



NGO SUSTAINABILITY

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PROMOTING SUSTAINABLE LIVING AND RENEWABLE ENERGY FOR THE FUTURE OF OUR PLANET
ngosustainability@gmail.com | unngosustainability.org

Consultative Status, the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)
Observer Status, United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)

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*“You know what I can’t stand sometimes? People are like, ‘I love the environment! Save the environment!’ and then they’re just shouting about it, but they don’t actually do something.”
–Beatrix Nachtigal, 10, Brooklyn, The New York Times*

Local Leader Spotlight: William Heher (By Ayushi Singh)

William Heher, better known as “Big Fish” to his students, is a science teacher at Trumbull High School (THS) in Trumbull, Connecticut, where he teaches AP Environmental Science and Biology. He has been teaching at THS for the past 6 years and previously taught Biology at Bethel High School. His teaching has inspired many students to pursue environmental fields in their studies and beyond.

He began his undergraduate studies at Arizona State University as a business major but switched to education after an influential class. He graduated with a BaE in Secondary Education in Biological Sciences from ASU and later earned a Masters in Biology from Clemson University, with fieldwork in the U.S. Virgin Islands that influenced his teaching.

His classroom is filled with student artwork depicting invasive species and various plants, and fish tanks. He values open discussion, and welcomes contradictory questions.



*Heher holding crops at Sweetlife Farm in Monroe, CT.
Source: Facebook*

Heher is the head of the Environmental Club at THS, which launched a composting initiative to reduce cafeteria food waste, collecting over 3800 pounds of waste that used to produce methane and compost.

Outside of teaching, he owns and operates Sweetlife Farm, an aquaponics farming system. Heher hopes to eventually work in other forms of education and is valued in the Trumbull community.

Prayer for the Great Family

By Gary Snyder¹

Gratitude to Mother Earth, sailing through night and day—
and to her soil: rich, rare, and sweet
in our minds so be it.

Gratitude to Plants, the sun-facing light-changing leaf
and fine root-hairs; standing still through wind
and rain; their dance is in the flowing spiral grain
in our minds so be it.

Gratitude to Air, bearing the soaring Swift and the silent
Owl at dawn. Breath of our song
clear spirit breeze
in our minds so be it.

Gratitude to Wild Beings, our brothers, teaching secrets,
freedoms, and ways; who share with us their milk;
self-complete, brave, and aware
in our minds so be it.

Gratitude to Water: clouds, lakes, rivers, glaciers;
holding or releasing; streaming through all
our bodies salty seas
in our minds so be it.

Gratitude to the Sun: blinding pulsing light through
trunks of trees, through mists, warming caves where
bears and snakes sleep—
in our minds so be it.

Gratitude to the Great Sky
who holds billions of stars— and goes yet beyond that—
beyond all powers, and thoughts
and yet is within us—
Grandfather Space.
The Mind is his Wife.

So be it.

¹Gary Snyder. "Prayer for the Great Family", 1974. <https://www.stevenkharper.com/prayerfortheGreatFamily.html>.

“Water Scarcity May Hinder Global Solar”

By: Prakash Govindan, *North American Clean Energy*



Photo: Getty Images

Solar energy is rapidly becoming the dominant source in the world's energy system, projected to constitute a majority of global electricity generation by 2050. The annual manufacturing capacity of solar photovoltaic (PV) cells is estimated to exceed 1,000 gigawatts this year. However, with this substantial increase in PV manufacturing, concerns over droughts and water scarcity are likely to intensify. PV manufacturing heavily depends on ultrapure water. Given the water shortages faced by many regions worldwide, exacerbated by 2023 being declared the hottest year in recorded human history, effective freshwater management is crucial for PV producers and investors. Conserving water will significantly benefit solar energy production, ensuring a more reliable production system.

