



## NGO SUSTAINABILITY

### CLIMATE WEEK EDITION

# GLOBAL WARNING <sup>+1.2°C</sup>

LATEST NEWS IN SUSTAINABILITY

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PROMOTING SUSTAINABLE LIVING AND RENEWABLE ENERGY FOR THE FUTURE OF OUR PLANET

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*- NGO Sustainability team*

***“The era of global warming has ended. The era of global boiling has arrived.”***

***- António Guterres, UN Secretary General***

## His Excellency Dr. Michal Mlynar

Ambassador Mlynar currently serves as the Deputy Executive Director, UN-Habitat (UN Human Settlements Program) working to promote resilient, inclusive, and socially and environmentally sustainable cities. Previously, he served as the Permanent Representative of Slovakia to the United Nations from 2017-2023. During this period he was a board member of NGO Sustainability. He holds Masters and Doctorate degrees in foreign languages from Comenius University Bratislava, Slovakia. He was previously the Ambassador of Slovakia to Kenya, and Permanent Representative to UN agencies in Nairobi. Mr. Mlynar has served in New York as Deputy Permanent Representative during Slovakia's membership in the UN Security Council, 2006-2007. In addition to his diplomatic assignments, Ambassador Mlynar had served as chair of the Governing Board of the International Security Sector Advisory Team (ISSAT),



Undersecretary General Michal Mlynar and Her Excellency Koki Muli Grignon (NGO Sustainability's Permanent Representative to UN agencies, Nairobi, Kenya).

Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces since May 2011. Ambassador Mlynar was also the Chair of the Committee of Permanent Representatives to UN-Habitat during the 2014-2015 Biennium. Additionally he was appointed President of the 25th session of UN Habitat between 2016-2017.

**“Ice Would Suffice” By Risa Denenberg<sup>1</sup>**

How swift, how far  
the sea  
carries a body from shore.

Empires fail, species are lost,  
spotted frogs  
and tufted puffins forsaken.

After eons of fauna and flora, hominids have stood  
for mere years  
baffled brains atop battered shoulders.

In a murky blanket of heavens  
an icy planet  
made of diamond spins.

Our sun winks like the star  
it was  
billions of years ago, without ambition.

We bury bodies in shallow dirt, heedless of lacking space  
or how long  
our makeshift planet will host us.

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<sup>1</sup> Denenberg Risa, “Ice Would suffice?” *poets.org*. Accessed September 7, 2023, <https://poets.org/poet/risa-denenberg>

## “A Medical Toolkit for Climate Resiliency Is Built on the Latest Epidemiology and ER Best Practices”

By: Danish Bajwa, *Inside Climate News*



*Photo: Getty Images*

A climate resilience toolkit was just created by Harvard University’s Chan School for Public Health, which will be provided in emergency rooms and clinics for when a climate disaster strikes. The toolkit includes guidance and resources for administrators, physicians and patients. It is currently being tested in 19 clinics along both US coasts that are typically affected by wildfires, hurricanes and floods. The developers will then take the information from these clinics to update and improve the kits if necessary. The kits have been released in both English and Spanish, as well as a heat alert system that will notify hospitals and clinics two days before extreme heat potentially hits. Many clinics have already noted the success of the toolkit while it is still in its pilot phase.

[Full article](#)

