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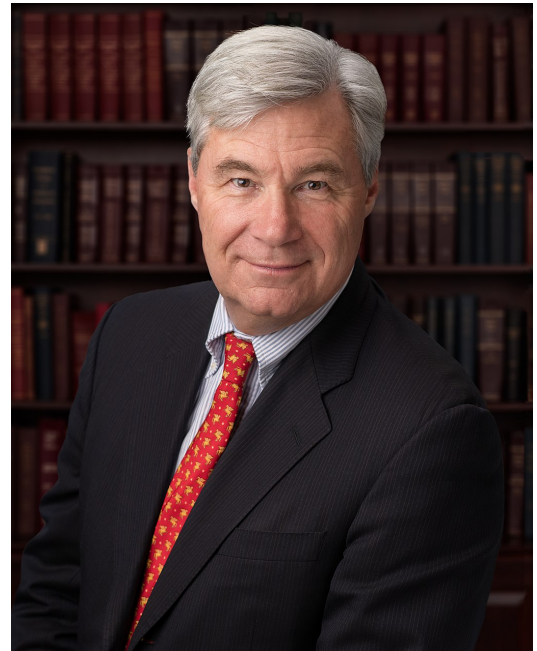
PROMOTING SUSTAINABLE LIVING AND RENEWABLE ENERGY FOR THE FUTURE OF OUR PLANET
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Consultative Status, the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)
 Observer Status, United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)

*“The Earth is in a death spiral. It will take radical action to save us.”
 -George Monbiot*

Sheldon Whitehouse

Sheldon Whitehouse is a Democratic politician and Rhode Island’s junior senator since 2007. His concern and passion for the environment spans a large portion of his time in office. He co-founded and serves as co-chair of the Bicameral Task Force on Climate Change as well as the bipartisan Senate Oceans Caucus. He has been a strong proponent of renewable energy—particularly solar—and has advocated for the prosecution of notable fossil fuel executives for misleading the public about climate change. He is also known for giving his “Time to Wake Up” speeches weekly on the Senate floor to spread awareness of climate change. Having started in 2012, he has currently made 284 speeches as of this newsletter.



“Awareness About Our Environment”
By Sylvia Stults

Broken bottles and charred pieces of glass,
Wadded up newspapers tossed on the grass,
Pouring of concrete and tearing out trees.
This is the environment that surrounds me?

Poisons and insecticides sprayed on our food,
Oceans filling with thick oil crude.
All sea life destined to a slow, awful doom.
These are the things we are to consume?

Mills pumping out iron, expelling Wallace-Wells fumes,
Airlines emitting caustic gases from fuels,
Weapons of destruction tested at desolate sites.
And this is the air that's to sustain life?

There has to be something that someone can do,
Like raise the awareness to those around you
That if we don't heed the problem at hand
It's your life that's at stake, the destruction of man.

To view her poetry and others like it, visit:
<https://www.familyfriendpoems.com/collection/climate-change/>

“Once an Open Sewer, New York Harbor Now Teems With Life. Thank the Clean Water Act”

By: John Waldman, *The New York Times*



Photo: Getty Images

Almost 50 years ago, Congress passed the Clean Water Act of 1972, which revolutionized the United States’ responsibility to protect and restore vital waterways. The Clean Water Act has proven to be one of the most transformative environmental laws ever enacted. At the time of its passing, hundreds of millions of gallons of raw sewage were being dumped into New York’s Hudson River daily. As a result, health officials were required to warn nearby inhabitants to avoid swimming and eating the fish within the waters. Today, while those same advisories remain, the water ecology has immensely improved. The success of the bill can be seen with the resurgence of many native species including herons, sturgeons, and ospreys.

[Full Article](#)

“Trying to Live a Day Without Plastic”

By: A.J. Jacobs, *The New York Times*



Photo: The New York Times

Journalist A.J. Jacobs challenges himself to go 24 hours without using or touching plastic products. Jacobs soon realizes that his goal may have been a bit too lofty, as he fails 10 seconds into his experiment by stepping onto his nylon carpet. Jacobs goes through his morning and daily routines, which have to be dramatically altered to accommodate his plastic-free experience. He asks his wife to open the “plastic coated” doorknob for him. He’s unable to use an oven, toaster, or refrigerator for breakfast. He has to bring a cloth sack everywhere he goes, use coins when paying for items at a grocery store, and is even forced to use a metal spatula as a substitute for poop bags. Jacobs’ experiment goes to show how not only that most things in this world revolve around plastic, but that any efforts to become more sustainable are oftentimes regarded as quixotic and are looked down upon by the rest of Western society.

