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

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- NGO Sustainability Team

“The greatest threat to our planet is the belief that someone else will save it.”

–Robert Swan

Kamala Harris

Vice President Kamala Harris has prioritized environmental issues for a long time in her career, from her time as California's attorney general to her current role as vice president. As attorney general, she actively prosecuted polluters, challenging federal approvals of offshore fracking along the California coast and investigating major oil companies for potential securities fraud related to climate change misinformation. Though her high profile case against Exxon Mobil did not lead to prosecution, she secured settlements from other major oil and gas companies for pollution violations.

As a U.S. senator, Harris was a vocal advocate for comprehensive climate policies. She co-sponsored the Green New Deal, aiming for a transition to 100% clean energy within a decade and supporting job guarantees and universal healthcare. Her climate plan during her 2020 presidential run included a \$10 trillion investment over ten years and a carbon tax. Harris also supported banning fracking and electrifying school buses to reduce pollution.



Vice President of the United States, Kamala Harris

Source: Getty Images

As vice president, Harris has continued her climate advocacy, casting the tie breaking vote for the 2022 Inflation Reduction Act, which allocated over \$370 billion for renewable energy projects. She has integrated climate change into foreign policy, advocating for global climate action and forming partnerships with countries vulnerable to climate disruption.

Source: Friedman, Lisa. "Here's Where Kamala Harris Stands on Climate." *The New York Times*, The New York Times, 22 July 2024, www.nytimes.com/2024/07/22/climate/kamala-harris-climate-environment.html?campaign_id=54&emc=edit_clim_20240722&instance_id=129436&nl=climate-forward®i_id=48701404&segment_id=172832&te=1&user_id=9c792f2589cbef9f52d46fdafa89cbf.

Anthropocene Pastoral

By Catherine Pierce¹

In the beginning, the ending was beautiful.
 Early spring everywhere, the trees furred
 pink and white, lawns the sharp green
 that meant *new*. The sky so blue it looked
 manufactured. Robins. We'd heard
 the cherry blossoms wouldn't blossom
 this year, but what was one epic blooming
 when even the desert was an explosion
 of verbena? When bobcats slinked through
 primroses. When coyotes slept deep in orange
 poppies. One New Year's Day we woke
 to daffodils, wisteria, onion grass wafting
 through the open windows. Near the end,
 we were eyeletted. We were cottoned.
 We were sundressed and barefoot. *At least*
it's starting gentle, we said. An absurd comfort,
 we knew, a placebo. But we were built like that.
 Built to say *at least*. Built to reach for the heat
 of skin on skin even when we were already hot,
 built to love the purpling desert in the twilight,
 built to marvel over the pink bursting dogwoods,
 to hold tight to every pleasure even as we
 rocked together toward the graying, even as
 we held each other, warmth to warmth,
 and said *sorry, I'm sorry, I'm so sorry* while petals
 sifted softly to the ground all around us.

¹Catherine Pierce. "Anthropocene Pastoral", 2018. <https://poets.org/poem/anthropocene-pastoral>.

“Florida: tree cactus becomes first local species killed off by sea-level rise”

By: Richard Luscombe, *The Guardian*



Photo: Getty Images

Florida scientists have determined that the Key Largo tree cactus is the first species local to the state that has been killed off due to climate change. Rising sea levels have killed off the six remaining stems within the species's population in the Florida Keys, the overwhelming majority of which at no more than 5 feet of elevation above sea level. As NASA projects that sea levels will continue to rise by as much as 7 feet by the end of the century, the extinction of the Key Largo tree cactus could be considered, in the words of botanist Jennifer Possley, “a bellwether for how other low-lying coastal plants will respond to climate change.”

[Full Article](#)

“The rise of the truly cruel summer”

By: *The Economist*



Photo: Getty Images

Summer in the northern hemisphere brings dangerously high heat levels, exemplified this year by fatalities in Saudi Arabia during the hajj and extreme temperatures in Delhi and Mexico. Global temperatures are rising, with this year set to continue the trend. Heatwaves, among the deadliest climate disasters, contribute significantly to global deaths and economic costs. Adaptation measures, such as early-warning systems and urban planning, are lagging. Effective responses include targeted resource deployment, better forecasting, and commonsense regulations for outdoor workers. Examples like Spain's and India's heat plans show the benefits of proactive measures but highlight the need for continuous evaluation and adaptation.

[Full Article](#)

“OSHA proposes rule to protect workers exposed to extreme heat”

By: Anna Phillips, *The Washington Post*



Photo: Getty Images

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) is proposing new more strict regulations for employers, preventing the possible endangerment of workers due to heat. These rules would prohibit extended periods of work deemed dangerous, allowing for frequent breaks and available water for employees. Certain jobs are not being protected, including most indoor jobs and public jobs, which are leading nonprofits, and advocates for a national heat standard to argue that the rules around necessary workplace safety regulations are not strict enough. Despite the haste with which many lawmakers are trying to pass this bill, it is unsure whether it will be passed before this presidential election.

