



CURRENT NEWS ON ECOLOGICAL WELLNESS AND GLOBAL HEALTH

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Hi,

Incredibly, a story in the PHW last week needs updating immediately. It stated that 20 persons had recently died of measles in Samoa, but now the number is [over 60 with over 4000 infected and the country has come to a standstill](#). What a disaster, what a shame, and all so incredibly fast and preventable. Sadly, though, a medical error when giving vaccinations caused two deaths last year and the misinformation machine went into overtime causing a big reduction in the vaccination rate, now leading to so many more rapid deaths and thousands sick and injured with high fever, rash, and potentially pneumonia, brain inflammation and most likely [serious immune system damage](#) as we reported three weeks ago. Those circulating the antivax line seem to me to be just as criminal and those responsible for the vast majority of CO2 emissions now sickening the planet. But, this also shows the power of the internet in spreading lies, falsehoods and harm. We see this daily now.

Our goal, though, is to provide good solid and reliable information to you every week. I hope you'll take a look at this week's **Planetary Health Weekly** (#49 for the year) with important reading on:

- most countries missing their Paris Agreement commitments,
- the EU parliament declaring a global climate emergency and their plotting with China,
- faltering HIV treatment,
- 1000s of dangerous dams in the U.S.,
- the oceans' great potential bounty,

- Fukushima becoming a giant solar generation hub,
- Great Lakes flooding,
- Anishnawbe Health to the rescue,
- global insight from Barack Obama
- Amazon fires through the lens of young Amazon photographers,
- more on damming the Mekong,
- a new book [Losing Earth: A Recent History](#) by Nathaniel Rich,
- a study showing the benefits of ‘mindfulness’ for graduate students, and more!

I hope you'll take a look.

Best, david

David Zakus, Editor and Publisher



Credit: David Zakus

LEAVING TORONTO

DECEMBER 3, 2019

Countries' Fossil Fuel Production Plans

Inconsistent With Paris Agreement



Credit: Dru Oja Jay, Dominion/Flickr)

Current levels of greenhouse gases are “almost exactly” at the same level as 2020 projections made ten years ago under the UN Environment Program’s (UNEP’S) business-as-usual scenario, which was based on the assumption that no climate policies would be put in place after 2005.

Countries are not doing enough to keep Earth’s temperature from rising to near-catastrophic levels, a UN report says. A new United Nations report paints a bleak picture: The commitments countries pledged to limit the climate crisis are nowhere near enough to stave off record-high temperatures. Delaying change any further will make it impossible to reach desired temperature goals. The time for ‘rapid and transformational’ change to limit global warming is now, the report says. The UNEP 2019 Emissions Gap report calls on countries to strengthen the commitments made in the 2015 Paris Agreement to stall climate change. Current measures will not keep global temperature increases within the 1.5-to-2-degree Celsius range (a “safe” level to which temperatures can rise and not cause devastation, though 1.5 degrees is preferable). Greenhouse gases reached a record high in 2018 with no sign of peaking, according to a World Meteorological Organization report also just released. Carbon dioxide levels reached 407.8 parts per million, a unit used to measure the level of a contaminant in the air. At the current rate, temperatures are expected to rise 3.2 degrees Celsius (5.8 degrees Fahrenheit) by 2100, the UNEP report states. The changes the UNEP suggests are needed are extreme. To get Earth back on track to the 1.5-degree goal, countries must multiply their commitment level, or the level at which they pledge to reduce their emissions, five times the current rates outlined in the Paris accords. That means global greenhouse gas emissions must fall at least 7.6% every year to remove 32 gigatons of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere.

Incremental change is no longer enough to stall off the potentially devastating effects of a changing climate, the report's authors write. What the world needs now, they say, is 'rapid and transformational action.' [Read more at Climate Change News](#)

[See Also at CNN: New UNEP Report Says Climate Catastrophe Imminent](#)

European Parliament Declares Global Climate Emergency



Credits: Hatim Kaghat/AFP via Getty Images

The world is experiencing a “climate and environment emergency,” the European Parliament proclaimed last week — a symbolic move for the bloc days before negotiators gather for a global climate summit in Madrid. Adopted during a plenary session in Strasbourg, the Parliament’s resolution “declares a climate and environment emergency; and calls on the Commission, the Member States and all global actors, and declares its own commitment, to urgently take the concrete action needed in order to fight and contain this threat before it is too late.” [Read more at Politico](#)

E.U. Plots Climate Deal With China



Credit: Elysée

As the Trump administration formally notified the UN of the US withdrawal from the Paris Agreement last month, French president Emmanuel Macron was heading to China, plotting to ramp up the climate ambition of the world's largest emitter. Macron's three-day state visit was part of a strategic rapprochement between Europe and Beijing ahead of an exceptional EU-China summit with the 27 EU heads-of-state and President Xi in September 2020. [Read more at Climate Change News](#)

HIV Treatment Access Isn't Rising Fast Enough To Reach 2020 Targets



Credit: Fredrik Naumann

According to Winnie Byanyima, Executive Director of UNAIDS, there has been “significant progress” in expanding access to HIV treatment over the last decade, but testing and treatment gaps still place the goal of getting 30 million people on treatment by 2020 out of reach, according to new findings from UNAIDS. Social injustices, inequality, denial of citizenship rights, and stigma and discrimination are holding back progress against HIV and the Sustainable Development Goals.