[Full Article](#)

“England Will Ban Single-Use Cutlery and Plates”

By: Nicola Davis, *MotherJones*



Photo: Getty Images

To decrease plastic pollution, England will ban single-use items including plastic cutlery, trays, and plates. The country uses billions of these products each year, but only a small fraction are actually recycled. There was consultation on the topic with the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs in 2021 which preempted Thérèse Coffey’s, the environmental secretary, to act. While the ban will be implemented in cafes, takeaways, and restaurants, shops and supermarkets would be exempted due to being classified as “primary packaging” in those settings. However, the government is looking for solutions there as well. Greenpeace advocates approved of the new legislation but called for more comprehensive refill and reuse programs.

[Full Article](#)

“France Says Oui to Putting Solar Panels on Parking Lots”

By: Rick Spence, *CorporateKnights*



Photo: Getty Images

With the recent crisis unfolding in Ukraine resulting in the dramatic reduction of Russian natural gas and a possible impending recession, the transition to the clean energy era is knocking at Europe’s door. Emmanuel Macron and his administration have recently announced an “Every Gesture Counts” energy-reduction campaign, which has already seen success. Recently, the French Senate and National Assembly approved a bill in which parking lots throughout France will also become solar arrays. Within 5 years, all parking lots exceeding 1,500 sq. meters will be required to hold solar arrays. Richard Conniff, a National Magazine Award-winning writer, wrote that parking lots “are abundant, close to customers, largely untapped for solar power generation, and on land that’s already been stripped of much of its biological value.”

[Full Article](#)

“How Torrential Downpours Make it Harder for California to Save up Water”

By: Umair Irfan, *Vox News*



Photo: Getty Images

The Golden State is experiencing an unprecedented “water year”. One would think that massive downpours would be beneficial for Californians, who over the past few years have experienced some of the worst drought conditions in North America. However, groundwater stores, which hold between 40-60% of California’s water supply, are unable to hold the massive amounts of water caused by the recent floods. Most of the rainfall flows back to the ocean. Ultimately, California’s water shortage demonstrates the severity of the phenomena of weather whiplash, where quick shifts between opposing weather conditions create difficulties for water infrastructure in California and beyond.

[Full Article](#)

“Great Salt Lake will disappear in 5 years without massive ‘emergency rescue’, scientists say”

By: Rachel Ramirez, *CNN*



Photo: Rick Bowmer/Associated Press

Utah’s Great Salt Lake, a popular tourist attraction with abundant wildlife, is in danger. The lake has receded to alarmingly low levels, having lost 73% of its water and 60% of its lakebed, which has adversely affected local biodiversity. In the lead-up to Utah’s 2023 legislative session, an estimated three dozen scientists and conservationists released a report urging state lawmakers to take emergency measures to preserve the lake. Without an increase in action, the Great Salt Lake will likely disappear within the next five years, which could damage the local economy by up to \$2.2 billion a year. Furthermore, the report noted that if the Great Salt Lake disappears, it will reign havoc on Utah’s public health and environment due to the release of toxic dust particles once sealed off at the bottom of the lake.

[Full Article](#)

Environmental Organization Report: Tennessee Clean Water Network (TCWN)



TENNESSEE CLEAN WATER NETWORK

Executive Director and Board Members:

Their president is Dawn Vinson. Having graduated from the University of Tennessee, she initiated events like Memphis' Bike-to-Work Day.¹ Dr. Henry Spratt, Secretary, is a tenured professor at the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga. He also serves on the board of directors for the Tennessee River Gorge Trust.²

Organization Mission and Background:

They work to protect Tennessee's waters in whole, address community concerns, and increase public participation. They do this through gathering support of businesses, the public, and other organizations. They began as citizen watershed groups who wanted to look at clean water across the state. Forming a state-wide organization was determined to be the best method of addressing technical assistance and building capacity.³

Accomplishments:

Some of their projects include permitting in Scott, Weakley and Jefferson counties. They also do work on wetlands. Water fountains can be found in Athens, Chattanooga, Jackson, Memphis and Knoxville.⁴ They also work with laws including the Tennessee Water Quality Control Act, the Clean Water Act, and others on the local and national levels. The Network works with the Tennessee State Legislature, implements the Clean Water Rule, and mitigates nitrogen and phosphorus pollution. They also work with organizations like the Mississippi River Collaborative and encourage people to become a River Citizen to protect the river.⁵ In 2012, the city of Knoxville added 5 acres of purchased land to TCWN's parks. They use goats to remove invasive species on the property.⁶

1 "Dawn Vinson." TCWN Tennessee Clean Water Network.