[Full Article](#)

“New Jersey Is One of America’s Fastest-Warming States, Data Shows”

By: Hilary Howard, *The New York Times*

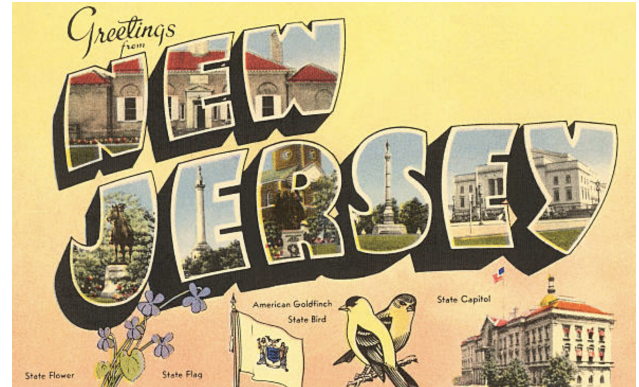


Photo: Getty Images

The rising temperatures in New Jersey are impacted by development and warming of the nearby ocean. Land use patterns and development density create the urban heat-island effect, or a phenomenon where there is more heat absorbed by the cities' because of decreased tree canopy cover. The areas can be several degrees warmer than surrounding areas. Nearby states are also experiencing increasing temperatures, including Delaware. A 2021 study links ocean warming to land temperature changes and potential impacts from glacial melting. Rising heat increases condensation and humidity, and there is less tolerance of the heat. Also, rainfall is predicted to increase by 4-11% by midcentury.

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“In the Berkshires, an effort to corral climate change, one stream at a time”

By: Erin Douglas, *Boston Globe*



Photo: Getty Images

As climate change has led to warmer average temperatures throughout New England, rainstorms have become far more intense, meaning drainage pipes have now become too small to effectively control the flooding of roads. In fact, across all of Massachusetts, most culverts have been deemed inefficient at working to combat climate change, either too small or blocking certain wildlife activity. The National Climate Assessment has measured a 60% rise in extreme precipitation days in the American Northeast over the past seven decades, the biggest increase of all U.S. regions, which makes the inadequacies of these culverts even more alarming. Consequently, local organizations – such as the Berkshire Environmental Action Team – are working to survey these culverts in order to recommend improvements, so that they can be better equipped to mitigate the impacts of climate change in the Bay State.

[Full Article](#)

“With Tiny Shampoo Bottles Soon to Be Banned, N.Y. Hotels Weigh Options”

By: Clare Fahy, *The New York Times*



Photo: Getty Images

A new bill in New York State will require large hotels to stop using small plastic shampoo and conditioner bottles beginning January 1st, 2025. This new law echoes a nationwide sentiment for the reduction of plastic waste in the hotel industry. A similar ban has already been implemented in California, and a bill to phase out plastic toiletries by 2027 has been passed in Washington State. The ban in New York currently only applies to hotels with 50 or more rooms (hotels with fewer rooms have until 2026 to start complying with the law). For initial violations, hotels will be fined \$250, and further infractions are subject to a \$500 fine. Money raised will go to the New York Environmental Protection Fund. As some hotel owners have concerns with how the ban will affect guest satisfaction, they believe some guests might be hesitant to trust larger pump-topped bottles that are harder to clean.

[Full Article](#)

“Why the Era of China’s Soaring Carbon Emissions Might Be Ending”

By: Max Bearak, *The New York Times*



Photo: Getty Images

China has been the world’s largest greenhouse gas emitter since 2006, responsible for almost one-third of global emissions. However, while their emissions may not significantly decrease any time soon, it seems they might stop rising, thanks to a rise in renewable energy sources like solar and wind, which are increasingly replacing coal. China installed more solar panels in 2023 than the U.S. has in its entire history, and almost two-thirds of the current global construction of large wind and solar plants are in China. This shift is partly driven by policy changes and financial incentives favoring renewables.

Despite these advancements, China continues to invest in coal as a power source. Last year, they accounted for two-thirds of newly operated coal plants across the globe, and today they account for about 60% of the world’s coal use. Some of these investments in coal are meant to provide a fallback option for dips in renewable energy production. It is expected that the Chinese government will reveal new emission reduction targets and strategies ahead of COP 29 in November.

