

Environmental journalists everywhere are breathing easier this morning. They made it through Earth Day — one of two insufferable seasons of cliche, inane PR pitches clogging their inboxes. (The other? The 2-week UN Climate Conference each fall.) Environmental advocates are breathing a little easier too, because the White House blinked first in the war of words over possibly trying to revoke their tax-exempt status. Small victories.

I usually feel “meh” about Earth Day because a hyperfocus on a single day feels superficial and performative. But this Earth Day hit different. For one thing, when all things climate are under assault, it’s hard to be mad at a day to talk about climate. Plus, when so many corporations and institutions are afraid to use the “c” word, there is less greenwashing.



This Earth Day also saw the launch of an interesting new journalism initiative informed by social science. On Tuesday, dozens of newsrooms around the world launched what they're calling **the 89 Percent Project**, intended to highlight the fact that the vast majority of the world's population actually wants climate action, based on a spate of studies. "Researchers find 89% of people around the world want more to be done, but mistakenly assume their peers do not," **Damian Carrington** wrote at the Guardian. "More than two-thirds said they were willing to give 1% of their income to fight the climate crisis. Crucially, however, they thought only a minority of other people – 43% – would be willing to do the same." One such survey involved 130,000 people in 125 countries, which account for 96% of the world's carbon emissions, and was published in the journal Nature Climate Change. The project is a global initiative of Covering Climate Now intended to spur collaboration globally. The bottom line: we are a massive silent majority that can be awakened.

One other thing was different this year. The death this week of one of the world's biggest climate heroes — Pope Francis — was still very much on everyone's mind. Many climate desks published obits and columns with a focus on the impact of the

"Climate Pope" who took the namesake of the patron saint of ecology and wrote the first climate encyclical. **Bill McKibben** writes that "perhaps the world's greatest environmental champion is dead," noting that the pope understood the crisis as one about power and human dignity. LA Times climate columnist **Sammy Roth** reread the "Laudato Si" encyclical, and "was struck by his nuanced discussion of extreme weather and sea level rise, and the need to phase out fossil fuels" making it "almost certainly the most famous climate essay ever written." In that way, we just lost one of the most impactful climate communicators. Time for new ones and for the 89 percent to speak up. My UCLA colleagues shared some of the things making them mad as hell this Earth Day and **Jonathan Zasloff** wrote at Legal Planet that this is very good time to hit the phones calling unlikely voters who care about the Earth.

Here's what else I'm seeing…

- **Appealing to Ego:** In letters to multiple agencies, the focus from environmental experts is now on how job reductions at E.P.A., Interior and other agencies would hurt President Trump's "energy dominance" agenda, NYT reports.
- **Schedule F 2.0:** The administration has officially filed proposed regulations to reinstate Schedule F but renamed "Schedule Policy/Career." The proposal has been revised "to make it more legally palatable, including moving the final decision-making authority regarding the conversion of jobs to the president, rather than the OPM director," writes Government Executive.
- **EPA Administrator Lee Zeldin does and says things:** Zeldin said with a straight face this Sunday on Face the Nation that he can "absolutely" guarantee Trump administration deregulations won't have an adverse health impact on people and the environment. He said there will be a process that includes public comment, encouraging Americans to "weigh in when they have that opportunity." Zeldin also held a wide-ranging news conference. He headed to San Diego to tour sites where sewage is flowing over the border from Mexico. Meanwhile, EPA celebrated Earth Day by announcing its intention to lay off remaining environmental justice staff, in a second official attempt to purge EJ-focused employees from the agency. EPA is also canceling grants that protect kids from toxic chemicals, affecting research into "forever chemicals" contaminating the food supply, NYT's **Hiroko Tabuchi** reports.
- **U.S. Interior Secretary Doug Burgum handed the country's public**

lands over to a DOGE staffer, **Nitish Pahwa** reports for SLATE. Burgum "is abdicating a sizable portion of his responsibilities to … Tyler Hassen, best known as one of the staffers who, in January, flew to California on the taxpayers' dime for a photo-op in support of DOGE's false claim that Donald Trump opened federal water supplies to Los Angeles."