[Read more at Devex](#)

What It Takes To Be Carbon Neutral — For A Family, A City, A Country



Credit: Ulf Svane/For The Washington Post

Amid mounting global concern about climate change, Denmark has turned into a buzzing hive of green experimentation, with efforts underway inside homes, across cities and on a national scale. Copenhagen is trying to become the first carbon-neutral capital by 2025 -- a full 25 years before Washington and other major world cities expect they might have a shot at canceling their emissions. Denmark’s newly elected leaders are trying to turn the whole country into a showcase for how to go green without going bankrupt. [Read more at The Washington Post](#)

At Least 1,680 Dams Across The U.S. Pose Potential Risk



Credit: Nebraska Department of Natural Resources via AP

On a cold morning last March, Kenny Angel got a frantic knock on his door. Two workers from a utility company in northern Nebraska had come with a stark warning: Get out of your house. Minutes later, the dam came crashing down, unleashing a wave of water carrying ice chunks the size of cars. Angel's home was wiped away; his body was never found. A more than two-year investigation by The Associated Press has found scores of dams nationwide in even worse condition, and in equally dangerous locations. They loom over homes, businesses, highways or entire communities that could face life-threatening floods if the dams don't hold. A review of federal data and reports obtained under state open records laws identified 1,688 high-hazard dams rated in poor or unsatisfactory condition as of last year in 44 states and Puerto Rico. The actual number is almost certainly higher. [Read more at AP News](#)

Oceans Could Provide More Than Two Thirds Of The Animal Protein That U.N. Food Experts Predict Will Be Needed To Feed The World In Future



Credit: Antara Foto

The ocean could provide over six times more food than it does now with better management and more technological innovation. Boosting cultivation of bivalves like mussels and clams could be especially beneficial. It's estimated the oceans could provide more than two thirds of the animal protein that U.N. food experts predict will be needed to feed the world in future. Fish currently accounts for about a fifth of animal protein consumed by humans. Cultivating food from the ocean generally has a lower impact on the climate than land-based agriculture, and is not limited by the same land and water constraints. [Read more at Trust](#)

Fukushima To Become Solar, Wind Hub Using Farmland Tainted By Radiation



Credit: Tomohiro Ohsumi

Japan is pursuing a 300 billion (\$2.75 billion) yen project to transform disaster-struck Fukushima prefecture into a clean-energy hub, with the development's first solar farm scheduled to start in January. Building wind and solar farms on agricultural land tainted by radiation from the 2011 Dai-Ichi plant meltdown will help rejuvenate the area, which had suffered devastating earthquake and tsunami damage. [Read more at Bloomberg](#)

OPINION

Trudeau's Climate Change Math Is Incomplete



Credit: The Tyee

Under the UN Convention, developed countries are required to report their greenhouse gas emissions every year. They only account, however, for emissions physically occurring within their national boundaries. This means that Canada does not count more than 900 million tonnes of carbon dioxide that comes from others burning our fossil fuel exports each year. This amount far exceeds our own territorial emissions that are just over 700 million tonnes of CO2 equivalents. [Read more at The Tyee](#)

SPOTLIGHT ON POLICY

Great Lakes Flooding: The Warning Signs That Homes Must Be Moved



Credit: Tom Hawley/The Monroe News via AP

Every fall, I take my environmental studies class camping at Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore on Lake Michigan. Some years the beach extends more than three metres to the water. This year, in many spots, there was no beach at all. The story is the same throughout the Great Lakes. During my summer research trip to Lake Ontario and the St. Lawrence River, I lost track of the number of submerged docks and buildings; swimming near the shore of Lake Huron was a bad idea because of the high risk of electrocution from inundated boathouses that still had the juice flowing. [Read more at The Conversation](#)

SPOTLIGHT ON INDIGENOUS WELLNESS

Jennifer's Story: Discovering Ceremony & Tradition Leads To Healthy Path For Mother Of Six



Credit: Anishnawbe Health Foundation

Growing up in Toronto's Cabbagetown neighbourhood, Jennifer Downie struggled to fit in. At school, she was picked on because of her Indigenous roots. And although her father was Eagle Village First Nation of Quebec, her family did not participate in many Indigenous traditions at home. Jennifer suppressed her identity because she only heard the negative stories in the news and at school. She was ashamed to let others know her background. Years went by and Jennifer struggled with both alcohol and mental health challenges. Her anxiety was crippling and prevented Jennifer from moving forward. One day, in September 2013, Jennifer walked into Anishnawbe Health Toronto and asked to see a Counsellor. How life has changed over the last seven years, for this wife and mother of six children because of Anishnawbe Health.

