



OCTOBER 2023

KENT ENVIRONMENTAL COUNCIL NEWSLETTER

Making a difference in Kent, Portage County and beyond since 1970



Back on the Road with Iris: From Canada to Washington to Oregon to Idaho to Utah to Wyoming to Colorado to Kansas . . . to Home Sweet Home!

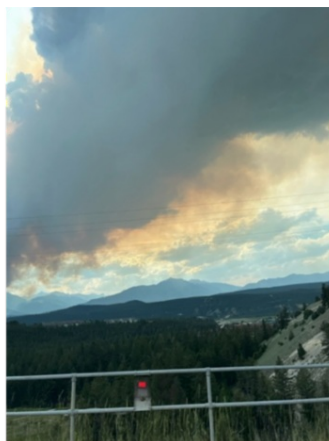
KEC member Iris Meltzer and her companion and RV returned home safe and sound August 26 with lots of pictures to document their travels. "This coast-to-coast trip," said Meltzer, "gave us the opportunity to experience the natural environment of a wide swathe of North America. We also experienced some of the impacts of climate change, including forest fires on the mountains in British Columbia and temperatures over 100 degrees in Iowa and Kansas. Cows were standing in farm ponds up to their bellies to try to keep cool. On the other hand, we observed responses to climate change—EV chargers in large parking lots and service plazas; miles of wind turbines and acres of solar farms; and lots of hybrid and fully electric cars on the 11,500 miles we drove."

July 23: Kootenay Rockies (British Columbia, Canada)



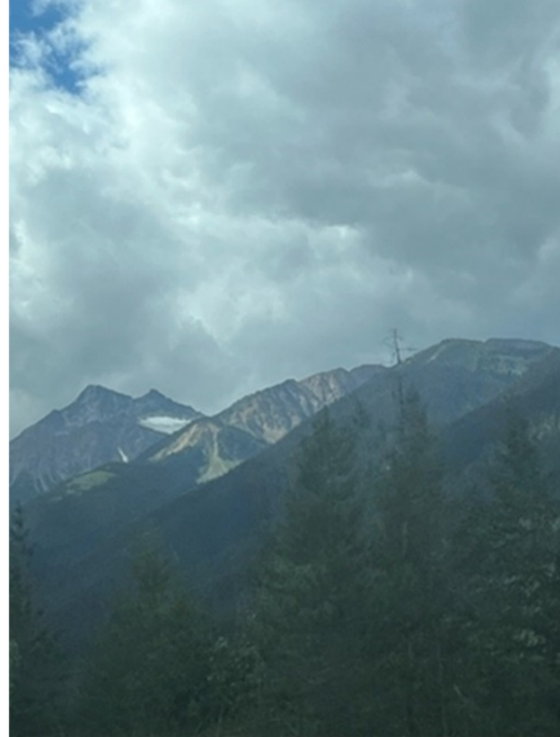
Top row, left: Kootenay Rockies map guide. *Top row, right:* Fire-damaged mountain. You can see where a past fire decimated the forest, but there is much regrowth. There is a lot of fireweed growing, so the forest floor looks purple. *Bottom row, left:* More fire on the mountain, yet the sky is a glorious blue and we have good air quality. Four hours later, and the fire has worsened. *Bottom row, middle:* A closer look at fireweed, which is the first plant to grow after a forest fire. *Bottom row, right:* Numa Falls In Kootenay National Park.

July 24: Kootenay National Park and on to the Bigfoot Factory



Left to right: First day, the sky has been hazy. Out of control fires raging on the mountains; not threatening to us, and we leave tomorrow. Passing through the village of Bugaboo, British Columbia, on our way west to the Bigfoot factory to see how our trailer was made.

July 25: Canada's Glacier National Park



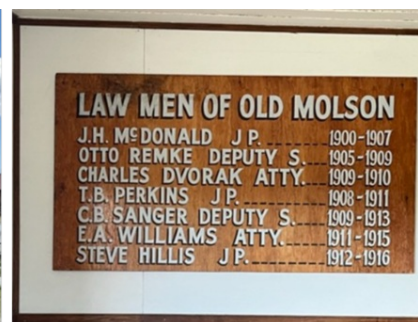
Left: Sun through last night's smoke. *Right:* A glacier in Canada's Glacier National Park.

July 27 and 28: Back in the United States



Left: View of Osoyoos Lake from our campground in Oroville, Washington, on July 27. *Right:* Wildlife in north central Washington on July 28.

July 29: North Central Washington



Left, middle and right: We visited the original site of Molson, Washington, which has a current

July 29: Northeast Washington



Top row, left: The hills and roadsides are covered in sagebrush here in northeastern Washington. *Top row, middle:* We are camping tonight next to the Columbia River, where we could see the moon over the river. *Top row, right:* Crossing the Columbia River on Interstate 90. *Middle row, left:* Waste Management has been the trash hauler across the United States and Canada. *Middle row, middle:* Daroga State Park in Orondo, Washington. *Middle row, right:* One of the solar-powered electric vehicle chargers in Daroga State Park. *Bottom row, left:* A close-up of one of the electric vehicle chargers in Daroga State Park. *Bottom row, right:* This warning has been in effect since we left Mt. Kidd in Alberta, Canada.

