



## NGO SUSTAINABILITY

# GLOBAL WARNING

*LATEST NEWS IN SUSTAINABILITY +  
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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)

*"Climate change is moving faster than we are, but we don't give up because climate action is the only path" -  
António Guterres*

## Inger Anderson

Inger Anderson is an environmentalist and economist from Denmark who is currently the Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Program, serving since 2019. Before she was appointed Executive Director of UNEP, she worked on sustainable development at the World Bank in her position as Vice President. Anderson originally cut her teeth at the United Nations Headquarters in New York at UNSO which is now called the Global Policy Centre on Resilient Ecosystems and Desertification. She has focused primarily on the role of environmental conservation in accomplishing sustainable development. Her four year term as the Executive Director of UNEP is set to expire in 2023. NGO Sustainability is proud to be in Observer Status with the United Nations Environment Program.



Hilda Raz is an American poet whose work is often published in the country's most prestigious journals and poetry contests. She was an editor for the literary journal *Prairie Schooner*, and president of the Association of Writers and Writing Programs. She currently works as the series editor for poetry at the University of New Mexico Press.

**“Some Questions about the Storm”**

By: Hilda Raz

What's the bird ratio overhead?  
Zero: zero. Maybe it's El Niño?

The storm, was it bad?  
Here the worst ever. Every tree hurt.

Do you love trees?  
Only the gingko, the fir, the birch.

Yours? Do you name your trees?  
Who owns the trees? Who's talking

You presume a dialogue. Me and You.  
Yes. Your fingers tap. I'm listening.

Will you answer? Why mention trees?  
When the weather turned rain into ice, the leaves failed.

So what? Every year leaves fail. The cycle. Birth to death.  
In the night the sound of cannon, and death everywhere.

What did you see?  
Next morning, roots against the glass.

Who's talking now and in familiar language? Get real.  
What's real is the broken crown. The trunk shattered.

Was that storm worse than others?  
Yes and no. The wind's torque twisted open the tree's tibia.

Fool. You're talking about vegetables. Do you love the patio  
tomato? The Christmas cactus?  
Yes. And the magnolia on the roof, the felled crabapple, the topless  
spruce.

## “Time has run out: UN fails to reach agreement to protect marine life”

By: Edward Helmore, *The Guardian*



Photo: Getty Images

UN representatives in New York failed to come to an agreement to establish a UN Ocean Treaty to protect biodiversity and marine resources in international waters. While many hoped that the most recent round of discussions would result in a tangible treaty, members could not agree on how to mitigate human activity or establish protected areas. This comes weeks after uplifting and widespread calls to action from the UN World Ocean Conference in Lisbon. Environmental groups are accusing wealthier countries of not adequately compromising in spite of aggressive goals to protect the ocean, focusing more on economic gains or political spite. Unless action is taken by the UN in the form of an emergency session, talks will not resume until next year. While many policymakers are appreciative of the current progress made so far, others remain disheartened due to the additional time lost towards saving the world’s most precious resource.

[Full Article](#)

## “Blinken Urges Congo to Rethink a Plan to Sell Critical Tracts of Rainforest”

By: Edward Wong, *The New York Times*



Photo: Andrew Harnik

Concerned for wetlands to be auctioned by the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) for oil drilling, U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken took action and recommended that officials from each country assemble a team to pause drilling plans for oil and gas extraction. Blinken stated that, “Some of these blocks infringe on sensitive rainforest and peatland areas, including in the Virunga National Park and Salonga National Park.” These peatlands and rainforests in the Congo Basin are very important resources as they store carbon, contain tremendous biodiversity, and help sustain agriculture across the region. Considering this, Blinken decided to meet and discuss these matters with Foreign Minister Christophe Lutundula and DRC President Felix Tshisekedi – commended as a figurehead in mitigating climate change – and led to their announcement of stopping the auction. This became national news and served as a symbol of hope that everyone will work together to stop climate change and serve as allies.

[Full Article](#)

## “California to approve plan to ban sales of gas-powered cars by 2035”

By: Dani Anguiano, *The Guardian*



Photo: Getty Images

By 2035, California intends to ban the sale of new gasoline cars as part of a significant effort to reduce emissions and deal with the climate emergency. Following voting, state authorities in the biggest auto market in America are set to approve a plan to gradually phase out the sale of gas-powered cars over the following 13 years. The law will be one of the first of its kind and serve as a model for other states that frequently look to California when establishing their own standards. With automakers such as General Motors and Tesla increasing their production of electric vehicles, there was little opposition to the motion. According to research, switching to electric vehicles would have a significant impact in the US, where transportation is the main cause of the nation's greenhouse gas emissions. All of America will be watching this step closely, and many Californians believe that this is the most significant action the state can take to combat climate change.