[Read more at Anishnawbe Health Foundation](#)



Credit: Luke Sharrett/Bloomberg

Quote Of The Week

When asked what his biggest problem in the world is, President Obama responded by saying that two “directly connected” issues top his list: climate change and global economic inequality.

“The reason I say those two things are connected is that it is hard to figure out how we solve sustainability issues and deal with climate change if you also have huge gaps in wealth and opportunity and education. Because what happens — and we’re seeing this around the globe — is that as wealth gets more and more concentrated and more and more energy is used up by the few, the many become resentful and it undermines our sense of politics and a sense of community.”

For More see on Bloomberg: [Obama Talks Climate Change, Inequality At Green Conference](#)

Upcoming Events

- February 19th - 20th, 2020: [2nd World Congress on Primary Healthcare and Medicare Summit](#) (Paris, France)
 - March 31 - April 2, 2020: [World Public Health Nutrition Congress 2020](#) (Brisbane, Australia)
 - April 6th -7th, 2020: [17th World Congress on Paediatrics and Neonatology](#) (Tokyo, Japan)
 - April 18th -20th, 2020: [CUGH Conference 2020: Global Health in a Time of Worldwide Political Change](#) (Washington, D.C., USA)
 - April 24th - 26th, 2020: [PEGASUS IV Migration - Climate Change - Sustainable Development](#) (Waterloo, Ontario, Canada)
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FYI#1 SPOTLIGHT ON MEDIA

Between Ashes And Hope: Bolivia's Amazon Fires Seen Through The Lens Of Two Young Indigenous Photographers



Credit: Peter Nelson

In this unique photo reportage, indigenous youth Jimmy Piaguaje and Ribaldo Piaguaje, along with members of Amazon Frontlines' communications team, take us on a journey to investigate and experience the frontlines of the fires in the Bolivian Amazon and meet the affected communities, through their eyes, perspectives, and memories.

[See More at Amazon Frontlines](#)

FYI #2

GCL-SI Supplies 150 MW Solar Modules For The Largest Solar project In Europe



Credit: Solar Daily

GCLSI, a world-leading one-stop intelligent and integrated energy system provider, is scheduled to deliver 72 polycrystalline products with three varying grades of power to the Nunez de Balboa project in December. Nunez de Balboa is the first utility-scale solar station made by Iberdrola in Europe. The 1,000-hectare mega-facility with a capacity of 500MW is currently the largest ongoing project in continental Europe.

[Read More at Solar Daily](#)

FYI #3

Museveni Orders Disbandment Of

Rhino Fund Board In Uganda



Credit: New Vision

President Yoweri Museveni has directed the disbandment of the current board of the Rhino Fund Uganda (RFU) and the constitution of a new team of directors aimed at ending the impasse over the ownership of land and management of Rhinos at the Zziwa Rhino Sanctuary in Nakasongola. The President also ordered the reappointment of Capt. Joy Roy and that the RFU enters into joint management with him over the Rhinos and shares equally all revenues generated from the project.

[Read More at New Vision](#)

FYI #4

Laos Defends Latest Plans To Dam The Mekong



Credit: Zsombor Peter

Laos has dismissed fears that its next hydropower dam on the Mekong River would devastate downstream communities after neighboring countries and rights groups raised their doubts at a recent regional forum in the capital. The tiny landlocked country announced its intentions to go ahead with the 1,460 MW Luang Prabang dam next July, making it the fifth of nine dams it has planned for the waterway to move forward — and the largest yet — in its bid to become "Asia's battery." The first, the Xayaburi, began operating late last month.

[Read More at VOA News](#)

FYI #5: EARLY WINTER READING

Losing Earth: A Recent History By Nathaniel Rich

Losing Earth **A Recent History** **Nathaniel Rich**



Credit: Nathaniel Rich

The New York Times Magazine devoted an entire issue to Nathaniel Rich's

groundbreaking chronicle of the 1970s. Now expanded into book form, *Losing Earth* tells the human story of climate change in even richer, more intimate terms. It reveals, in previously unreported detail, the birth of climate denialism and the genesis of the fossil fuel industry's coordinated effort to thwart climate policy through misinformation propaganda and political influence. The book carries the story into the present day, wrestling with the long shadow of our past failures and asking crucial questions about how we make sense of our past, our future, and ourselves.