July 30: More of Washington



Left: This area of Washington has acres and acres of fruit trees. Often, they are covered with netting to protect them from birds. *Right:* Acres of wind turbines on a ridge in south central Washington.

August 2: Northwestern Washington



Top row, right: Farewell to the arid east of the Cascades landscape. *Top row, middle:* Mt. Rainier as opposed to a cloud on the horizon. *Top row, right:* Mt. Adams. *Bottom row, left:* Acres of wind turbines on the ridge. *Bottom row, middle:* The power of a hydroelectric dam. *Bottom row, right:* West of the Cascades, the landscape is very different.

August 3: Portland Maine to Portland Oregon! Four more weeks to go!



Clockwise from top left: Mt. Hood in the clouds. A visit to the Portland Japanese Gardens with my college roommate and her husband. This is the aluminum bottle in which water is sold in the gardens. A view of Portland and the distant mountains from the Japanese Gardens. Parking lot in Happy Valley, Oregon. A view of Portland and the distant mountains from the Japanese Gardens.

August 5: Western Oregon



Left and right: Rather more lush here in western Oregon.

August 7: From the Atlantic to the Pacific



Left, middle and right: Scenes from the Pacific Coast.

August 8 and 9: Nehalem Bay State Park (Near Tillamook, Oregon)



Left: Nesting warning at Nehalem Bay. *Right:* As encouraging as "beware of rattlesnakes" sign.

August 10: More Points of Interest in Oregon



Top row, left: Mt. Hood from the other side. *Top row, middle:* View from one side of the Columbia River. *Top row, right:* A solar array (grayish patch to the left) near Portland, Oregon. *Bottom row, left:* A roof full of solar panels in Portland, Oregon. *Bottom row, middle left:* Basalt rock formation created by volcanic eruptions eons ago. *Bottom row, middle right:* More basalt formations along the Hood River. *Bottom row, right:* Coming down from the summit of the Blue Mountains.

August 11: More Points of Interest in Oregon and on to Idaho and Utah



Left: Wind turbines atop a mountain in far eastern Oregon. *Middle:* Mountains come into view in eastern Oregon. *Right:* Another view of the mountains in eastern Oregon.

August 12: Idaho



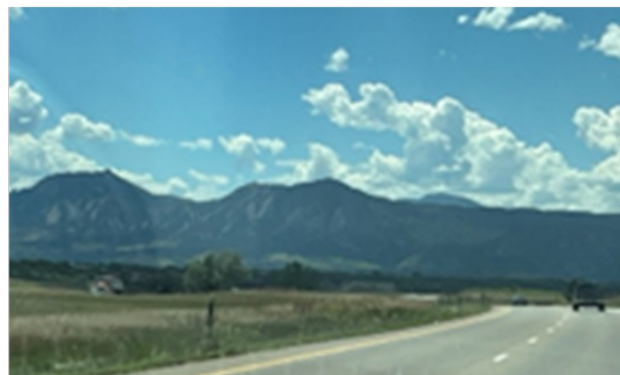
Top row, left: These small, leggy sunflowers grow along the side of the road here in Idaho. *Top row, right:* The Sawtooth Mountains on our way out of Idaho and on to Utah. *Bottom row, left:* Now in Utah looking at the Wasatch Mountains. *Bottom row, right:* A closer view of the Wasatch Mountains in Utah.

August 12: Utah, Wyoming and Colorado



Top row, left: Wyoming wind turbines in the rain, the first rain since the East Coast. *Top row, right:* Wind turbines near Laramie, Wyoming. *Bottom row, left:* View from the campground in Laramie, showing the Snowy Mountain. *Bottom row, right:* Out of Wyoming and into Colorado and the Rockies.

August 12: Colorado



Top row, left: In a parking lot for a shopping plaza in Loveland, Colorado. *Top row, right:* We hope to do some walking (as opposed to hiking) later. *Bottom row, left:* More views of the Rockies. *Bottom row,*

August 12: Colorado



Top row, left: Another view of the Rockies. *Top row, right:* The Rocky Mountains as seen from a Costco parking lot. *Bottom row, left:* A bee on sunflower in Longmont, Colorado. *Bottom row, right:* The Rockies as seen from the Stanley Hotel in Estes Park, Colorado. The hotel was the inspiration for "The Shining" and the location where it was written.

August 12: Colorado, Kansas and Missouri



Top row, left: Another view of the Rockies as seen from the Stanley Hotel in Estes Park, Colorado. *Top row, middle left:* Imagine getting out of your car at the grocery store and seeing this (Boulder, Colorado). *Top row, middle right:* Not a great picture from the back seat of a car, but this is an impressive solar array. *Top row, right:* Wind turbines in Eastern Colorado. *Bottom row, left:* Electric vehicle chargers in the Walmart parking lot in Colby, Kansas. *Bottom row, middle:* Fields of corn and fields of wind turbines. *Bottom row, right:* A bank in a small, rural Missouri town. The Walmart next to it had EV charging stations.

