



NGO SUSTAINABILITY

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

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“We are called to assist the Earth to heal her wounds and in the process heal our own – indeed, to embrace the whole creation in all its diversity, beauty and wonder..”

– Wangari Maathai

Benjamin Jealous

As the first person of color to lead the Sierra Club, Benjamin Jealous became executive director in 2023 and has since advocated for climate resilience, racial justice, and clean energy. He supported campaigns like “Beyond Coal,” which pushes for clean energy and inclusive coalitions to address climate disasters.

At 35, he became the youngest person to serve as president and CEO of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), a role he held from 2008 to 2013. During his time with the organization, he expanded existing programs, established the NAACP Financial Freedom Center to provide banking resources and financial education, and introduced national programs on voting rights, health, criminal justice, and environmental justice.

In 2012, the NAACP published a report, “Coal Blooded: Putting Profits Before People”, which analyzed 378 coal fired power plants and their disproportionate effect on minority and low income communities. Prior to joining

NAACP, Jealous was a reporter for the Jackson Advocate, a black-owned community newspaper, where he exposed "cancer clusters" in Mississippi's rural communities with industrial pollution.



Benjamin Jealous, former NAACP president and CEO, at the August 28, 2021, March On For Voting Rights in Atlanta, Georgia.

Source: Getty Images

Sources:

<https://blackhistory.news.columbia.edu/people/benjamin-t-jealous>

Warned¹
By Sylvia Stults

*The sands of time have rendered fear
Blue skies on high no longer clear
Stars were bright whence they came
Now dimmed, obscured, pollution's haze*

*Crystal clear our waters gleamed
Fish abundant, rivers streamed
Ocean floors sandy white
Now littered, brown, pollution's plight*

*Trees towered high above
Trunks baring professed love
Birds chirping from sites unseen
Gone, paper joined pollution's team*

*One can't blame pollution alone
As they say, you reap what you've sown
So let us plant a better seed
Tear out old roots, cultivate, weed*

*Protect what has been given for free
Our waters, skies, wildlife and trees
For once they're gone, don't you say
Consider yourself warned of that fatal day*

¹ Sylvia Stults. "Warned." Family Friend Poems, October 21, 2015.
<https://www.familyfriendpoems.com/poem/warned>

“The World Bank Pivoted to Climate. That Now May Be a Problem.”

By: Max Bearak and Somini Sengupta, *NY Times*



Photo: Getty Images

The World Bank's climate funding initiatives are facing potential challenges under U.S. President Donald Trump's administration. Previously, the World Bank pivoted to prioritize climate-related projects to combat climate change. However, this shift may face obstacles due to the Trump administration's skepticism towards climate science and its reluctance to support international climate agreements. As a major donor to the World Bank, the U.S. withdrawal or reduced funding could undermine the bank's ability to finance climate projects. Additionally, this addresses the tension between the World Bank's climate goals and the Trump administration's priorities, which favors fossil fuel development and domestic economic interests over global environmental initiatives. This divergence raises concerns for developing countries relying on the World Bank for support in transitioning to cleaner energy and adapting to climate impacts.

[Full Article](#)

“E.P.A. Investigations of Severe Pollution Look Increasingly at Risk”

By: Hiroko Tabuchi, *NY Times*



Photo: Getty Images

Environmental policy has faced some turmoil as a refinery in New Mexico has caused some of the worst air pollution in the area. At the same time, the EPA has announced plans to shift its mission from a broad environmental approach to one focused on lowering the cost of sustainable consumer goods. A memo from the agency also sidelined environmental justice considerations for minority and low-income communities. The broader goal appears to be deregulating the EPA and promoting American energy through low-cost options. Other targets for rollback include wetland protections and limits on tailpipe and smokestack emissions. Furthermore, the EPA's scientific research arm is set to be eliminated, with a push for increased reliance on privately funded research.

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“Millions in Texas Told to Avoid Drive Thru-Lanes as Houston Warning Issued.”

By: Joe Edwards, *Newsweek*



Photo: Getty Images

Tuesday, TCEQ officials issued air quality alerts for Houston to avoid vehicle emissions. The EPA stated that exposure to elevated ozone can cause diseases and lung damage, which follows the National Weather Service’s report that atmospheric conditions may produce ozone air pollution. Therefore, residents are advised to limit emissions-generating activities due to pollution levels and public health risks. Texans should continue to monitor current and forecasted air quality conditions with the TCEQ’s air monitoring network, and public health agencies will continue steps to reduce emissions and protect populations from pollution concerns.