2 "Dr. Henry Spratt." TCWN Tennessee Clean Water Network.

3 "About." TCWN Tennessee Clean Water Network.

4 "Projects." TCWN Tennessee Clean Water Network.

5 "Clean Water Policy." TCWN Tennessee Clean Water Network.

6 "Williams Creek." TCWN Tennessee Clean Water Network.

COP27 Analysis: Some Steps Forward, Some Steps Back

The 27th United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP27) of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) was poised to be a turning point for world leaders to enact meaningful change with crucial warming goals hanging in the balance. Limiting warming to 1.5°C, once a reasonable and attainable goal, has become mostly unachievable unless global emissions are rapidly reduced by 2030.¹ After fiery



opening remarks from Secretary General António Guterres, who reminded the audience that the world was on “a highway to climate hell with our foot still on the accelerator²”, many thought that progress would be swift and widespread. While significant headway was made across many aspects of climate policy that will benefit large portions of the world, key factors prevented large-scale developments in other areas, and once again proved that world leaders remain hesitant to enact sweeping legislation when it is so desperately needed.

Key Takeaways

Arguably the most historic and momentous achievement to come out of the conference was the establishment of the Loss and Damage Fund (LDF), ending an almost three-decade battle fought by several developing nations.³ In principle, the LDF is designed to provide key finances to nations severely impacted by climate change and are vulnerable to future climate events. Key beneficiaries of this fund could include Pakistan, where record-breaking floods caused an estimated \$30 billion in damages and an incredible loss of life, or low-lying island nations vulnerable to rising sea levels. In addition, major heat events and droughts in Sub-Saharan Africa have left countries like Somalia in desperate need of foreign assistance.⁴

¹ E. Masood, J. Tollefson, and A. Irwin, “COP27 climate talks: what succeeded, what failed and what’s next,” *Nature*, vol. 612, no. 7938, pp. 16–17, Nov. 2022, doi: 10.1038/d41586-022-03807-0.

² D. Wallace-Wells, “Opinion | The World Took a Bold, Toothless Step Forward on Climate Justice,” *The New York Times*, Nov. 23, 2022. Accessed: Jan. 26, 2023. [Online]. Available: <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/11/23/opinion/environment/cop27-climate-decarbonization.html>

³ Editorial, “The Guardian view on Cop27’s outcome: a real achievement, but too far to go,” *The Guardian*, Nov. 20, 2022. Accessed: Jan. 26, 2023.

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⁴ Masood et al., “COP27 climate talks”

However, the road leading up to this deal was not an easy one. Many delegates expressed doubts as to how the LDF's would be implemented, as there was no agreement on how much money would be set aside and which countries would have to foot the bill. Some published studies project that adaptation costs alone could cost over \$400 billion a year, and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) puts mitigation costs at rates 3-6 times greater.⁵ Many developed nations were hesitant to support the motion, notably the United States and the European Union. However, there was enough last-minute support to get the necessary approval for the fund, but the finer details are left to be determined for COP28 in Dubai.⁶

Additionally, five more countries joined the Global Methane Pledge, bringing the total up to 151 countries worldwide. The pledge is a first step in a national commitment towards cutting methane emissions in line with limiting global warming to 1.5°C. In the United States, the Inflation Reduction Act included a clause outlining a tax on methane that is leaked out of pipelines and other infrastructure. Other nations made key commitments to reducing fossil fuel use in the coming decades. Colombia and Kenya, two developing countries with large reserves of oil, both supported the inclusion of “all fossil fuel” phaseout legislation. Other African nations protested against further oil and gas developments due to health and environmental concerns. In South Africa, President Ramaphosa announced investment plans for the South African Just Energy Transition Partnership (JETP), an initiative to utilize \$8.5 billion to reduce their reliance on coal.⁷