August 24: Illinois



Left, top: Windmills along Interstate 80 in Iowa. *Left, bottom:* Crossing the Mississippi River into Illinois. *Right:* Close-up of a wind turbine in Illinois.

August 25: Indiana



Top: Welcome to Indiana and bumper-to-bumper stalled traffic. *Bottom:* This picture was taken at the second service plaza we passed on the highway. The first service plaza had seven to 10 electric vehicle charging stations. It was interesting to see that the smaller EV chargers are for Teslas.

August 26: Indiana

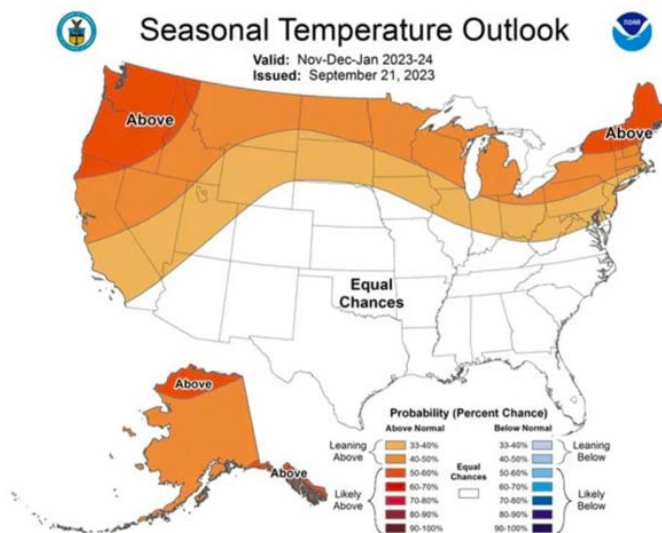


Left: The last 260 miles of this epic journey. *Middle, left:* A long stretch of solar panels in Indiana. *Middle, right:* At this rest area on the Ohio Turnpike, 10 miles from home, there are four electric vehicle chargers and eight Tesla chargers. *Right:* We are now home! We covered 20 states, nine provinces and 11,458 miles!

Will We Have a White Christmas?

Will we have a snowy white Christmas? According to the projection released by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) in late September, the likelihood of a snowy December is less than usual. In short, we may need our umbrellas more than our snowblowers this winter.

To be more exact, NOAA says there is about a 50% chance that those of us living in Northeast Ohio will encounter higher-than-normal temperatures from November through January, while experiencing somewhat below-normal amounts of precipitation. Put it together, and the likelihood of checking out a new pair of skis on the Brandywine slopes is slim.



But why? The reason lies in the Pacific Ocean, where an El Niño is strengthening. An El Niño occurs when the Trade Winds blow the warm water from the western Pacific eastward toward South America. In turn, this causes changes in the upper atmosphere that bring warmer than normal temperatures in the northeastern states along with lower-than-normal precipitation. But wait—there's more . . . more heat in the western Pacific, which can cause a "Super El Niño" to develop. The average temperature of the western Pacific is 1.5 degrees Celsius (nearly 3 degrees Fahrenheit) warmer than average at this time of year. Super El Niños often lead to extreme weather conditions worldwide, including wildfires and floods.

The last Super El Niño was in 2015-2016. What was that winter like in our area? I have kept daily weather records for the past 40 years; here is what I recorded between November 15, 2015, and March 15, 2016:

**Monthly Weather Data Recorded between
November 15, 2015, and March 15, 2016**

Month	Temp (min)	Temp (max)	Rainfall (inches)	Snowfall (inches)
Nov	26	68	0.90	0.10
Dec	19	62	4.02	0.30
Jan	7	55	0.56	7.52
Feb	0	65	2.70	22.00
March	16	71	2.54	3.90
Total			10.72	33.82

In short, it was a very warm winter marked by significant amounts of rain. Especially when you consider that a fresh snowfall is typically about 10% percent water, the rain equivalent of the snowfall was only about 3.4 inches. And for what it may be worth, on the day before Christmas 2015, the temperature was 61 degrees Fahrenheit and rainfall totaled 1.38 inches.

OK, it's anecdotal and not truly scientific, but these data illustrate the possibility that we could be in for a significantly warmer-than-normal winter with significantly more rain than snow. So, if you want to see a White Christmas, check out the movie by that name

—or better yet, check out the movie “Holiday Inn,” a Fred Astair flick (sans Ginger), which introduced the Irvine Berlin song “White Christmas.”

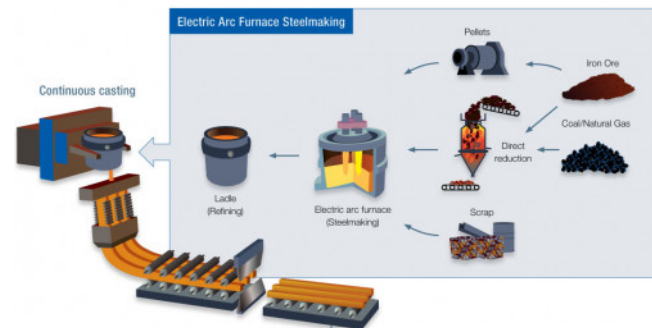
—Bob Heath

Good News Is Always Welcome

Good news is always welcome—especially when it comes to the environment. Here are some of the latest developments.