[Full Article](#)

"How an Old Laptop Is Transformed Into 9-Karat Gold Earrings"

By: Eshe Nelson, *NY Times*



Photo: Getty Images

The UK Royal Mint has introduced a sustainable method to recover gold from discarded electronics like laptops and phones and repurposed it into high-end jewelry. This addresses the increasing problem of electronic waste while reducing reliance on environmentally destructive gold mining. The process targets printed circuit boards (PCBs), which contain small amounts of precious metals. Instead of conventional smelting, the Mint uses a patented chemical solution from Canadian firm Excir, which extracts over 99% of the gold quickly and with fewer toxic chemicals. The recovered gold is purified into 9-karat gold, and crafted into jewelry sold under the Royal Mint’s 886 brand. With global e-waste surpassing 50 million tons annually and recycling rates less than 20%, this process provides a viable solution for recovering valuable materials while reducing pollution.

[Full Article](#)

“Greenland Races Into New Era Without Losing Grip on Inuit Traditions”

By Jeffrey Gettleman, *The New York Times*



Photo: Getty Images

In a glacial fjord, ice fishing offers a quiet escape from the outside world but Greenland stands at a crossroad between preserving Inuit tradition with sweeping changes. With Immigration rising, mineral resources are increasingly sought after, and tourism among the glaciers is growing. Greenlanders are pushing for independence from Denmark, but this push unfolds against the backdrop of climate change, including collapsing roads caused by melting permafrost and a shortage of local professionals. The story focuses on families like the Sandgreens in Ilulissat, who continue to hunt, fish, and respect traditional knowledge while adopting modern tools like snowmobiles and managing tourism businesses. Through media and activism, individuals such as Qupanak Olsen, a recently elected Indigenous rights advocate, are strengthening Greenlandic identity. However, as evidenced by claims of discrimination and medical abuse, the impacts of Danish colonization persist.

[Full Article](#)

“It Fought to Save the Whales. Can Greenpeace Save Itself?”

By: Karen Zraick, *The New York Times*



Photo: Getty Images

Greenpeace is facing a \$300 million lawsuit from pipeline Energy Transfer, claiming that it incited unlawful activity during the 2016 Dakota Access Pipeline protests. The lawsuits for Greenpeace protests seek to overturn protections that were highlighted in the illegal attacks on, for example, the Standing Rock Reservation demonstrations. The First Amendment is being tested, and legal conduct is the counterargument as opposed to free speech. The missteps of widening the base of the environmental movement are losing traction in a less tangible reality of climate change. The founding of Greenpeace was rooted in anti-militarism and having a reach of international ecology. The ships and whale saving is a concerted effort, but they have to also contend with the day-to-day operations.

[Full Article](#)

“Plastic Pollution Leaves Seabirds with Brain Damage Similar to Alzheimer’s, study shows”

By Patrick Greenfield, *The Guardian*



Photo: Getty Images

Ingesting plastic waste is causing severe and often invisible damage to seabird chicks, including neurodegeneration like Alzheimer’s disease. Researchers from the University of Tasmania focused on young sable shearwaters from Australia’s Lord Howe Island revealing that many were unknowingly fed plastic debris by their parents. The plastic in their stomachs leads to stomach lining decay, cell rupture, and damage to major organs. Blood tests showed protein patterns like those found in human patients with Alzheimer’s or Parkinson’s disease. Shearwater is particularly vulnerable as some chicks have been found with over 400 plastic fragments, making up 5–10% of their body weight. While the chicks can regurgitate some plastic before their migration, many chicks still face internal damage, risking their survival.

[Full Article](#)

“Natural Insect Predators May Serve as Allies in Spotted Lanternfly Battle”

By: Amy Duke, *Science Daily*



Photo: Getty Images

A study by Penn State reveals that the spotted lanternfly could be kept in check with native insect predators in the US, decreasing the on chemical reliance methods. There were ten predators put through controlled environments by researchers including spined soldier bugs and praying mantises which proved highly effective in consuming lantern flies regardless of diet or life stage. The invasive lanternfly species has spread across 18 states, causing damage to vineyards, nursery industries, as well as orchards. The approach to leverage natural enemies is a way to control the populations with a low-impact approach. Biological control would be an alternative to insecticides, and habitual predators such as parasitic wasps would be a good measure to combat this.