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## “St. Louis, Death Valley and now Dallas: Why ‘1000-year’ floods suddenly seem so common”

By: Evan Bush, *NBC News*



Photo: Dallas Morning News

On top of record-breaking heat waves, communities in multiple states have experienced torrential downpours and flooding deemed by experts to be “1-in-1000-year” events. A recent storm in Dallas dumped over 13 inches of rain over 12 hours, and over two dozen people were killed in flooding events across eastern Kentucky. The unpredictable nature and increased frequency of these storms presents a stark reminder of climate change’s impact on future weather patterns. With a warmer atmosphere comes a greater capacity to hold moisture, which allows for more intense storms. It is likely that once unprecedented weather events will become more commonplace, with larger periods of drought followed by extreme bursts of precipitation becoming the norm. Although future damages can be mitigated if drastic global action is taken, adaptations will need to be made to prepare for once unforeseen calamities.

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## “As Alaska Warms, Fires Burn Over (and Under) More Wild Land”

By: Simon Romero, *The New York Times*



Photo: Scientific American

In Alaska, a fire called the Clear Fire took out 72,000 acres surrounding Anderson, Alaska. Alaska has been suffering from extreme forest fires over the last decade. Climate change affects the poles more drastically than the equator, and the last 6 out of 10 largest wildfires in the United States have all been in Alaska. There has been a total of 3 million acres burned down statewide, more acreage than all 49 states combined. Alaska’s vast forests and difficult terrain makes it incredibly challenging to battle forest fires. Many people have been displaced and have had to leave homes and belongings behind. To make matters worse, there are even fires that can burn underground and stay this way through the winter season. Dubbed “zombie fires” or “sleeping dragons”, they can reignite in warmer weather and cause further destruction. These fires are evidence of the devastating impacts of climate change being felt in our world’s higher latitudes.

[Full Article](#)

## “Desalination plants produce more waste brine than we thought”

By: Tik Root, *National Geographic*



Photo: Time.com

Desalination plants are a potential option for coastal communities to create fresh drinking water. The plants take in salt water and extract pure freshwater using reverse osmosis, but produce excess waste brine (consisting of salts and other contaminants) as a byproduct. A recent study by Manoor Qadir and his team from the UN University Institute for Water, Environment, and Health in Canada have found that a majority of desalination plants produce 1.5 times more brine than previously reported. The world releases approximately 51.8 billion cubic meters of brine each year into the ocean, enough to cover all of Florida a foot deep. This is an extremely important waste issue that must be taken care of immediately as brine is being pumped directly near shore which is where most ocean life dwells. Brine is so salty that it changes the ability of ocean life to function. The more desalination plants continue to operate, the saltier the oceans will become. It seems like a simple issue but it is highly complex as brine is saltier than seawater and contains metals and other chemicals.

[Full Article](#)

## “Electric cars to solar panels: tax breaks in Biden’s Climate law for Americans”

By: Oliver Milman, *The Guardian*



Photo: Andrew Caballero-Reynolds

President Biden recently signed groundbreaking climate legislation into law to slow down climate change. The \$369-billion dollar bill vows to introduce massive savings to consumers by offering tax rebates for green investments. It is said that US households will save hundreds of dollars on energy bills as well as at least a thousand dollars if heat pumps and efficient air conditioning units are installed. From electric cars to solar panels and even home appliances, this bill will use government funds to encourage the use of environmentally friendly technologies and appliances. For example, new electric cars and trucks will be eligible for a \$7,500 tax credit, new solar installations will have a 30% tax credit, and low and middle-class households can receive up to \$14,000 in rebates for installing greener home appliances.

[Full Article](#)

## “Machine Learning Algorithm Predicts How to Get the Most Out of Electric Vehicle Batteries”

By: Sara Collins, *Environmental News Network*



Photo: Getty Images

Researchers at the University of Cambridge recently developed a machine learning system that might aid in reducing charging times and extending battery life in electric vehicles by predicting how varied driving patterns impact battery performance. The researchers created a non-invasive sensor that shoots electrical pulses into a battery and evaluates the reaction, resulting in a set of 'biomarkers' of battery health. These markers were transformed into a description of the battery's status, which is then put into the new learning system. Aside from vehicle manufacturers and drivers, this method could be beneficial to businesses that operate large fleets of electric vehicles. Researchers are now collaborating with battery manufacturers to hasten the creation of safer, longer-lasting batteries. They are also investigating how their architecture may be utilized to design efficient fast charging protocols to minimize charging times for electric vehicles without incurring deterioration.