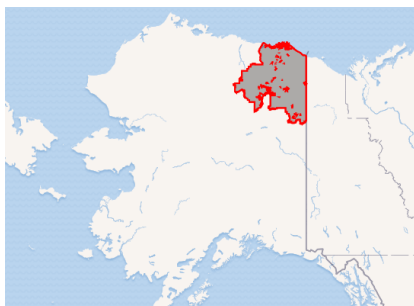
Steel Production Is Getting Cleaner

The Steel is the backbone of the modern economy, essential for building skyscrapers, wind turbines, planes, trains and automobiles. It’s also incredibly dirty, responsible for about 7% of global carbon emissions. Most steel plants emit carbon twice: They heat up coal to create coke and then burn the coke in massive blast furnaces. Over the past 12 months, however, the outlook for



the industry has changed significantly. Electric arc furnaces, which rely on a newer technology that uses scrap metal and electric current instead of iron ore and coke, are on the rise around the world. The arc process produces only 14% as much carbon dioxide compared with a blast furnace. About 43% of planned steel plants will use electric arc furnaces, up from 33% a year ago, according to a [recent study by Global Energy Monitor](#). Cleaning up steel emissions is one area where the United States has taken the lead. More than 70% of American steel is now produced using electric arc furnaces, and U.S. Steel just announced plans to build new arc furnace plants, as did the main steel maker in New Zealand and ArcelorMittal, one of the world’s largest steel producers. Plus, Europe last month approved more than \$3 billion in subsidies for two of the continent’s biggest steel makers to build electric furnaces. But challenges remain. India does not have the grid capacity for electric arc furnaces, China does not have the scrap metal supply chain to use them, and some European countries are subsidizing the older technology. Nevertheless, the shift under way in the steel industry is proof that the right combination of money, policy and resolve could help even hard-to-abate sectors clean up their acts (Source: *New York Times Climate Forward*, August 24, 2023. Photo source: [European Steel Association](#))

President Biden Halts Arctic Refuge Oil Drilling



This action protects the realms of birthing caribou and migratory birds and the key denning ground of America’s polar bears. It safeguards lands that the Gwich’in people rely on for their livelihood and eliminates a significant threat to the refuge’s 1.6 million acre coastal plain, thereby safeguarding this irreplaceable wildlife habitat and Indigenous land. It is past time to stop deepening our dependence on fossil fuels that are driving the climate crisis, but the fight continues to stop other problematic projects. (Source:

NRDC Alaska Response Team, September 7, 2023. Map source: [Wikipedia](#))

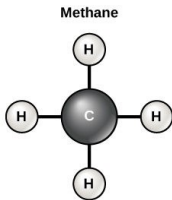
Wind and Solar Provide Record 35% of Renewable Power during Texas' Summer Heat

Wave

The two alternative energy sources helped Texans stay cool when temperatures surpassed 100 degrees for days on end. (Source: *Sierra*, Fall 2023)



\$1 Billion Pledged for Reducing Methane Gas Emissions



The Environmental Protection Agency and the Department of Energy pledged \$1 billion for reducing methane gas emissions. (Source: *Sierra*, Fall 2023)

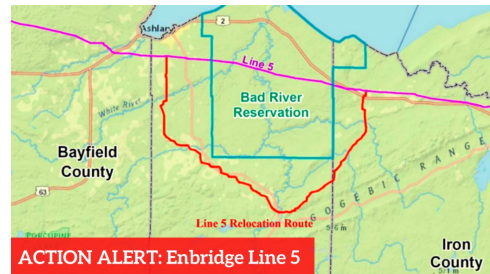
New Law Calls for Protecting 50% of Land in Vermont by 2050



A new law directs state officials to conserve 50% of the land in Vermont for biodiversity, recreation and sustainability purposes. (Source: *Sierra*, Fall 2023)

End of the Line

Easements that allowed Canadian company Enbridge to operate Line 5 on tribal land in Wisconsin expired 2013, but the company continued to operate the pipeline anyway. This past summer, however, a federal court ordered Enbridge to shut down the portion of the line that runs through tribal lands. The Bad River Band of Lake Superior Chippewa were heartened that the court correctly held that Enbridge could not continue to trespass on their lands. (Source: *Sierra*, Fall 2023. Photo source: [River Alliance of Wisconsin](#))



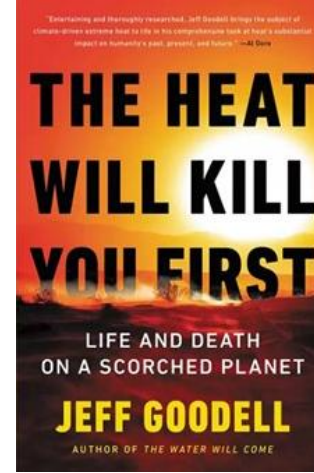
—Lorraine McCarty

BOOK REVIEW

The Heat Will Kill You First: Life and Death on a Scorched Planet by Jeff Goodell (Little, Brown and Company, 2023)