[Full Article](#)

“The Push to Control Plastic Waste in New York: What to Know”

By: Hilary Howard, *The New York Times*



Photo: Getty Images

New York is considering the Packaging Reduction and Recycling Infrastructure Act to reduce single-use plastics like wrappers and food containers. These items, made from fossil fuel-based chemicals, are hard to recycle and often end up in landfills or incinerators, producing harmful microplastics. The bill aims to cut plastic packaging by 50% over 12 years, with companies either finding sustainable options or paying fees. The collected fees would support recycling and waste disposal infrastructure. Toxic chemicals in plastics would be banned. Supported by many city leaders and organizations, the bill faces opposition from the plastics industry and large manufacturers concerned about costs. Final negotiations are ongoing, with a decision expected before the legislative session ends on June 6th.

Note: The Plastic Packaging Bill ultimately failed to pass in the New York State Assembly.

[Full Article](#)

“Environmental Group to Study Effects of Artificially Cooling Earth”

By: Christopher Flavelle, *The New York Times*



Photo: Getty Images

The Environmental Defense Fund (EDF) will support controversial research on estimating the effects of global cooling technologies. While the EDF will fund solar geoengineering that increases the albedo of particles or clouds and could potentially temporarily reduce temperatures, the organization was previously skeptical of this technique and others like it. Also, their stance on geoengineering is that “deliberate climate interventions” create “serious ecological, moral, and geopolitical concerns.” The risk of unintended consequences, such as altering global temperatures or ocean currents, is a criticism of the projects. California officials halted an experiment due to health considerations.

The Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC), another environmental organization, is uncertain about the side effects, saying more research could help mitigate the hesitant optimism of the new technology.

[Full Article](#)

“City Life Offers Surprising Opportunities for Some Endangered Species”

By: Sarah DeWeerd, *Anthropocene Magazine*



Photo: Getty Images

Native biodiversity can be impacted by land-use changes such as urbanization. Greenways and wildlife bridges can help with migration patterns and habitat fragmentation. However, a study on mammal communities in urban landscapes showed the presence of different species communities. Additionally, four out of five vulnerable and endangered mammals included in the research were observed in urban locations in Southern England. A citizen scientist study in Los Angeles across 12 different taxonomic groups concluded that native species were more abundant in natural areas than in urban areas, but snails and slugs showed a higher affinity to inhabit cities compared to butterflies and moths.

[Full Article](#)

“Canadians are taking dramatic steps to avoid more ruinous firestorms”

The Economist



Photo: Getty Images

Wildfires devastated 185,000 square kilometers of Canada in 2023, releasing 1,800 megatons of CO₂, far surpassing the country’s 2022 emissions. This year’s fire season is intensifying, with major blazes already prompting evacuations and threatening oil production. Canada’s fire services are adopting new strategies, including drones and indigenous practices like controlled burns. These efforts focus on preparation and mitigation rather than mere suppression. Homeowners are being urged to “fire-smart” their properties to prevent future damage. The costs of these measures are increasing, with significant implications for insurance and property values.

Note: Please learn more about preparing for wildfires [here](#).

[Full Article](#)

“Pollution Paradox: How Cleaning Up Smog Drives Ocean Warming”

By: Fred Pearce, *YaleEnvironment360*



Photo: Getty Images

Cleaning up air pollution, particularly smog, has paradoxically led to ocean warming, according to new research. The reduction of smog particles from China’s air cleanups has contributed to extreme heat waves in the Pacific Ocean, creating a phenomenon called “The Blob.” This marine heatwave disrupts marine life and has severe ecological consequences. While essential for public health, reducing aerosols—which cool the planet by blocking sunlight—has intensified atmospheric warming. This has significant implications for future climate patterns and highlights the complexity of balancing air quality improvements with climate change mitigation.