## “NASA releases first U.S. pollution made images from new instrument launched to space: “Game-changing data”

By: Emily Mae Czachor, *CBS*



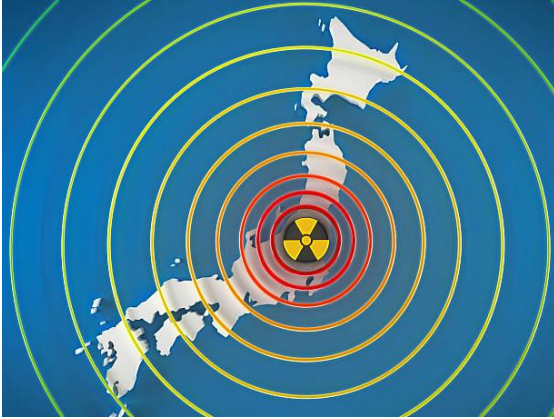
*Photo: Getty Images*

A new instrument is being used by NASA to measure air pollution from space, which has so far shown high levels of major pollutants over North America. Many urban areas are now being considered hotspots for air pollution, which changes depending on time of day. Nitrogen dioxide is in high abundance in these areas, which is a chemical produced when fossil fuels are burned, making them common over major highways. This tool is the first instrument to measure air quality over North America in space, and can only be used during daylight hours as it tracks the reflection of sunlight off of Earth’s surface, clouds and the atmosphere.

[Full Article](#)

### “We unpacked Japan’s plan to release Fukushima wastewater”

By: Geoff Brumfiel, Kat Lonsdorf, Rachel Carlson, Rebecca Ramirez, and Regina G. Barber, *NPR*



*Photo: Getty Images*

Recent decisions for Japan’s Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant to release radioactive waste into nearby oceans is causing international concerns. Despite various safety concerns for marine biodiversity, including poisoning the fish species comprising a major global food source, scientists from the plant are claiming to be treating water and decreasing the radioactivity to safe levels before releasing it into the environment. While they are able to remove most radioactive isotopes, tritium, an isotope of hydrogen, can not be filtered from the wastewater. Concerns regarding exposure to nuclear waste are still motivating protests in Japan and South Korea and have led to a ban on Japanese seafood imports in China. Alternative disposal options like borehole injection and continued storage were considered but ultimately ruled against.

[Full Article](#)

### “Tiny Forests With Big Benefits”

By: Cara Buckley, *New York Times*



*Photo: Getty Images*

From Los Angeles’s Griffith Park to a recently established garden in Cambridge, Massachusetts, a global trend of “tiny forests” is finding influence within the United States. Planting mostly native vegetation within urban environments, these gardens expand habitat for insect and animal species, absorb flood water from storms, and increase the availability of green space for recreation or other human use in urban environments. These gardens further improve urban air and soil quality, particularly on top of landfills, former factories, and other especially polluted or degraded urban sites, harboring multiple benefits to humans and all other species. Thus, these gardens are becoming a necessary collaboration among scientists and citizens seeking to repair environmental damages and improve the quality of urban environments for humans and the surrounding environment.

[Full Article](#)

## “Alaska governor vetoes statewide ban on pollution-causing firefighting foam”

By: James Brooks, *Alaska Beacon*



Photo: Getty Images

The US Alaskan governor, Mike Dunleavy, recently vetoed a bill that would ban firefighting foams that contain PFAS, a carcinogenic “forever chemical” which has caused a large amount of pollution in Alaska’s drinking water. The governor claimed that banning the foam would be complicated to do. The veto also applies to the other part of the bill that required the use of only environmentally safe refrigerants. It is possible to override this veto if 40 out of 60 members of the legislature decide to pass it, which has not happened since 2002. The Department of Transportation and Public Facilities, as well as the Department of Environmental Conservation, were concerned with a certain aspect of the bill that included the removal of certain “Code Red” carts used by firefighters as it would leave many without protection against fires. PFAS-free high heat firefighting foams are internationally accepted and would be available for substitution.

[Full Article](#)

## “Only about 5% of plastic waste gets recycled in US, new report says”

By: Frank Kummer, *Phys*



Photo: Getty Images

Alarming statistics surrounding plastic recycling in the United States have been revealed by research done by environmental groups working to battle plastic pollution. They discovered that just 5-6% of the 46 million tons of plastic waste produced yearly in the US is actually recycled. This is a sharp decline from the rate of 9% that was just years ago. The results of the study highlights the urgent need for better recycling procedures and public education about the recycling system. The report also recommends that more efforts should be directed at lowering plastic usage and discovering environmentally friendly alternatives to plastic items because it is clear that plastic recycling in the US faces major hurdles.