What do rising sea levels, record-breaking floods, and a year-round wildfire season have in common—aside from being part of anthropogenic climate change? As veteran environmental

journalist and author Jeff Goodell underscores in his deeply reported and absolutely terrifying new book, these events are all caused by the single phenomenon of heat. It is easy to overlook the highly complex nature of heat and its manifold effects on life. Goodell's book fills a void in our understanding of climate change. He examines heat events in history, talks with scientists, environmental activists and ordinary people whose livelihoods—and very lives—have been upended by rising temperatures. The book reads almost like a detective story as the author investigates deadly heat waves in the Pacific Northwest, India, China, and elsewhere—almost as if they are crime scenes. And perhaps they are. But Goodell concludes with a message of hope. “When people ask me if it’s hard to write about the climate crisis and imagine the hardship and suffering to come, my answer is always the same: This is the great story of our time, one that I feel privileged to tell. And yes, it gets dark sometimes. But it is also endlessly inspiring because I meet so many people who are fighting for the future and reimagining everything about how we live on this planet.”



Environment Watch

While President Joe Biden did sign the Inflation Reduction Act—the biggest step forward ever on climate and one that will help Biden fulfill his pledge to cut in half the nation’s greenhouse gas emissions by 2050 compared with 2005 levels, it will take further executive action to realize that goal. The administration is working to lock in additional carbon cuts by approving offshore wind projects and pursuing rules to make everything from cars to home appliances more efficient. But any action on Capitol Hill remains uncertain because the current Republican house majority has opposed Biden’s climate agenda.



In addition, the Inflation Reduction Act includes a rule that both sides compromised on and left many people unhappy and helps me understand why Biden has completely stopped offshore gas and oil leasing: **Biden recently proposed limited Gulf oil and gas lease sales.** The move disappointed energy companies that wanted more sales and activists who wanted the offshore drilling shut down in the fight against climate change. It turns out that the Inflation Reduction Act limits the administration’s options by linking oil and gas leasing to renewable energy leasing. The law requires the administration to offer at least 60 million acres of offshore oil and gas leases in any one-year period before it can offer offshore wind leases or solar leases on public lands. The recently published schedule is for only three lease sales (in 2025, 2027 and 2029). This schedule also limits the wind and solar lease sales that can be offered, according to Sen. Joe Manchin (D-West Virginia), the author of this provision. The administration points out that this is the smallest number of lease sales in history and represents the number that will allow the administration to continue to expand offshore wind facilities. Environmental organizations are pledging to continue fighting the lease sales in court.

Now for the numbers and specifics being tracked by the Washington Post about the policies added, proposed, overturned, tracked and untracked.

- Added: 73
- Proposed: 69
- Overturned: 91
- Tracked: 83
- Untracked: 58

For a deeper dive, click [here](#):

Actions Added between May 5, 2023, and October 9, 2023

- **Establishment of the American Climate Corps.** Biden established a program aimed at training and employing young people to help speed the transition to clean energy.
- **Designation of Baaj Nwaavjo I'tah Kukveni as a National Monument.** Biden designated a new national monument near the Grand Canyon spanning nearly 1 million acres, which ensures that uranium mining will not take place there.
- **Restrictions on the use of super-polluting hydrofluorocarbons in certain products.** The Environmental Protection Agency proposed restricting the use of hydrofluorocarbons, a potent greenhouse gas, in certain foams, aerosol products, and refrigeration, air conditioning, and heat pump equipment starting in 2025.
- **The phasing down of hydrofluorocarbons.** The EPA finalized a rule phasing down the production and import of hydrofluorocarbons, potent greenhouse gases used in refrigeration and air conditioning, 85% by 2036. The EPA also mandated a 40% cut in use and production by 2024. (Biden sued.)
- **Approval of the Ocean Wind 1 Project.** The Bureau of Ocean Energy Management approved Ocean Wind LLC's plan to construct up to 98 wind turbines and as many as three offshore substations 13 nautical miles southeast of Atlantic City, New Jersey.
- **Completion of energy conservation standards for electric motors.** The Energy Department finalized new efficiency standards for 100- to 250-horsepower motors and established first-time efficiency rules for 501- to 750-horsepower

Actions Proposed between May 5, 2023, and October 9, 2023

- **"Zero-emission" building standards.** Biden outlined a national standard for what constitutes a "zero emission" building in an effort cut energy use in a sector that accounts for nearly a third of U.S. greenhouse gas emissions.
- **Blocking oil drilling on nearly half of the National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska.** The Interior Department proposed protecting more than 10 million acres on the National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska from oil drilling and canceling oil leases that had been granted on the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge under the Trump administration.
- **Energy efficiency rules for water heaters.** The Energy Department proposed tightening efficiency standards for water heaters, which it estimates would prevent 501 million metric tons of carbon dioxide from entering the atmosphere over a 30-year period and save Americans \$198 billion in energy costs during that same time span.
- **Curbing lead paint in older homes and schools.** The Environmental Protection Agency proposed curbing nearly all lead in dust in buildings frequented by children younger than six.
- **Raising royalty and bonding rates for oil and gas firms on public lands.** The Bureau of Land Management proposed raising the bonding rates to \$150,000 per lease from \$10,000 per lease and the minimum royalty rate to 16.67% from 12.5%. The changes would mark the first overhaul of the leasing program in decades.
- **Efficiency standards for beverage vending machines.** The Biden administration is seeking more stringent standards for ubiquitous vending machines.

