



Good morning! The L.A. Times fantastic Boiling Point column is ending its weekly news roundups of environmental and climate stories. As columnist Sammy Roth [noted in his message to readers](#), “reading and analyzing so many news stories every week takes up an enormous amount of time and energy.” No kidding! I produce something similar for my colleagues at the UCLA Emmett Institute, so we’ll start sharing our roundups here on Legal Planet. I’m calling it The Drain. If you’ve found Boiling Point’s roundups informative, as I have, or if you just like the idea of a weekly Legal Planet digest, please share this!

(Boiling Point is not going anywhere; Sammy is focusing more on his enterprise reporting on energy in the West and the corresponding new podcast.)

This week saw a flurry of stories at the intersection of federal actions, tariff “policy”, and rule of law concerns...

- How Trump’s on-again, off-again tariff threats will raise the costs of building renewable energy projects in the U.S. was a sub-theme of tariff coverage: [NYT](#) and [Heatmap News](#) and [Canary Media](#) all focused on wind, solar, and batteries. [Politico’s Climate California took a look at how it’s affecting EVs.](#)

- But the tariff terror did not spare dinosaur energy either, effecting [LNG projects](#) and oil prices. *[“A double whammy of presidential policies — more OPEC output and historic trade levies — are sending fossil stocks tumbling,”](#)* as Robinson Meyer put it, meaning that even Trump’s Big Oil allies were feeling some pain. And rising prices at the pump could affect consumers.
- The disruption is serious enough that some countries [may trade American LNG for Chinese renewables](#) which is an ironic opening in the trade war with China.
- On the other hand, there’s some reporting from [Bloomberg](#) that the U.S. solar industry has “stockpiled 50 GW of imported equipment... which will help it stave off the impact of President Trump’s tariffs.”
- Another big story worth watching is the fate [of the Inflation Reduction Act](#), which hangs in the balance as Congress works on its [joint budget resolution](#). As of Wednesday night, the House delayed a [vote on a Trump-backed budget bill](#) after some [Republicans](#) expressed dissatisfaction with it.
- The DOE could decide to shut down its Office of Clean Energy Demonstrations, which helps launch emerging clean technologies, as early as next week, sources familiar with the matter have told [Latitude Media](#).
- Doug Burgum, Trump’s Interior secretary, had the nerve to [order all National Parks to remain open](#), no matter what — even after the mass firing of National Park Service workers. And the secretary likes chocolate-chip cookies—preferably freshly baked and still warm,” [the Atlantic reported](#), without apparently being added to a Signal chat. The point being that he’s making unusual demands of staff.
- And the search for gold bars has shockingly been fruitless... EPA Administrator Lee Zeldin has said that the greenhouse gas reduction program was vulnerable to “waste, fraud, and abuse.” If that claim was substantiated, as the NYT points out, it would allow the E.P.A. to take back the \$20 billion, which was awarded to eight nonprofit groups. [But so far, the Trump administration has failed to provide evidence of wrongdoing.](#) *“Here we are, weeks in, and you’re still unable to proffer me any information with regard to any kind of investigation or malfeasance,”* said Judge Tanya Chutkan of the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia.
- And about the EPA having that email address set up for copy and paste exemptions to the Clean Air Act, which my colleague Mary D. Nichols [said](#) she’s “never seen before,” well the nation’s most polluting coal plant, Montana’s Colstrip plant, has [asked the EPA for an exemption](#)

## LA stories about the post-fire rebuilding effort

- A new [motion](#) to cut through red tape was unanimously approved to help expedite the

rebuilding process in Altadena following the Eaton Fire by designating and establishing a Unified Permitting Authority who shall have the authority to make final determinations on residential rebuilding permit applications processed through the Altadena One-Stop Recovery Permitting Center for properties impacted by the Eaton Fire.”

- The aforementioned Boiling Point published an [interesting Q&A](#) with Edison’s CEO about wildfire resilience and ratepayers, the Eaton and Palisades fires, the climate crisis, California’s rising electric rates, the Trump administration and more, and [the podcast version of the interview is a great listen.](#)
- Great thinking by Alissa Walker to sit down with the one person who always makes me feel better, or at least smarter, about LA disasters: Dr. Lucy Jones the earthquake czar turned climate musician and thinker: [“We’re Going to Have Something Worse”](#)
- The U.S. Green Building Council of California also published a guide this week on how to [rebuild homes and businesses after a wildfire](#) to make them more resistant to future conflagrations.