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UNEP Annual Report 2024: Overview

Wonsuk Cho (NGO Intern)

Tackling the Climate Crisis:

Climate action dominated global agendas, with UNEP spearheading efforts to align national policies with the Paris Agreement. The Emissions Gap Report 2024 delivered a stark warning: current pledges put the world on track for a catastrophic 2.6°C–3.1°C temperature rise by 2100. To limit warming to 1.5°C, emissions must drop 42% by 2030, necessitating stronger Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs). UNEP supported 64 countries in enhancing transparency reporting and 30+ nations in implementing low-carbon strategies. Colombia scaled climate investments, Morocco developed decarbonization roadmaps, and Vietnam advanced mangrove restoration to bolster coastal resilience.

Electric mobility emerged as a priority, with UNEP aiding 60+ low- and middle-income countries. India expanded EV charging infrastructure, Kenya enacted e-motorcycle legislation, and Antigua and Barbuda introduced electric buses. Globally, EV sales surged to 18% of new cars in 2023, a tenfold increase since 2018. Meanwhile, the Climate and Clean Air Coalition assisted 30+ nations in curbing methane emissions—critical to achieving the Global Methane Pledge’s 30% reduction target by 2030.

Adaptation efforts reached 50 countries, benefiting 3.5 million people. Jordan’s \$60 million water security project aims to support 750,000 residents, while small island states like Niue and Palau strengthened early-warning systems for extreme weather. The Kigali Amendment gained momentum, with eight new ratifications advancing the phase-down of hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs), potentially averting 0.5°C of warming.

Protecting Nature and Biodiversity:

The Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) guided UNEP’s work, with 70 countries updating national biodiversity strategies. China launched the \$230 million Kunming Biodiversity Fund, supporting 15 developing nations. However, the Protected Planet Report 2024 revealed only 18% of land and 8% of marine areas are protected—far short of the 30x30 target. Meeting this goal requires

designating land equivalent to Brazil and Australia combined and ocean areas larger than the Indian Ocean by 2030.

Ecosystem restoration took center stage. The Great Green Wall initiative secured \$80 million to restore 6.9 million hectares across Africa's Sahel, benefiting 5 million people. Seven World Restoration Flagships, including Pakistan's Indus River project and Peru's Amazon efforts, aim to restore 40 million hectares and create 500,000 jobs. Marine conservation spanned 53 countries, with Thailand establishing a 900-hectare marine sanctuary to protect crab populations vital to local economies.

Indigenous leadership was pivotal. Brazil's Minister of Indigenous Peoples, Sonia Guajajara, was named a Champion of the Earth for advancing territorial rights. UNEP's Natural Capital Atlas of Africa provided data to align development with ecological limits, supporting Agenda 2063. Yet, desertification remains a critical threat, prompting UNEP's support for Iraq's land degradation strategy and the Riyadh Action Agenda's \$12 billion pledge for drought resilience.

Pollution and Circularity:

Plastic pollution negotiations in Busan saw 170 nations agree on a Chair's Text, paving the way for a 2025 treaty. UNEP aided 30+ countries in drafting regulations, including India's single-use plastic bans and Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) schemes adopted by 45,000 companies. The Stockholm Convention added two "forever chemicals" to its list of regulated pollutants, while the Basel Convention tightened e-waste export rules to curb dumping in developing nations.

Air quality initiatives expanded, with sensors deployed in Nairobi, Kenya, and the Cameroons to monitor toxins like PM10 and sulfur dioxide. UNEP's Global Framework on Chemicals promoted safer practices in agriculture and textiles, while Latin America's first eco-labeling program empowered 450 million consumers to choose sustainable products. Mauritius diverted 25,000 tonnes of waste through circular economy roadmaps, creating 20,000 jobs.

Efforts to counter antimicrobial resistance (AMR) intensified, with UNEP leading Quadripartite initiatives to reduce pharmaceutical and agricultural pollution. A youth-led toolkit to combat AMR highlighted intergenerational engagement.