Actions Overturned between May 5, 2023, and October 9, 2023

- **Tighter restrictions for blowout preventers on offshore wells.** The Biden administration finalized stricter requirements on fail-safe devices used to prevent oil spills, part of an effort to prevent disasters such as the Deepwater Horizon incident in 2010. (Biden sued.)
- **Transporting liquified gas by rail.** The Biden administration reversed the Trump-era authorization allowing the bulk transport of liquified natural gas in rail tank cars.
- **Tighter restrictions for blowout preventers on offshore wells.** The Biden administration finalized stricter requirements on fail-safe devices used to prevent oil spills, part of an effort to prevent disasters such as the Deepwater Horizon incident in 2010. (Biden sued)
- **Drilling near Chaco Culture National Historical Park.** Interior Secretary Deb Haaland withdrew lands within a 10-mile radius of Chaco Culture National Historical Park from any new oil, gas or mineral leasing for 20 years, after the

Trump administration had proposed leasing more than 2,300 oil and gas wells in the Greater Chaco area.

Actions Targeted between May 5, 2023, and October 9, 2023

- **Recalculating the social cost of carbon.** The Biden administration reestablished the panel that formulates the social cost of carbon, an estimate for the damage caused by climate change for federal cost-benefit analyses, placing the interim figure at \$51 per ton of carbon dioxide released. Biden directed agencies to use this estimate in rules and for making major permitting decisions. (Biden sued.)
- **Changing Endangered Species Act consultations.** After a federal court vacated a Trump administration policy scaling back consultations under the Endangered Species Act, the Biden administration moved to reverse it.
- **Handling of coal ash waste and disposal.** The Biden administration proposed a rule that would require the safe management of coal ash dumped in areas currently unregulated at the federal level.

Now, more about other environmental news at the federal governmental level:

- **New EPA official plans to ramp up enforcement at the agency to hold polluters accountable.** David M. Uhlmann, a former federal prosecutor who spent seven years as chief of the environmental crimes section at the Department of Justice, is now heading the EPA unit that holds individuals and companies accountable for fouling drinking water, dumping hazardous waste, failing to control toxic pollution and other violations. Last year, the agency only opened 117 criminal inquiries. In his first interview, Uhlmann said that he aims to hold polluters accountable when they break the law and to revitalize the enforcement program at the EPA. He also said that the EPA would put a new enforcement priority on greenhouse gas emissions, especially methane leaks and the phase out of hydrofluorocarbons. Uhlmann's priorities also include PFAS (so-called forever chemicals) and the disposal of coal ash. Uhlman cited severe staffing cuts in both the civil and criminal divisions of the EPA since 2012 as a hurdle to overcome.
- **Biden administration announces \$1.4 billion for rail projects aimed at improving safety, boosting passenger service.** Much of this money will come from the 2021 infrastructure law and will deliver tangible benefits to dozens of communities where railroads are located and strengthen supply chains for the entire country, according to Transportation Department Secretary Pete Buttigieg. It will fund 70 projects in 35 states and Washington D.C. The projects include track upgrades, bridge repairs, and increased connectivity among railways and making routes less vulnerable to extreme weather. The funding also will be used to restore passenger service to parts of Alabama, Louisiana and Mississippi for the first time since Hurricane Katrina struck in 2005. Amtrak reached an agreement with CSX and Norfolk Southern railroads last year to allow passenger trains to resume operating on the tracks the freight railroads own, making the passenger service possible. Another large project will help the Palouse River and Coulee City Railroad in Washington state to upgrade track and related infrastructure, which will enable the companies handle modern 286,000-pound railcars. A project in Kentucky will make improvements in track and infrastructure along the Paducah and Louisville Railway, while a project in Tennessee will help upgrade about 42 bridges on 10 different short-line railroads.
- **Neat Bus Fleet.** The Department of Transportation's Federal Transit Administration is investing in public transit with its Beyond Cleaner Buses grant program—giving 130 awards totaling \$1.7 billion to cities across the country to overhaul their fleets with new zero-emission buses.

(Source: *Akron Beacon Journal*, August 3, 2023; *Akron Beacon Journal*, September 26, 2023; *Akron Beacon Journal*, October 1, 2023; *New York Times*, August 17, 2023; *Sierra*, Fall 2023; *Washington Post*, "Tracking Biden's Environmental Actions," October 9, 2023.)

—Lorraine McCarty

Food Prices Rising as Countries Limit Exports

Akron Beacon Journal, September 30, 2023



Countries around the world are facing food shortages, and many are limiting exports so they can feed their own people. An El Niño weather pattern threatens food production and increasing damage from climate change, along with Russia's war with Ukraine, are the major factors making food instability the new normal. Scientists believe that climate change is making this year's El Niño stronger, which can negatively impact food production. The early signs of this occurring are worrying, so it doesn't look like food prices are coming down anytime soon.