#### **Stories related to this week’s [Emmett Institute “Charging Ahead” symposium](#)**

- Congressional Republicans’ attempt to undo California’s important, long-respected vehicle emissions waivers crashed into a wall in the Senate, where the parliamentarian ruled last Friday that they aren’t subject to the Congressional Review Act.
- Maryland Gov. Wes Moore has decided to give car- and truck-makers extra time to comply with clean-vehicle regulations, after state officials there came under pressure from dealers who said they couldn’t meet the strict timelines. Maryland is one of the states that aimed to spur the adoption of electric vehicles by adopting California’s clean-car and clean-truck regulations. There’s a more inspiring example of political courage, hopefully, in Illinois where the state’s Pollution Control Board, which develops environmental rules for Illinois, is [considering adopting](#) California’s clean truck standards and the Golden State’s Advanced Clean Cars II program to phase out the sale of most non-electric passenger vehicles by 2035, as well as California’s stricter nitrogen oxide limits on heavy-duty vehicles.

#### **Energy stories that caught my eye**

- “Puerto Rico has the least reliable energy system of any place in the U.S. Despite billions of federal dollars available for repairs, it’s still in shambles,” in [Politico Magazine](#)
- [New York City’s Building Electrification Law Wins in District Court – Climate Law Blog](#)
- The California Energy Commission will delay the decision [it planned to make](#) this

spring on whether to cap oil refiners' profit margins until 2026.

- A first-of-its-kind pilot to electrify homes on Cape Cod and Martha's Vineyard is set to finish construction in the coming weeks — [and it could offer a blueprint for decarbonizing low- and moderate-income households in Massachusetts and beyond.](#)

## California

- Gov. Newsom wants to be the governor who turned on the "big faucet". His administration is seeking approvals to build a \$20-billion water tunnel in the Sacramento-San Joaquin River Delta. Lawyers for supporters and opponents have been debating the project in state hearings, as reported on [by the LAT](#).
- [A Texas oil firm is pushing revive drilling off Santa Barbara](#): "For months, a Texas-based oil company has rebuffed the authority of the California Coastal Commission — the body tasked with enforcing the act — and has instead [pushed forward with controversial plans to revive](#) oil production off the Gaviota Coast." Subject of a public hearing yesterday, stay tuned to the outcome.
- The South Coast Air Quality Management District is weighing [new WEAKENED rules to reduce emissions of nitrogen oxides](#), or NOx, the smog-forming byproducts of combustion, by limiting the sale of home gas-fired furnaces and water heaters. *"Starting in 2027, manufacturers would be required to aim for a sales target of 30% for appliances that meet zero-NOx emissions standards, i.e., [heat pumps](#) and [heat-pump water heaters](#). The fraction would increase to 90% by 2036, but the rules would never require sales of gas appliances to actually stop,"* [Canary Media reports](#).
- Tuesday kicked off a hearing of up to three days to determine whether State Farm truly deserves the 22 percent emergency rate hike that Insurance Commissioner Ricardo Lara [provisionally approved](#) after historic losses in the Los Angeles firestorm.

## COP30

- The fund, known as the Tropical Forest Forever Facility, or TFFF, which Bloomberg recently called "[Brazil's "audacious" plan](#) to tie performance of global financial markets to the preservation of the world's tropical forests" got a close up from the Bloomberg [Green Daily newsletter](#).
- And in his [first letter](#) outlining Brazil's aim for the conference, COP30 president-designate André Corrêa do Lago emphasized that this COP should mark a shift to implementation, pushing nations beyond promises. He also stressed the importance of making progress on unlocking climate finance for developing nations and an urgent focus on forest conservation, ecosystem restoration, and investment in sustainable bioeconomies.

## ☐ **Other stories, studies, policy papers**

[Toxic Polluters Are Taking Control of the Air We Breathe — We Can Stop Them](#) (A good Substack article on the various EPA efforts)

[Oil giant Chevron must pay \\$744.6 million](#) to restore damage caused to southeast Louisiana's coastal wetlands, a jury decided Friday after a landmark trial more than a decade in the making.

[Truck safety is down...](#) Enforcement actions by the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration dropped nearly 60 percent from Inauguration Day to the end of February, to 157 cases from 382 cases adjudicated in the same period under the Biden administration last year.

[Brightline Brought High-Speed Rail to Florida. Can the Public Sector Follow?](#) *"With intercity rail travel struggling in America, is a private company the fix? It's a truism that trains are potent engines of urban and economic development. But can they make money? These questions arise as the Trump administration targets public services like Amtrak and New York's Metropolitan Transportation Authority, [threatening](#) to pull federal funding."*

## ☐ **Legal Industry News**

Matthew Karmel, a principal at the law firm Offit Kurman and the chair of its environmental and sustainability law practice group, is one of the organizers of the [Climate Pro Bono Bootcamp](#), a two-day virtual conference dedicated to helping more lawyers and legal professionals figure out how to donate their time and skills to advance climate work.

Hope this roundup was informative, if infuriating. Come back next week. This is a work in progress.