[Full Article](#)

“Why Greece Is Betting Big on American Gas”

By: Max Bearak, *New York Times*



Photo: Getty Images

Summary by:

Greece, a country devastated by economic hardship for over a decade, has found some help in the form of natural gas. The country has become highly sustainable, with the majority of its energy coming from renewable sources within its borders, utilizing solar and wind power farms on islands and in the mountains. They even managed to run the country on renewable sources for 100% of its energy needs, albeit only for a few hours. However, this does not paint the full picture. Although Greece does not consume much fossil fuel itself, it is responsible for a large portion of the liquefied natural gas (LNG) supply to the rest of Europe. This raises concerns among those working towards a more sustainable future, as Greece’s sale of LNG inevitably counteracts its own progress by relying fully on renewable sources. Nevertheless, the economic advantages for this long-struggling country cannot be overlooked.

[Full Article](#)

“As Solar Power Surges, U.S. Wind is in Trouble”

By: Brad Plumer and Nadja Popovich, *New York Times*



Photo: Getty Images

The 2022 Inflation Reduction Act reduced renewable energy costs through tax breaks and increased non-renewable energy costs, boosting solar power capacity tenfold. However, wind farms lag behind. Experts emphasize the need for both forms of renewables to meet sustainability goals, as wind farms generate energy at night, complementing solar farms. Wind farms face more local opposition and higher post-pandemic costs. Unlike solar, wind energy still suffers from supply limitations seen in countries like China, slowing its recovery.

[Full Article](#)

Key International Environmental and Climate Change Initiatives

Nikolai Stephens-Zumbaum (NGO Intern)

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) is a United Nations body established in 1988. Its primary function is to assess the scientific, technical, and socio-economic information relevant to understanding the risk of human-induced climate change. The IPCC produces very detailed assessment reports, special reports, and technical papers, which are important in shaping international climate policies and are also often used by many other governing bodies when making decisions. The panel's work is based on the contributions and work of thousands of scientists from around the world, making it a highly authoritative source of climate information.

The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs) are a collection of 17 interconnected global goals designed to be a blueprint to achieve a better and more sustainable future for all. Established in 2015 by the UN General Assembly, the goals cover a wide range of issues, including poverty, inequality, climate change, environmental degradation, peace, and environmental justice. Each goal has specific targets to be achieved by 2030, emphasizing a holistic approach to sustainability and the urgent need for coordinated action across different sectors and countries. At NGO Sustainability, we are most focused on goals 7 (Affordable and Clean Energy), 13 (Climate Action), 14 (Clean Oceans), and 17 (Partnerships).

The United Nations High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (UN HLPF) is the main platform for the yearly global follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the SDGs. The HLPF meets annually under the supervision of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and every four years under the General Assembly. It provides a space for member states and other stakeholders to share experiences, highlight successes, and discuss challenges in implementing the SDGs. The forum plays a critical role in promoting transparency, accountability, and mutual learning among nations. Essentially, they discuss how the world is doing with trying to achieve the SDGs laid out, and is a place for strategies to be shared amongst countries.

The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), to which NGO Sustainability is in Observer Status, is the leading global environmental authority, established in 1972 at the Stockholm Conference. UNEP sets the global environmental agenda, promotes a coherent implementation of the environmental part of sustainable development within the United Nations system, and serves as a massive advocate for the global environment. It works on various issues such as climate change, biodiversity, ecosystem management, pollution, and sustainable consumption and production. UNEP's work includes assessments, policy advice, capacity building, and supporting the implementation of international environmental agreements.

In 2024, Baku, Azerbaijan, will host a significant climate change summit, bringing together world leaders, policymakers, scientists, and activists to discuss and advance global efforts in combating climate change. The summit will focus on reviewing progress towards international climate goals, including the Paris Agreement targets, and exploring innovative solutions for mitigating and adapting to climate impacts. Key topics are expected to include renewable energy advancements, financing for climate initiatives, technology transfer, and strengthening resilience in vulnerable communities. The

Baku summit aims to foster international cooperation and accelerate action to address the urgent climate crisis.