U.S. Billion Dollar Disasters Eclipse Record

Akron Beacon Journal, September 12, 2023

With four months left to go, the United States has already endured 23 separate weather and climate disasters, breaking the record of 22 set in 2022. Each 2023 disaster has led to at least \$1 billion in damages and 250 people killed, according to a new National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) report. The total cost exceeds \$57.6 billion. The NOAA has been tabulating weather and climate events where overall costs reached or exceeded \$1 billion in damage since 1980. The costliest year for weather and climate disasters was 2017, with \$383 billion in costs from California wildfires and hurricanes Harvey, Irma and Maria. Since 1980, there have been 371 events in the United States, at a cost of \$2.615 trillion.

Idalia Hits Florida with 125 mph Winds

Akron Beacon Journal, August 31, 2023

This Category 3 hurricane flooded streets, snapped trees, damaged homes and businesses, and cut power to half a million customers in Florida before moving into Georgia as a still powerful storm that flooded roadways, sent residents running for higher ground, and disrupted power supplies. The mostly rural and less populated region in Florida that was hit still sustained heavy damage.

Railroads Resist Safety Hotline

Akron Beacon Journal, August 29, 2023

The major freight railroads are not following through on the promise they made in March after the Ohio train derailment in East Palestine on February 3 because they want to be able to discipline workers who report safety concerns, which safety experts say undermines the purpose of such a hotline. The railroads' trade group claims that their opposition comes from a fear that workers would try to avoid discipline by reporting situations a railroad already knows about, and the immunity granted by reporting would shield them from being able to discipline workers in other situations. The railroads want a rule similar to the one used for the aviation hotline, which allows workers to be disciplined if they report the same safety violation more than once in five years.

Hawaii Wildfires Will Take Heavy Toll on Environment

Akron Beacon Journal, August 12, 2023

The fast-moving wildfires that devastated Maui this week took a heavy toll not only on humans and property but also the environment. Experts say the fires are likely to hasten erosion, send a great deal of toxic sediment into waterways and degrade coral that is critically important to the islands, marine life and the humans who live nearby. Coral reefs protect coastal areas and fisheries and support cultural practices in Hawaii. Drinking water could be another casualty. Private wells can be shallow and are easily overcome by fire and contaminants. Municipal water systems also can be affected with problems such as drops in pressure that lead to backups and the sucking in of smoke, soot, ash and vapors when fire damages distribution pipelines. Invasive and fire-prone grass species have moved in over the years and, during a fire can burn into native forests, which means that forests are replaced with grass. The soil burns and sloughs off, leading to massive postfire erosion that smothers coral, impacts fisheries, and reduces the quality of the ocean water. Hawaii is windy, so the dust blows for years,

harming human health.

Utah Oil Train Plan Chugs Along Amid Concerns

Akron Beacon Journal - August 12, 2023

Officials in Utah hope to build an 88-mile rail line to move fossil fuels from the Uinta Basin's massive reserve to refineries around the country, an effort that has been decried by environmental groups. The rail line has the support of the local Ute Indian Tribe of the Uintah & Ouray Reservation and Utah lawmakers, who have approved funds to help launch the proposal and clear early permitting hurdles. The project has won key approvals from the Federal Surface Transportation Board and the U.S. Forest Service. President Joe Biden, however, said during a recent trip to Utah, Arizona and New Mexico to discuss heat and climate change that the country cannot afford to double down on fossil fuels. The president's comments have prompted environmental groups to point out that the administration is not adhering to its own policies. Supporters of the rail line say that the United States still needs petroleum and that new capacity is not being created elsewhere in this country. The project could be years away and still needs to fend off fiscal, environmental and safety concerns, which are very high since the fiery February train derailment in East Palestine, Ohio. One concern is that the train track would run directly alongside the headwaters of the Colorado River, which is a vital water supply. A spill in the vicinity of the river would be catastrophic.

Regulators: Railroad Must Change Culture

Akron Beacon Journal - August 11, 2023

The Federal Railroad Administration's 143-page report on the safety culture at Norfolk Southern Railroad was released on August 9. The report says that poor communication and mistrust between employees and managers hinder efforts to improve safety, that the company's training for employees and managers is inadequate and shows that the company is nowhere near the "gold standard for safety" that the company is striving to be. This first-of-its-kind assessment began immediately after the Norfolk Southern train derailment in East Palestine, Ohio. The agency says that between 2018 and 2022, the rate of accidents per million train miles on Norfolk Southern railway lines rose faster than it did for any other major freight carrier, and that after some initial improvement, the railroad has been inconsistent in communicating to all its supervisors and employees the changes it has been trying to make.

Scientists: July Is Hottest Month on Record—by Far

Akron Beacon Journal - August 7, 2023

July's temperature record was six-tenths of a degree (Celsius) higher than the previous record set in 2019, according to Copernicus, a division of the European Union's space program that has records going back to 1940, and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, which has records going back to 1850. The Potsdam Institute for Climate Research in Germany, however, says that studies using tree rings and other proxies show that July was the warmest month on Earth in 10,000 years.

