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NGO Sustainability Speaks

Newsletter Summary of Recent Articles



Great Barrier Reef Is Imperiled, Much Of It Dying or Dead

By: Damien Cave and Justin Gillis
March 16, 2017

Australia's Great Barrier Reef is in serious peril. Nearly hundreds of miles in the reef's pristine north section were found to be dead due to overheated ocean waters. This die-off surprised scientists who were not expecting a die-off of this magnitude for at least another 30 years. A recent study published in the journal *Nature* noted that this is the third mass bleaching of coral reefs since 1998, but the recent disaster was by far the worst. Scientists attribute the bleaching event to climate change. Globally, ocean temperatures have risen by 1.5 degrees Fahrenheit since the late 19th century, and it is this excess heat that has killed the temperature sensitive corals. While the Australian government has tried to reduce the threat of bleaching through local efforts such as restricting port development and controlling agricultural runoff, these efforts are not enough to combat the changes that are taking place globally. The bleaching of coral reefs will not only bring a loss of rich ocean life, but it could also have devastating effects on countries that rely on reef fish for protein or income from reef tourism.

Link:
<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/03/15/science/great-barrier-reef-coral-climate-change-dieoff.html>

Ocean Resorts Work to Restore Coral Reefs

By: Jennifer Billock
February 23, 2017

While there is a prevailing sentiment that island and beach resorts contribute to environmental degradation, resorts like the Outrigger Konotta Maldives Resort have developed programs designed to regrow damaged coral reefs. In collaboration with a marine biologist from the German Museum of Oceanography and Fisheries, the Outrigger Resort has developed an initiative that enables guests to get involved by planting coral or cleaning up the reef. The coral restoration process involves attaching broken but still living fragments of coral to metal or concrete frames and then securing the frame underwater. Although it takes 10 years for coral to fully grow, the reef can eventually regenerate itself from these frames. There are several resorts participating in similar programs in the Maldives and the Outrigger team alone has planted 21,450 sq. ft. of new coral, nearly halfway to their goal of planting a football field's worth of coral by 2025.

Link :
<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/02/23/travel/restoring-coral-reefs-ocean-resort-priority.html>





How a Pacific Island Changed From Diesel to 100% Solar Power

By: Daniel Lin
February 23, 2017

In November 2016, American Samoa's Ta'u island went completely solar. The island previously relied on diesel generators for its energy needs, but the completion of the solar microgrid enabled the island to end its reliance on the 110,000 gallons of diesel that were once required to power the island each year. The project, installed by SolarCity, consists of 5,328 solar panels that provide enough electricity for the island's 200-600 residents. SolarCity designed the panels to withstand the island's climate, including category 5 hurricane winds. Energy generated from the array can be stored in 60 large Tesla batteries, allowing Ta'u to access electricity for up to three days without any sunlight. Proponents of the project hope that its success will help inform other countries around the world of the benefits of solar power.

Link:
<http://news.nationalgeographic.com/2017/02/tau-american-samoa-solar-power-microgrid-tesla-solarcity/>

Amazon Deforestation, Once Tamed, Comes Roaring Back

By: Hiroko Tabuchi, Claire Rigby and Jeremy White
February 24, 2017

A decade after efforts to save the Amazon rainforest, deforestation activity is roaring back as Cargill, one of the world's largest agricultural companies, seeks to fulfill a growing appetite for soy. A new study by an environmental group, Mighty Earth, used supply chain mapping to connect the recent large-scale forest-clearing in Bolivia to farmers who are eager to sell their soybeans to Cargill. This report comes despite a deal signed by Cargill three years ago that included a target of eliminating deforestation from the production of agricultural products like palm oil, beef, and soy by 2020. While Cargill has invested millions of dollars to modify its palm oil supply chain, it has been less aggressive with other commodities. In recent statements, Cargill adopted a 2030 deadline for eliminating deforestation from its entire supply chain, not just the agricultural supply chain – a move that environmental groups have characterized as backtracking on the original 2020 commitment.

Link:
<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/02/24/business/energy-environment/deforestation-brazil-bolivia-south-america.html? r=0>



The State-by-State Assault on Electric Cars

By: Hiroko Tabuchi
March 11, 2017

Many of the economic incentives that have helped popularize electric vehicles in the US are under attack at the state level. Several states are moving to repeal tax credits for battery-powered vehicles while other states are simply letting these tax credits expire. While there are also federal tax credit available, each auto-maker has only a limited allotment of federal credits and estimates suggest that auto-makers will reach their allotments by 2018. Therefore, state tax credits are of increasing importance if electric vehicles are ever going to make a dent



in the overall American market. Additionally, bills have been introduced in at least nine states that would impose new registration fees on electric car owners. According to legislatures, these fees are important because electric vehicle owners do not pay gasoline taxes, a critical way states cover the costs of infrastructure projects. The proposed electric vehicle registration fees would help cover these costs in the same way that gasoline taxes do currently. It is unclear how many of these state measures will pass.

Link:

<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/03/11/business/energy-environment/electric-cars-hybrid-tax-credits.html>

State Considers Carbon Tax on Oil, Gas

By: Bill Cummings
March 14, 2017

The Connecticut General Assembly is considering imposing a carbon tax on heating oil, natural gas, and gasoline to spur lower consumption and help reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The legislation would result in a \$15 per ton tax in 2019, amounting to an increase in home heating costs by about 16 cents per gallon and an increase in gasoline prices by about 13 cents per gallon. Proponents of the bill

recognize that the tax is a way to reflect the true cost of fossil fuel. Opponents of the bill are worried that Connecticut fuel companies will lose business to nearby New York state dealers and some companies may chose not to locate in Connecticut. The bill would not become effective unless Rhode Island and Massachusetts pass similar bills now under consideration in those states.

Up-Coming Events

UN Non-Governmental Liaison Services - SDG Financing Lab: Civil Society and Social Entrepreneurs
UN – Headquarters, New York
April 18, 2017

Apply to speak or attend here:
<https://unngls.org/index.php/sdg-financing-lab-application>

People's Climate March 2017
Washington, D.C.
April 29, 2017

For details visit: <http://peoplesclimate.org/>