The previous climate change summit held in Dubai in 2023, known as COP28, was an important event for global climate action. Key outcomes included the adoption of new commitments to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, significant pledges for climate finance aimed at supporting developing nations, and a strong emphasis on accelerating the transition to renewable energy. The summit also focused on enhancing climate resilience and adaptation strategies, with extensive discussions on innovative solutions and technologies to address climate impacts. Additionally, COP28 facilitated important dialogues on the importance of aligning national policies with the goals of the Paris Agreement, aiming to limit global warming to well below 2 degrees Celsius.

The IPCC, UN SDGs, UN HLPF, UNEP, and the upcoming climate change summit in Baku represent critical components of the global framework for addressing environmental challenges and promoting sustainable development. The IPCC's scientific assessments inform policy decisions and international negotiations on climate change. The SDGs provide a comprehensive and integrated approach to achieving a sustainable future by 2030, addressing a wide range of social, economic, and environmental issues. The HLPF ensures that progress towards these goals is monitored, and best practices are shared among nations. UNEP leads global efforts to address environmental challenges through policy guidance, capacity building, and advocacy. The climate change summit in Baku will be a critical event for galvanizing international action, enhancing collaboration, and exploring innovative solutions to meet climate goals. Together, these initiatives underscore the importance of coordinated efforts, scientific guidance, and international cooperation in tackling the complex and interconnected issues of climate change and sustainability.

World Environment Day: A Brief Overview

Sydney Black (NGO Intern)

World Environment Day, celebrated annually on June 5th, is a global platform for raising awareness and taking action on pressing environmental issues.

Established by the United Nations in 1972 at the Stockholm Conference on the Human Environment, it has grown to be the largest global event dedicated to environmental protection, as part of the U.N. Environment Programme.

Since its inception, World Environment Day has evolved from a single-day celebration to a global movement, mobilizing millions of people from over 150 countries to tackle pressing environmental issues. This global event highlights various themes annually, such as plastic pollution, biodiversity, and ecosystem restoration, promoting sustainable actions by governments, businesses, and individuals. Significant accomplishments include the adoption of international treaties like the Montreal Protocol, bans on single-use plastics, and commitments to restore ecosystems and curb climate change.

Each year, the host country, this year Saudia Arabia, brings a unique focus, such as the 2024 theme, “Land Restoration, Desertification, and Drought Resilience,” contributing to a global movement towards environmental protection and sustainability under the slogan “Our land. Our future. We are GenerationRestoration.”

This issue is highly relevant given the UN Convention to Combat Desertification reports that 40% of the planet’s land is degraded, affecting half the world’s population and threatening US\$44 trillion in GDP. Droughts have increased by 29% since 2000 and without urgent action could affect over three-quarters of the world’s population by 2050. Furthermore, restoration is vital for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, as emphasized by the U.N. Decade on Ecosystem Restoration (2021-2030). The 30th anniversary of the U.N. Convention to Combat Desertification will be marked by COP 16 in Riyadh from 2 to 13 December 2024.



World Environment Day serves as a reminder of the urgent need to protect our planet, and will next focus on ending plastic pollution at the 2025 event in the Republic of Korea. Through collective efforts at the international, national, and local levels, we can address environmental challenges and pave the way for a sustainable future. As pointed out by Antonio Guterres, the Secretary General of the U.N., in his special address at this year’s celebration, “We are at a moment of truth. The truth is ... almost ten years since the Paris Agreement was adopted, the target of limiting long-term global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius is

hanging by a thread.” Simultaneously, he told his audience, “The need for action is



unprecedented but so is the opportunity – not just to deliver on climate, but on economic prosperity and sustainable development.”

Relevant Sources:

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Producer: Roma Stibravy, President
Editors: Adrianna Mannino - Columbia University School of Professional Studies
Sydney Black - Harvard College
Contributors: NGO Sustainability Interns

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