OEPA Says 86% of Major Ohio Rivers Meet Quality Standards

Akron Beacon Journal - August 6, 2023

According to Gov. Mike DeWine, a new statewide study of Ohio's water quality by the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency used contaminant levels in sediments and fish to track water quality changes over time, comparing modern-day levels with those from 1987. The results of the study showed significant decreases in phosphorous, ammonia and lead as well as improvements in the health of fish populations. The OEPA, however, says there is still work to do because the same sort of excess phosphorus and nitrogen that contribute to harmful algal blooms in Lake Erie and the surrounding areas are occurring in rivers too. The Mohican River was the only river to show a significant decline in water quality caused by excessive levels of phosphorus and nutrients from agricultural runoff. Algae enrichment is mostly seen in the lower stretches of the state's larger rivers, particularly the Scioto and Great Miami rivers and their tributaries, which drain into the Ohio River. The H2Ohio team is working with farmers on modernizing stormwater management systems to combat the issue, and it is trying to figure out if enough is being done. The positive results were obtained before the train derailment in East

Palestine. After the derailment, the Ohio River was ranked the second most endangered river in the country. The OEPA study will provide information to allow scientists to determine the impacts of the derailment quickly and scientifically.

East Palestine Still Attempting to Heal

Akron Beacon Journal - August 6, 2023

Six months after the train derailment in East Palestine, Ohio, remediation continues, but healing comes slowly and in small steps. The Ohio Environmental Protection Agency continues to perform millions of tests out of an abundance of caution, but it has consistently determined that drinking water and air quality have been at safe levels all along. They have removed 25.2 million gallons of wastewater and have determined the waters around East Palestine are improving slowly and that aquatic life is returning. Near the derailment site, soil removal continues, as does the storage of contaminated water in large tanks that can hold up to a million gallons of water until they are cleaned and transported elsewhere. More than 10,000 tons of water have been removed from the derailment site, and 82,000 tons have been removed from a small area near the derailment. The timeline for completion of remediation has been moved from the end of August to sometime in October. Norfolk Southern continues to reimburse residents for losses and costs connected to the derailment, and some businesses have started to pick back up. These physical repairs are a start, but the emotional repair of East Palestine will take much more time. About 200 residents who left in the wake of the derailment have not returned but a few new people have moved into the town. The mayor thinks that portraying East Palestine as a ghost town is the wrong image, even if the derailment is still the talk of the town.

Clean-Up Winding Down for Tuscarawas River

Akron Beacon Journal - July 27, 2023

Nobel Oil's George Bower, vice president of risk management, told Barberton city officials, the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency and the Ohio Department of Natural Resources that the river will be in better condition than before a July 5 oil spill. Bower said that the company is winding up operations after removing an unanticipated sunken fuel tank found near the Barberton wastewater treatment plant and will be removing two of the four booms used to clean the spill. The remaining two booms will continue to be monitored and, when nothing is collected for a couple of days, the operation should be able to gain EPA approval to shut down—about two weeks from now.

Climate Change Costly for U.S. Military

Akron Beacon Journal - July 23, 2023

In Alaska, rising temperatures mean billions in repairs. Temperatures in the Arctic have risen two to four times faster than in the rest of the world, resulting in higher levels of sea water and forcing the Pentagon to fortify radar sites by covering sensors such as those that picked up the Chinese spy balloon January. High temperatures and increased summer rains are melting permafrost, requiring billions of dollars in spending to protect military bases against the conditions or do costly repairs to areas underneath ammunition storage bunkers or runways. Alaska is vital for protecting against two main U.S. adversaries, China and Russia, both of which have been increasing their commercial and military activity in the Arctic. This turn of events has prompted U.S. military officials to assign more troops to Alaska, where upkeep is costly. But Alaska is vast. Winter can last for nine months with temperatures up to 60 degrees Fahrenheit below zero in some places, which shortens the construction season. One new radar alone at Clear Space Force Station south of Fairbanks cost the government \$1.5 billion. The radar is part of a network to "detect threats through effective surveillance of the Northern approaches to North America."

—Summarized by Lorraine McCarty

KEC Membership: Join Today!

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Environmental Council and support our efforts. If you are already a member, you will be receiving a reminder of renewal by mail the month before the expiration date for your dues. Remember, dues are the main source of income for KEC.



Basic memberships help us maintain communication among our members for many of our activities. Sustaining, Organizational and Lifetime memberships enhance our ability to implement our education and advocacy responsibilities and to have a grant program to encourage innovative environmental projects.

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To join or renew, send your name, address, phone number, email address and check made payable to Kent Environmental Council, P.O. Box 395, Kent, OH 44240.

To join or renew online with PayPal, click [here](#).

*KEC dues are **not** tax deductible because the organization has a 501(c)(4) status.*

Informal Breakfast and Discussion Every Friday

KEC members have decided to meet every Friday at 8 a.m. for their informal environmental breakfast discussion at the **Nineteen 10 restaurant in the Kent State Hotel**, 215 S. Depeyster St., Kent, OH 44242. Participants order off the menu, and all are welcome. No reservations are necessary. We hope you will join us for good food and good conversation.



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