[Full Article](#)

## “Norway outlines powerful electrification of its North”

By: Atle Staalesen, *The Barents Observer*



*Photo: Getty Images*

Prime Minister Jonas Gahr Støre recently announced his new plans for Norway’s power system, including the construction of power lines and wind parks for hundreds of kilometers. Melkøya is a large plant located near Hammerfest, Norway’s downtown and is the largest contributor to CO<sub>2</sub> emissions in Norway. The power proposal sets out for Melkøya’s gas driven turbines to be traded in for electric power by 2030, which would result in the reduction of emissions by 850,000 tons per year. It is also hopeful that with the plan in place, job opportunities will increase throughout the country. Some are concerned that the electrification of Melkøya will result in a large increase of electrical prices for Norwegians. It has also been noted by the Sámi Parliament that the construction of power lines and wind parks will have negative effects on Indigenous land and other natural lands. The Norwegian government does not currently have any plans on regulating oil usage.

[Full Article](#)

## “Federal Court Stops Oil Project Near Colorado River - for Now”

By: Samuel Shaw, *Mother Jones*



*Photo: Getty Images*

Efforts from oil companies to move forward with extraction and transportation of crude oil from Utah, called the Uinta Railway project, were recently halted by the U.S. Federal Appeals Court. Concerns cited in the rejection of this plan closely matched those of nonprofit organizations and concerned citizens along the Colorado River. Both organizations and the Federal Appeals Court demanded further studies identifying risks to wildlife and water along the Colorado River, in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act. For the time being, these concerns for humans and other wildlife have stalled the progress of American oil conglomerates seeking to further their profits by expanding oil extraction opportunities.

[Full Article](#)

## Constitutional Climate Litigation

### Held v. State of Montana

August 14<sup>th</sup>, 2023, Judge Kathy Seeley of the First Judicial District Court in Montana ruled in the favor of the youth plaintiffs in the case of Held v. State.<sup>2</sup> This case stands as a noteworthy milestone in the realm of constitutional climate litigation.<sup>3</sup> Initially filed in 2020 by 16 Montana youth, the lawsuit revolves around the preservation of the fundamental rights to a clean and healthful environment, life, dignity, and freedom.<sup>3</sup> The plaintiffs argue that Montana's support for fossil fuel extraction and combustion infringes upon these rights, causing harm to their well-being.<sup>2</sup>

The core of the lawsuit aims to take legal action toward protecting Montana's environment, including air, water, wildlife, and public lands which are increasingly threatened by the impacts of drought, heat, wildfires, smoke, and floods.<sup>4</sup> Additionally, Montana's government continues to endorse fossil fuel-based energy policies, despite the presence of viable clean and renewable energy alternatives.<sup>4</sup> The youth seek a declaration from the court that the state's support of fossil fuels is in violation of their constitutional rights as well as challenge the constitutionality of fossil fuel exploitation and initiate the transition to clean energy with a goal of total transition by 2050.<sup>4</sup>

The youth argued through the Montana Constitution, Section 3, which states the inherent and inalienable rights of all individuals, encompassing the right to a clean and healthful environment, the pursuit of life's essentials, and the protection of life, liberty, and property.<sup>5</sup> Further elaborated in Section 1, the state of Montana and its citizens bear the responsibility of preserving and enhancing a clean and healthful environment for present and future generations.<sup>6</sup> This legislation mandates the implementation of measures for environmental governance, enforcement, and works to counteract excessive use of natural resources.<sup>4</sup>

Judge Kathy Seeley's verdict affirms that the state's approval of fossil fuel projects without considering climate change is unconstitutional.<sup>2</sup> This ruling marks a crucial moment in climate litigation, establishing governmental accountability for protecting citizens from the consequences of climate change.<sup>2</sup> The Held v. State of Montana ruling has implications that reach beyond state lines. It strengthens the global effort to make governments and industries responsible for their contributions to the climate crisis. Though the state of Montana intends to appeal the ruling, the case holds the potential to influence similar cases worldwide as it underscores the connections between environmental preservation, constitutional rights, and the pursuit of justice for both present and future generations. The full ruling can be found [online](#).