[Read More on Amazon](#)

FYI#6: SPOTLIGHT ON EDUCATION

Mindfulness Significantly Benefits Graduate Students, Says First Study Of Its Kind



Ph.D. students already have too much to do and a long list of challenges, from research setbacks to paying the bills on a meager salary. That's not to mention the things that can go wrong for a graduate student, such as having an abusive adviser. So the notion that a bit of mindfulness -- however popular it's become -- can make a difference in a graduate student's life may seem annoyingly quaint, or even offensive.

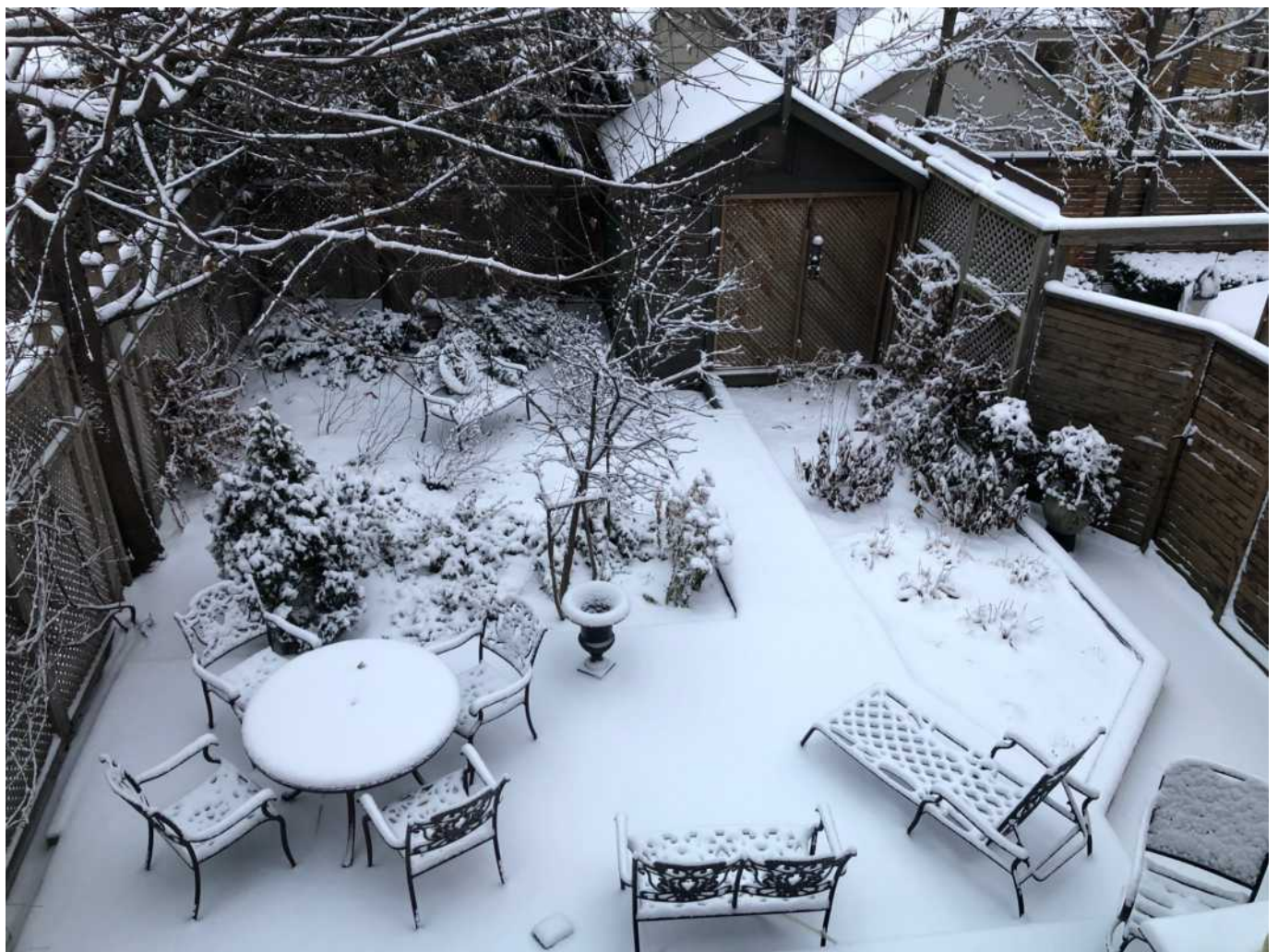
A paper in the *Journal of American College Health* on the effects of mindfulness practice on doctoral candidates' mental health acknowledges all that. But at the same time the research found in a randomized control trial -- the first such trial involving graduate students -- that compared to the control group, students who practiced mindfulness reported a statistically significant reduction in depression and increased self-efficacy, hope and resilience.

[Read more at Inside Higher Ed](#)

END SHOTS

WINTERY TORONTO ALREADY

DECEMBER 3, 2019





Credits: David Zakus



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