[Full Article](#)

“First Heat Protection Standards for Workers Proposed by Biden Administration”

By: Marianne Lavelle, *Inside Climate News*

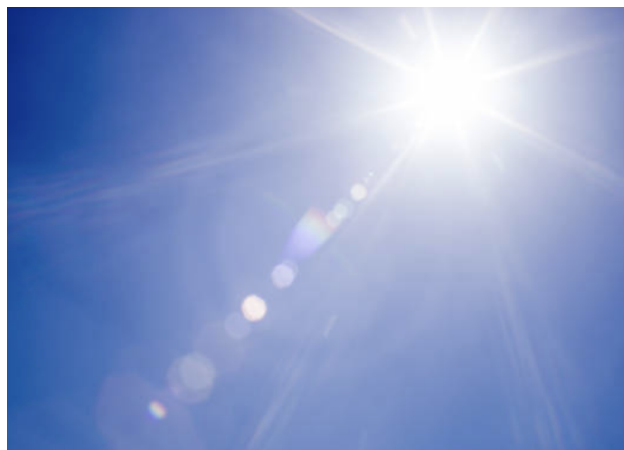


Photo: Getty Images

The Biden administration proposed the first national standards to protect workers from extreme heat, amid a record-hot summer. However, the proposal faces challenges due to recent Supreme Court decisions limiting federal regulatory power, and it may not be finalized before the 2024 election. If former President Trump wins, the plan could be halted. The proposal requires employers to implement prevention plans for heat-related injuries and illnesses, covering an estimated 36 million workers. Businesses have expressed concerns, arguing that heat hazards are difficult to standardize. The proposal is likely to face legal challenges and political opposition.

[Full Article](#)

Hurricane Beryl: The Meteorological, Environmental, and Human Impact

Amuktamalyada Panchangamvenkata (NGO Intern)

Hurricane Beryl roared into the Atlantic on July 11, 2024, carving a path of destruction that will be remembered for years to come. This formidable Category 3 hurricane unleashed its fury on coastal regions, leaving behind a trail of shattered homes, flooded streets, and disrupted lives. In this report, we delve into the meteorological and environmental conditions that gave birth to Hurricane Beryl, and examine the profound immediate and long-term effects it has had on the environment, economy, and humans.

The formation and intensification of Hurricane Beryl can be attributed to several key meteorological factors. Firstly, the warm sea surface temperatures in the Atlantic Ocean played a critical role. These warm waters provided the necessary heat and moisture to fuel the hurricane's development, allowing it to rapidly intensify from a tropical depression into a major hurricane. Another contributing factor was the presence of low wind shear in the region. Wind shear, which refers to the change in wind speed and direction with height, can disrupt the structure of a developing hurricane. However, in the case of Beryl, low wind shear allowed the storm to maintain its organization and continue strengthening. The atmospheric conditions were also favorable for hurricane formation. The presence of a moist and unstable atmosphere facilitated the development of deep convection, which is essential for the growth of hurricanes. Additionally, the influence of the Intertropical Convergence Zone (ITCZ), where trade winds from the northern and southern hemispheres meet, created a breeding ground for tropical disturbances that can evolve into hurricanes.

Most importantly, climate change is increasingly recognized as a factor that exacerbates the intensity and frequency of hurricanes. Warmer global temperatures lead to warmer ocean waters, which in turn provide more energy for hurricanes. Higher atmospheric moisture levels and rising sea levels also contribute to more intense storms and greater storm surge impacts. Hurricane Beryl is a prime example of how climate change can influence the behavior of tropical cyclones.

The immediate effects of Hurricane Beryl were truly devastating. The storm brought with it powerful winds, heavy rainfall, and a significant storm surge, all of which caused extensive damage to infrastructure. Buildings, roads, and bridges in the affected areas were severely damaged or destroyed, leading to widespread power outages and disruptions to daily life and economic activities. The heavy rainfall associated with Beryl led to widespread flooding, particularly in low-lying areas. Rivers and streams overflowed their banks, inundating homes, businesses, and agricultural land. The flooding not only caused immediate damage but also posed long-term challenges for recovery and rebuilding efforts. The humanitarian impact of Hurricane Beryl was profound. The storm resulted in numerous fatalities and injuries, overwhelming local healthcare facilities and emergency response systems. Thousands of

people were forced to evacuate their homes and seek refuge in emergency shelters. The displacement of populations added to the strain on resources and services in the affected areas. The economic losses from Hurricane Beryl are expected to be substantial. Businesses suffered from damage to property and interruptions to operations, while the cost of rebuilding and recovery placed a significant burden on local and national economies. The agricultural sector also faced severe losses due to crop damage and soil erosion caused by flooding.