[Full Article](#)

For climate activists and concerned citizens alike, **Climate Week NYC** presents a unique opportunity to learn more about environmental issues, celebrate climate action, and get involved with local organizations. Organized by the non-profit Climate Group, the event brings together some of the most influential leaders in climate action across multiple sectors and is one of the biggest climate events in the world. Now in its 14th year of operation, the event is planning to have over 500 events centered around 10 key themes, with opportunities for environmental organizations to host their own. The event will be held the week of September 18th - 25th, in New York City.

Key events planned for the week include:



### **Climate Week Opening Ceremony**

**Monday, September 19th, 9:00 - 1:00PM**

Finally back in person, the Opening Ceremony will include speeches from heads of state, government officials, CEOs, and other leaders on climate action.

### **Barnard Climate Week Circularity Symposium: Leveraging Circularity: Science, Business, and Community**

**Tuesday, September 20th, 3:00 PM - 6:00 PM; Barnard College Event Oval**

### **Financed Emissions: Leading the Transition to a Low-Carbon Economy**

**Wednesday, September 21st, 1:00 PM - 3:00 PM; MSCI, 7 World Trade Center (48th Floor)**

### **Marketplace of the Future**

**Friday, September 23rd**

The Marketplace of the Future is an annual expo showcasing sustainable products and services. Now in its 6th year, dozens of start-ups with groundbreaking renewable technologies will present their products to the public. The event is offered virtually or in person at the Starrett-Lehigh Building on West 26th Street.

For more information, visit: <https://www.climateweeknyc.org>

*Each week, interns at NGO Sustainability choose special topics of interest to report on, exploring issues they are passionate about within the sustainability field. We look forward to sharing some of the most interesting aspects of this work with you.*

## **Natural Resources Defense Council Report**

By Jaclynn Nicole Sandoval

### **Mission and Background**

The Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC) is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization that was founded in 1970 by a group of lawyers and scientists. The organization was established following the Scenic Hudson Preservation Conference v. Federal Power Commission lawsuit (the “Storm King Case”), which centered on Consolidated Edison’s proposal to build the world’s largest hydroelectric facility at Storm King Mountain in New York. The proposal prompted concerned citizens and environmental groups to form together and discuss the environmental impact and opposition to the project. The case ruled that environmental groups had the ability to challenge the Federal Power Commission’s administrative rulings. Funded originally by the Ford Foundation, the mission of the NRDC is to “safeguard the Earth, its people, its plants and animals, and the natural systems on which all life depends.” Experts of the NRDC use scientific data analysis to “unearth the root causes of the problem that confront us”. It works to address the biggest environmental issues of today such as climate change and clean energy in partnerships with businesses, elected leaders, and community groups. The NRDC is affiliated with E2, a national, nonpartisan group that advocates for policies that are good for the economy and the environment. Overall, as a legal advocacy group, the NRDC works to reach



environmental goals by using the legal process to protect natural resources and reduce pollution through litigation and interactions on both the national and international level.

### **Leadership**

The NRDC works to ensure the rights of all people to “clean air, clean water, and healthy communities.” The current President & CEO of the NRDC is Manish Bapna. Bapna served previously as the interim president and CEO of the World Resources Institute (WRI), a global research organization that works to address the challenges of sustainability. Before joining the WRI in 2007, Bapna was also the executive director of the non-profit Bank Information Centre (BIC), which works to protect rights and promote sustainability in the projects and policies of international financial institutions.

### **Actions**

On June 8th 2022, the NRDC published recent actions to safeguard our oceans, which are at risk of ocean acidification with the increasing

presence of larger seascapes, industrial-scale fishing, aquaculture, oil and gas development, military activities, offshore wind energy, and shipping. These actions include support for an initiative called “30x30,” a global “high seas treaty”, an end to offshore oil drilling, the widespread use of ropeless fishing systems, and mitigating illegal and unreported fishing. The “30x30” initiative refers to the idea that we need to protect at least 30% of our ocean and 30% of our lands and inland waters by 2030. The NRDC is contributing efforts to promote this initiative at the international, national, and state levels. Furthermore, the poor understanding and weak regulation of the high seas – the areas of the ocean that lie beyond the jurisdiction of any one country – are under increasing pressure from climate change, overfishing, noise, and chemical and plastic pollution in addition to bottom trawl fishing and seabed mining. Involved in the current negotiations of an ocean treaty, the NRDC advocates for a treaty that will result in real conservation benefits for our oceans. Moreover, the NRDC calls upon the Biden administration to cease new oil and gas leases, arguing that new leasing would lock in fossil fuel infrastructure and climate pollution for decades. Other efforts include reaching out to the government to help safeguard the ocean from the effects of climate change.