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<sup>2</sup> "Active State Legal Actions: Montana." Our Children's Trust. Our Children's Trust. Accessed August 16, 2023.

<https://www.ourchildrenstrust.org/montana>.

<sup>3</sup> Gelles, David, and Mike Baker. "Judge Rules in Favor of Montana Youths in a Landmark Climate Case." New York Times (New York City), August 16, 2023. <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/08/14/us/montana-youth-climate-ruling.html>

<sup>4</sup> "Historic Climate Trial: Held V. State of Montana June 12-20, 2023." Youth V. Gov. Youth V. Gov. Accessed August 16, 2023. <https://www.youthvgov.org/held-v-montana/#lists>.

<sup>5</sup> Montana. Const. art. II, pt. II, § 3.

<sup>6</sup> Montana. Const. art. IX, pt. IX, § 1.

## **UN SDG Summit 2023**

September 18-19, 2023, New York City

The United Nation High-Level Political Forum on Development (HLPF) will convene September 18-19 2023 at the UN General Assembly. This SDG Summit marks the mid-point in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The summit will review the current state of the SDGs, respond to the impact of multiple worldwide crises, and provide guidance on effective and accelerated actions as the 2030 deadline for achieving the SDGs approaches. The outcomes of the summit will be a negotiated political declaration.

The core of the Summit lies in the Leaders' Dialogues. These dialogues are co-moderated by Heads of State and Government and aim to facilitate engagement with various stakeholders, including civil society, the private sector, and academia. These dialogues are categorized into six themes;

1. Scaling up actions on key transitions to accelerate SDG progress.
2. Building resilience and leaving no one behind.
3. Game-changers: Applying science, technology, innovation and data for transformative action.
4. Strengthening integrated policies and public institutions for achieving the SDGs.
5. Unity and Solidarity: Strengthening the multilateral system for enhanced support, cooperation, follow-up and review.
6. Mobilizing finance and investments and the means of implementation for SDG achievement.

This summit comes at a critical juncture, as the world grapples with intersecting crises, including the lingering effects of COVID-19, the escalating challenges of climate change, and persistent global conflicts. These crises have collectively jeopardized the progress towards the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, making it imperative to take immediate and ambitious action to get back on track. This summit aims to offer high-level political guidance on the 2030 Agenda's implementation, assess progress and emerging challenges, and mobilize further actions to accelerate the achievement of these goals. The United Nations has provided an updated outline for the summit [online](#).

## **UN Climate Ambition Summit**

September 20, 2023, New York City

The UN Climate Ambition Summit, scheduled for September 20, 2023, is set to coincide with the second SDG summit. Its overarching goal is to rally governments, businesses, financial institutions, local authorities, and civil society towards building a robust, renewable-energy-driven economy. At this summit, attendees will have the opportunity to learn from pioneers and active contributors to sustainable initiatives. The summit's structure and expected outcomes will center on three acceleration tracks: ambition, credibility, and implementation.

The ambition track primarily targets governments, especially major greenhouse gas emitters, encouraging them to present updated commitments and targets for achieving a net-zero economy and facilitating a smooth transition. The credibility track is designed for leaders in business, urban governance, geographical regions, and financial institutions. They are expected to outline their transition strategies in line with credibility standards endorsed by the United Nations. Lastly, the implementation track will highlight partnerships that accelerate decarbonization efforts in sectors with high emissions. Additionally, it will contribute to progress in climate justice, including areas like adaptation financing and early warning systems. The summit will be available to view [online](#).



