, but this one threw us for a loop. That said, this new doomsday scenario isn’t inevitable and should not be a reason to give up. While it wasn’t mentioned in most of the press coverage, this same study acknowledges that there are steps we can still take to avoid this disaster—but the longer we wait, the harder it will be.

What to do about it?: Fighting climate change is going to require a massive and rapid build-out of innovative clean energy technologies. One way to encourage faster deployment of these low-carbon options is to make them eligible for master limited partnerships, a unique tax treatment that has already spurred tens of billions of dollars worth of private sector investment into oil, gas, and coal projects.

Scheisse!

Germany’s Failed Climate Goals: A Wake-Up Call for Governments Everywhere

William Wilkes, Hayley Warren, and Brian Parkin, *Bloomberg*, August 15, 2018

Germany is commonly thought of as a (if not *the*) leader in the global fight against climate change. But despite its admirable commitment to energy efficiency and aggressive policies to deploy renewable energy, Germany is predicted to fall far short of its 2020 emissions targets. What went wrong? Germany has had trouble chipping-away at emissions from sources outside of the power sector, particularly in transportation. But they’ve also made some major unforced errors like retiring carbon-free nuclear power plants, which has led to an *increase* in coal-fired power and eroded some of the country’s hard-earned progress on emissions.

What to do about it?: Germany’s stumble is a reminder of just how difficult the decarbonization challenge is—and that we can’t afford to dismiss viable carbon-free energy resources. For instance, over half the states have mandates for renewable power. If they opted instead for Clean Energy Standards that include additional technologies like nuclear and carbon capture, many states could set more ambitious targets for carbon-free power and slash emissions faster and more efficiently than with renewables alone. If your state is considering a new or expanded renewable mandate, make sure your legislators know about the advantages of a Clean Energy Standard.

He AUTO Know Better

How Big a Deal Is Trump's Fuel Economy Rollback? For the Climate, Maybe the Biggest Yet

Brad Plumer, *New York Times*, August 3, 2018

An extra 1.25 billion metric tons of carbon dioxide could be emitted if fuel efficiency standards are rolled back from standards set by the Obama Administration, according to separate analyses from the [Rhodium Group](#) and [Energy Innovation](#)—that's the equivalent of emissions from 276 million additional passenger vehicles. Trump's fuel economy freeze, along with his plan to [revoke the Clean Air Act waiver](#) that California and 13 other states use to set more ambitious vehicle standards, would add even more emissions than his plans to rollback regulations on the oil and gas sector.

What to do about it?: A few things can be done. We can push back against the Administration's proposal by submitting comments to EPA and attending one of the [three public hearings](#), writing [letters to the editor](#) and [op-eds](#) in opposition, and advocating for congressional resolutions that support clean car standards in the [House](#) and [Senate](#). Since this issue is likely to be determined in the [courts](#), you could also support organizations that are fighting to protect the standards, such as the [Natural Resources Defense Council](#), [Union of Concerned Scientists](#), and the [Environmental Defense Fund](#).

In the meantime, we need to continue making alternative vehicles and fuels more affordable and accessible by funding RD&D efforts, extending tax incentives for [electric](#) and [hydrogen fuel cell](#) vehicles, and investing in fueling infrastructure.