### **Finance**

In 2021, the NRDC had a total revenue of \$296,820,575 and total expenditure of \$196,643,135. This resulted in an asset growth of \$21,748,415. In total, they had a net asset value of \$398,006,120. at the end of 2021. As a

501(c)(3) organization, the NRDC is mainly funded through donations and distributions from its own asset holdings including individual members, foundation grants, and major donor contributions. The bulk of the funding was spent on NRDC Programs such as Sustainable Communities, Clean Energy Future, Wildlife & Wildlands, International, Membership services, and Total Program Services.

### **Assessment**

Overall, the NRDC supports the protection of our natural resources and is a great source for learning about the current environmental issues that society faces. The organization portrays itself as a means to “ensure the rights of all people to clean air, clean water, and healthy communities”. However, they could be doing more to address other environmental issues. With the cash flow they are generating, the organization could use a percentage of their funds for efforts such as the creation of wildlife refuges or programs that aim to financially assist less-developed regions of the United States with better access to clean air and/or water.

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## BOOK REPORT: **Breaking Boundaries: the Science of Our Planet**

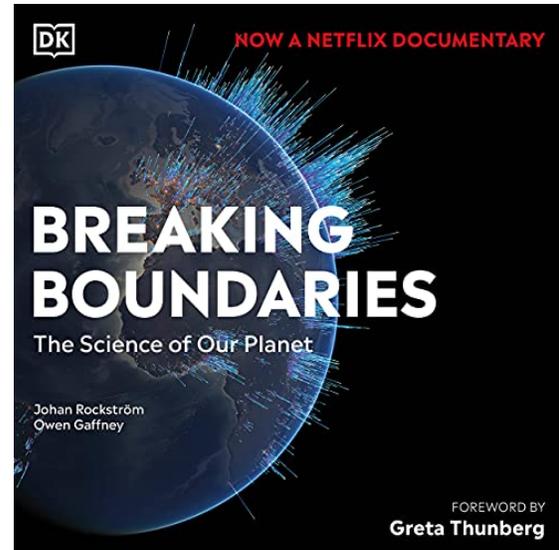
Johan Rockström and Owen Gaffney

Report by Andrew Miller

Humanity has pushed our planet into a dire condition. The climate is rapidly warming, species loss is on track to become the sixth mass extinction event, new chemicals and pollutants are flooding into the global environment, and biogeochemical cycles that once governed the Earth's nutrient balance are dangerously misaligned. These are all the consequences of human activities and some of the main indicators that Rockström and Gaffney use in their new book to detail the transition into a new geological epoch: the Anthropocene.

“Breaking Boundaries: the Science of Our Planet,” is a very scientific and technical book by nature. But the book's short length, colloquial writing style, and engaging topics make it a very approachable read. Rockström and Gaffney's thesis is that humanity is pushing planet Earth from the conditions that have persisted for the past 10,000 years, a period known as the Holocene, into a new era dominated by human influence: the Anthropocene. They claim to be able to monitor this transition through nine planetary boundaries: climate change, ozone depletion, atmospheric aerosol loading, ocean acidification, nutrient flows, freshwater use, novel entities, land-use change, and biodiversity loss. When a boundary is breached by human activities, it is almost impossible to return that system to its pre-Anthropocene state.

Currently, five boundaries have been crossed: biodiversity loss, nutrient flows, novel entities, climate change, and land use change. Now the effects of abnormally high atmospheric carbon dioxide concentrations, chemical pollution, nutrient pollution, and habitat loss will be even more difficult to reverse.



However, Rockström and Gaffney's book is far from all predictions of a doomed world. Humanity has accomplished the seemingly impossible, reversing our overshoot of a planetary boundary. Throughout the mid to late 20th century, humanity pumped millions of tons of ozone depleting chemicals into the atmosphere. But after effective international rules were put in place in 1987, the concentration of these chemicals in the atmosphere declined, and the ozone layer began to heal itself, bringing the ozone depletion boundary back within its safe limits. Accomplishing the same for others like climate change or biodiversity loss are therefore still within the realm of possibility.

Rockström and Gaffney's work doesn't tell us anything fundamentally new about how humanity is impacting the planet. Instead it offers us a new way of quantifying and measuring the damage we cause, and where the points of no return lie. “Breaking Boundaries” is not a happy read, but it is a hopeful one. With new tools like the planetary boundaries framework, humanity can track its progress on damaging, or healing, the Earth, and can give us a pathway to securing a sustainable future for generations to come.

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