COP27 also saw a greater push for financing reform in order to back these sustainability initiatives. Debate circled around reorienting funds towards net Zero Carbon goals in the lead up to the upcoming COP28 conference, including a just transition for fossil fuel workers.⁸ Additionally, the LDF backs global reform for lenders including the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and The World Bank, which only utilize a fraction of their available reserves for climate finance.⁹ In a stark contrast from COP26, COP27 saw greater awareness of the vulnerability of global food systems and a push for sustainable agriculture and food security. The Koronivia Joint Work on Agriculture, first adopted in 2017, reached a decision to implement a new four-year work programme dedicated to implementing solutions.¹⁰

Setbacks

While COP27 marked a significant step forward in the fight against climate change, it was not without significant complications. The optimism of meeting the warming goals set during the Paris Agreement was quickly fleeting, as there was insufficient progress and stagnation over the global energy

⁵W. Mackenzie, “COP 27 – Five Key Takeaways,” *Forbes*. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/woodmackenzie/2022/11/23/cop-27--five-key-takeaways/> (accessed Jan. 26, 2023).

⁶ Masood et al., “COP27 climate talks”

⁷A. Åberg et al., “COP27: What was achieved, and what needs to happen now,” *Chatham House*, Nov. 2022. <https://www.chathamhouse.org/2022/11/cop27-what-was-achieved-and-what-needs-happen-now>

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Masood et al., “COP27 climate talks”

¹⁰ A. Åberg et al., “COP27: What was achieved, and what needs to happen now,”

transition towards renewable energy. Few countries (aside from Australia and some EU members) followed through on their commitments to increase their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs).¹¹ Many of the pledges hailed as meaningful accomplishments were made intentionally vague and lacked the proper support behind them.¹²

Skyrocketing energy prices due in part to the ongoing crisis in Ukraine have put a strain on global economies, especially in Europe. As a result, fossil fuels like coal and natural gas became more appealing in the eyes of lawmakers, who aimed to ramp up short-term production in the name of quickly lowering energy costs. However, this came at the cost of transitioning to renewable energy.¹³ Additionally, close to 600 fossil fuel lobbyists were in attendance at the event to pressure governments to maintain the status quo.¹⁴

COP27 also demonstrated the frustrating elements of global conferences that do not further the agreed climate goals. The conference itself was hosted by Egypt, which has political ties with fossil fuel corporations. Transportation infrastructure consisted of 50 diesel buses ferrying lawmakers to and from their hotels, often idling for hours on end with their air conditioners at full blast. COP26 in Glasgow also faced similar challenges, as over 102,000 tons of CO₂ were released, costing upwards of \$10 million.¹⁵ With infighting and influence from major petrostates, including Saudi Arabia and Russia, the conference was hindered from more significant outcomes.¹⁶

What to Expect for COP28

COP27 made strides in many areas, but failed to deliver on key issues that require urgent solutions. In spite of the hesitancy from many world governments, the private sector continues to flourish, with many businesses demonstrating their progress with renewable energy and other sustainable technologies.¹⁷ The conference as a whole proved not to be a radical breakthrough in policy, unlike its predecessor, but rather a drawn out fight to maintain the goals set back in Paris and Glasgow.¹⁸ While the world is slowly shifting towards a net zero future, it may come down to the actions of local governments and the private sector to determine its speed and efficacy.

COP28 in Dubai must be a bastion of forward progress in order to meet previous climate goals. It will require the full cooperation of all actors involved to maintain the progress of reducing global emissions.¹⁹ With the UAE's link to fossil fuels, many are expressing their concerns over the outcomes. However, there is hope that the conference will exceed expectations and put us back on track towards an aggressive climate transition.

¹¹ A. Åberg *et al.*, "COP27: What was achieved, and what needs to happen now,"

¹² Editorial, "The Guardian view on COP27 outcome"

¹³ A. Åberg *et al.*

¹⁴ Editorial, *The Guardian*

¹⁵ W. Mackenzie, "COP 27 – Five Key Takeaways,"

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ W. Mackenzie, "COP 27,"

¹⁸ D. Wallace-Wells, "Opinion | The World Took a Bold, Toothless Step Forward on Climate Justice,"

¹⁹ Editorial, *The Guardian*

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