## WE ACT for Environmental Justice

*formerly known as West Harlem Environmental Action*

### Mission

Formerly known as West Harlem Environmental Action, WE ACT for Environmental Justice is one of the oldest environmental justice groups in the country and has had a substantial impact throughout its history.<sup>7</sup> The organization began in 1988 when three leaders from the West Harlem neighborhood in the New York City area were seeking change around environmental racism their community was experiencing.<sup>7</sup>

Since then, the organization has expanded, continuing to represent Northern Manhattan while also taking on projects of greater scope at the New York state level and in Washington D.C.<sup>7</sup>

As an environmental justice organization, their mission is to ensure that low-income communities and communities of color have the ability to participate in creating healthy communities and just environmental policies that improve public health and quality of life.<sup>7</sup>

To do this, they prioritize producing knowledge and research within communities, having engaged and informed community members, and pushing for fair and quality environmental policy.<sup>7</sup> WE ACT takes on a variety of roles to pursue this mission.<sup>7</sup> They monitor community health, work with academic institutions and researchers, and politically organize.<sup>7</sup>



### Leadership

The organization's executive director and co-founder is Peggy Shepard, who has been widely acknowledged for her foundational work in environmental justice.<sup>8</sup> In addition to leading WE ACT, she has served on the White House Environmental Justice Advisory Council, New York City Environmental Justice Advisory Council, and National Environmental Justice Advisory Council to the EPA.<sup>8</sup> She is joined by an extensive staff of lawyers, academics, residents of Northern Manhattan, activists, legal experts, and more in leading WE ACT in its endeavors.<sup>8</sup> The Board of Directors similarly spans a variety of disciplines, from environmental organization leaders to business leaders.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>7</sup> "Our Story." 2021. *WE ACT for Environmental Justice*. WE ACT for Environmental Justice. February 24. <https://www.weact.org/whowere/ourstory/>.

<sup>8</sup> "Peggy Shepard." 2022a. *WE ACT for Environmental Justice*. WE ACT for Environmental Justice. April 20. <https://www.weact.org/person/peggy-shepard/>.

## BOOK REPORT

### *No One is Too Small to Make a Difference*

By Greta Thunberg

“No One is Too Small to Make a Difference” by Greta Thunberg, is a collection of speeches given by Thunberg on climate change, global warming and demands for political action. In one of her featured speeches given to the European Parliament in 2019, Thunberg opened with “My name is Greta Thunberg. I am sixteen years old. I come from Sweden. And I want you to panic. I want you to act as if your house was on fire.” Thunberg is now a 20 year old activist who is best known for her School Strikes for Climate outside the Swedish parliament, which she started in 2018. In each of her speeches, Thunberg urges politicians to stand behind the science of climate change and implement policies to dramatically reduce emissions. Throughout the book, Thunberg refers to global warming as a crisis and wonders why people are not treating it as such. She then goes on to provide statistics to show the consequences of further warming, hoping to persuade her audience to make a difference. To Thunberg climate change is black or white, we either stop further warming or we don’t. To stop further warming, Thunberg urges for stricter regulations

on greenhouse gas emissions and more sustainable practices for corporations and the general public.

Thunberg is often criticized for her school strikes. Some politicians have gone so far as to insult her, but that has not stopped her from making a difference and encouraging others to follow in her footsteps. While some claim that Thunberg should not be skipping school for climate advocacy, Thunberg contends that there is no point in learning the scientific facts that politicians will not follow. She has since gone on to have papers published, presented her speeches at climate events such as the world economic forum, the UN general assembly, and the UNSSC meetings such as COP24. She has even been nominated for a Nobel Peace Prize.

Thunberg works independently and passionately, and recognizes that climate advocacy should not be the younger generation’s responsibility alone. Readers are encouraged to reflect on their own sustainable actions and how they can play a role in mitigating climate change. At 20 years old, Thunberg’s speeches act as a call to action for those looking to make a positive impact on our planet’s future.

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