The environmental impact of Hurricane Beryl was also significant with it causing severe coastal erosion as powerful waves and storm surges washed away beaches and reshaped coastlines. Floodwaters mixed with industrial pollutants and sewage, contaminating water sources and posing health risks to the affected populations. Hurricane Beryl also disrupted local ecosystems, destroying habitats and threatening wildlife. The loss of vegetation and the introduction of pollutants into natural habitats had long-term consequences for biodiversity and ecosystem health.

On a personal note, the lack of power and internet connectivity due to Hurricane Beryl added significant challenges. With no access to basic utilities, many of us had to drive to local parking lots to find WiFi to communicate, work, and stay informed. This not only highlighted the fragility of our infrastructure but also the resilience required to adapt to such adverse conditions.

Hurricane Beryl underscores the urgent need for improved climate resilience and adaptation strategies. Communities in hurricane-prone regions must invest in robust infrastructure designed to withstand extreme weather events. Effective early warning systems and comprehensive disaster preparedness plans are essential to minimize the impact of hurricanes and ensure swift recovery. Addressing the root causes of increased hurricane activity requires concerted policy and action at both local and global levels. Governments and organizations must prioritize climate policies aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions and mitigating climate change. Sustainable development practices that enhance community resilience is vital in the face of escalating hurricane threats.

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Supreme Court Overturns Chevron Deference

Sydney Black (NGO Intern)

Overturing of the Chevron Deference Doctrine

On June 28, 2024, the United States Supreme Court delivered a landmark ruling in *Loper Bright Enterprises v. Raimondo and Relentless, Inc. v. Dept. of Commerce*, effectively overturning the Chevron deference doctrine established in *Chevron U.S.A. Inc. v. Natural Resources Defense Council, Inc.* (1984). This doctrine mandated that courts defer to federal agencies' reasonable interpretations of ambiguous statutory provisions. Chief Justice John Roberts, writing for the majority in a 6-3 decision, described Chevron deference as "fundamentally misguided" and incompatible with the Administrative Procedure Act (APA), which directs courts to independently interpret laws.

Background and Overview

Chevron deference arose from a challenge to an Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) interpretation of the Clean Air Act during the Reagan administration. Initially perceived as a tool for regulatory flexibility, Chevron became a pivotal precedent in administrative law, cited over 18,000 times in federal court decisions. Over the years, it evolved into a target for critics of the administrative state, arguing that courts should play a more active role in interpreting laws rather than deferring to agencies.

Legal Basis and Rationale for Overturning Chevron

In *Loper Bright and Relentless*, the Supreme Court addressed challenges to a National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) rule under the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act. The rule required fishermen to bear costs for onboard observers, which the plaintiffs argued exceeded statutory authority. Lower courts, applying Chevron deference, upheld the rule, prompting the Supreme Court's review.

Chief Justice Roberts, in his opinion, emphasized that Chevron deference contradicts the APA, which mandates that courts decide legal questions independently. He rejected the notion that agencies possess greater expertise in statutory interpretation, asserting that courts are equally capable, aided by briefing and arguments from all parties involved. The decision highlighted the continuation of Skidmore deference, where agency interpretations may carry persuasive weight but are not binding.

Implications for Environmental, Energy, and Natural Resource Regulation

The decision's ramifications are profound across regulatory sectors, including environmental protection and energy policy. Historically, agencies like the EPA relied on Chevron deference to implement and

defend regulations, particularly in complex areas such as climate change mitigation and air quality standards. The ruling signals a shift towards stricter judicial scrutiny of agency actions, potentially leading to greater volatility in regulatory outcomes as courts assert more direct oversight.

The rise of the Major Questions Doctrine, which presumes Congress does not delegate major policy decisions to agencies without clear language, will continue to limit agency authority. This doctrine has already impacted significant EPA regulations, such as the regulation of carbon dioxide emissions under the Clean Air Act.

Moreover, *Loper Bright* does not eliminate judicial deference to agency rulemaking based on factual determinations and technical judgments where there is a clear congressional delegation. Courts may still give weight to agency interpretations, especially those consistent with longstanding practices or grounded in the agency's expertise.

Sector-Specific Impacts and Industry Responses

The solar industry, for instance, faces immediate uncertainty following the decision. The Supreme Court's reconsideration of previous rulings that relied on Chevron deference could disrupt ongoing projects, such as the Broadview solar array in Montana. Previously greenlit under federal regulations interpreted with Chevron deference, these projects now face legal reassessment, potentially affecting their viability and economic feasibility.

Conclusion

In conclusion, while the *Loper Bright* decision marks a significant departure from decades of administrative law precedent, its full impact on the administrative state and regulatory stability remains to be seen. As federal agencies and stakeholders navigate this new legal landscape, ongoing judicial reviews and legislative responses may shape the future contours of administrative law and regulatory policy in the United States.

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