Finance, Innovation, and Equity:

Climate finance saw breakthroughs: the Net-Zero Banking Alliance (140+ members) and Net-Zero Asset Owner Alliance (10trillioninassets) *channeled* 555 billion into green solutions in 2023. UN-REDD unlocked \$1 billion for forest conservation, preventing 138 million tonnes of CO2 emissions. The Environment Fund received contributions from 94 nations, supplemented by Planetary Funds targeting climate, nature, and pollution.

Gender equality was prioritized, with 100,000+ women gaining clean energy access in Asia and 30% of green startups in the region led by female entrepreneurs. UNEP's Digital Accelerator Lab deployed AI and satellites to detect 1,066 methane leaks, prompting repairs in Algeria and Nigeria. The Freshwater Ecosystems Explorer provided real-time data on water resources, while AI governance guidelines aimed to minimize the technology's environmental footprint.

Disaster Response and Resilience:

Conflict zones faced dire environmental fallout. In Gaza, UNEP assessed 50 million tonnes of war debris and launched recycling initiatives to clear hazardous waste. Iraq repurposed 60,000 tonnes of rubble into recycled roads, enabling displaced communities to return. The Joint Environment Unit responded to disasters in Ethiopia, Guinea, and Saint Vincent, marking 30 years of crisis coordination.

A Call for Global Solidarity:

While 2024 saw strides in climate transparency, biodiversity frameworks, and pollution treaties, gaps in finance, binding agreements, and political will persist. Executive Director Inger Andersen stressed, “*Collaboration across borders is our only option to protect Planet Earth.*” As temperatures rise and ecosystems degrade, the report urges nations to submit ambitious NDCs, finalize the plastic treaty, and prioritize inclusive, science-driven solutions. UNEP's role as a catalyst for multilateral action remains vital—but the window to secure a livable future is narrowing.

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Brazil's Amazon Deforestation for COP30 Infrastructure:

Arian Isaczai (NGO Intern)

Introduction:

Brazil has removed eight miles of Amazon rainforest to build a four-lane highway in preparation for hosting the COP30 UN climate summit in Belem. The Avenida Liberdade highway, which initially covered a large area of protected rainforest, will now facilitate the traffic expected from the summit, involving 50,000 delegates traveling to Belem in November 2025. Belem is located on the Pará River between the confluence of the Atlantic Ocean and the Amazon River and provides a major gateway to the Amazon Rainforest with its port facilities. Despite improving congestion and access to Belém, the project has provoked a great deal of criticism as it runs contrary to the climate action goals that COP30 intends to promote.

Key Concerns:

Clearing the 13 km long corridor creates a “deadly obstacle for wildlife” (Vaughan, 2025) and threatens the livelihood of locals. Given that Belem is considered the gateway to the Amazon River and rainforest, those living near the highway and depend on the food grown from the trees as a source of income have particularly felt the impact of the built road.

Aside from the economic harm locals face, the four-lane route fragmenting the rainforest will threaten biodiversity hotspots. This includes Utinga State Park and the Belem Environmental Protection Area, comprising over 800 plant and fungal species. Researchers claim the division will cause the mobility and breeding of land animals to be hindered as they will “no longer be able to cross to the other side too, reducing the areas where they can live and breed” (Nesi, 2025).

This project will put animals at risk of being hit by vehicles on the highways that pass through the rainforest. The construction of highways that cut through the rainforest may result in a fishbone pattern of destruction that spreads out from the road. For instance, there is projected to be an increase in illegal

mining and logging as criminals would have greater access to remote areas, without proper governance in the region.

Government Response and Justification:

The Brazilian government, including Adler Silveira, the state government's infrastructure secretary, presented the highway as sustainable and necessary, claiming it as an “important mobility intervention”. Officials promise the highway would feature solar-powered lighting, bike lanes, and 24 wildlife crossings for animals to safely travel through the rainforest.

Silveira mentioned that this highway is among one of the 30 projects underway to “prepare” and “modernize” the city (Nesi, 2025). He emphasized that COP30 will benefit Belém’s citizens beyond 2025, stating “We can have a legacy for the population and, more importantly, serve people for COP30 in the best possible way”. It was also described by President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva as a “COP in the Amazon, not a COP about the Amazon” (Nesi, 2025), indicating having Belém host the summit will garner attention and investment globally to the Amazon instead of merely framing it as an exhibit.

Aside from official promises, local communities continue to urge Brazilian authorities to honor their environmental commitments by strengthening conservation measures for the project and proposing less harmful infrastructure choices.

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