- **No, climate science isn't making our kids more anxious.** HEATED's **Emily Atkin** had the best take on this new front in climate denial used as a justification for scrubbing the federal government of climate science. "Researchers are pretty confident about what *doesn't* work to treat anxiety about catastrophic climate change: pretending catastrophic climate change doesn't exist.
- **How well is New York City's congestion pricing working 100 days in?** Complaints of excessive honking is down 70% from the same period last year, **Curbed** reports. Six million fewer cars drove into lower Manhattan and there were half as many traffic-related injuries. Perhaps the best indicator is that the US DOT's reality TV Secretary sent a threatening letter to New York's Governor saying that the US will not approve any federal transportation projects in New York going forward unless the congestion pricing program stops.
- **Judges be judgin':** One federal judge ordered EPA to stop "unlawfully suspending or terminating" $20 billion in climate grants (although an appeals court has temporarily halted that lower court's order that enabled the release of contested climate funds). Another judge temporarily blocked the Department of Energy's plans to cut $405 million in annual research funds from universities, and a third federal judge ordered the Trump administration to immediately resume disbursing funds from the 2022 climate law and the 2021 bipartisan infrastructure law.
- **"Take" would become "harm" in ESA:** The Trump administration proposed a rule to redefine what it means to "harm" a protected species under the Endangered Species Act, a move conservationists say will strip vulnerable plants and animals of habitat they need to survive. CBD plans to sue.
- **China to buy Russia LNG instead of US gas:** China has "completely stopped" imports of liquified natural gas from the U.S. the *Financial Times* reports.
- **Storm clouds for oil:** Liberty Energy, the oil company founded by Trump's own Energy Secretary Chris Wright, is reporting falling profits and

"storm clouds on the horizon" partly due to Trump's threatened tariffs, writes E&E News' **Benjamin Storrow**.

Los Angeles Trees, Fires, and a Budget Mess

- Some vandal (or vandals) armed with a chainsaw cut down dozens of healthy trees across downtown Los Angeles over the weekend, as LAT's **Susanne Rust** reported. There was an outcry on social media for these Laurel Fig trees, which are not technically invasive but can be a nuisance for aggressive roots. Regardless, the loss of any mature tree in budget-crunched Los Angeles is a big loss from an urban heat island perspective.
- During her State of the City address Monday at Los Angeles City Hall, Mayor Karen Bass said Los Angeles will waive all plan check and building permit fees for residents in the Pacific Palisades rebuilding after the wildfires.
- The Los Angeles Cleantech Incubator (LACI) announced the launch of the LA Resilient Rebuilding Cup a call for startup innovations to help LA communities rebuild more resiliently and sustainably following the devastating January fires
- Property owners affected by the firestorm have sued the big California insurance carriers, including State Farm, accusing them of violating California's antitrust and unfair competition laws.
- LA Board of Supervisors voted unanimously to divert $3 million from the county's 2018 $134-million settlement with lead-paint manufacturers to "test residential properties that are both downwind and within one mile of the Eaton burn scar boundary," LAT's Boiling Point reported. Sounds like the Times' **Corrine Purtill** has an investigation in the works, writing *"All I can say for now is: Watch this space."*
- LAT's **Noah Haggerty** reported on the efforts of a grassroots group called Eaton Fire Residents United, which found lead in every single one of the 90 homes they tested and 76% were above EPA limits. However, it's worth noting this recent Caltech study. A team of isotope geochemists from Caltech collected samples from 52 houses in areas ranging from deep within the fire zone to neighborhoods miles away. "About 90 percent of the sampled *cleaned surfaces* showed Pb levels *below* the EPA limit, indicating that cleaning is often, but not always, effective at removing heavy metals from surfaces."

EVs and Clean Car Rules

- The Supreme Court *today* will hear a challenge (sort of) to California's long-standing Clean Air Act waiver that allows it to establish pollution limits for cars

and trucks that are stricter than the federal government. “The arguments in *Diamond Alternative Energy v. EPA* won’t center on the waiver itself, which oil and biofuel interests had sued over. Instead, the court in December agreed only to take up a procedural issue: whether the petitioners have legal standing,” E&E News’ **Lesley Clark** reports.

- Rivian R2 is getting (and giving) some EV competition: Subaru unveiled its newest electric vehicle: the Trailseeker, a crossover. But wait, there’s more: Rivian is now giving an additional $3,000 bonus on top of any trade-in value specifically for those unwanted Tesla vehicles.
- Canary Media reports that a startup called 3V Infrastructure is self-financing EV charging at multifamily properties, betting that the market will reward this kind of solution for one of EV’s biggest challenges.

Cap-and-trade

- California lawmakers are preparing to “take a good, robust look” at the state’s cap-and-trade program in the process of reauthorizing it past 2030, the head of the State Assembly’s working group told **Politico’s California Climate** at a live event this week.
- “Trump is really doing our work for us,” our **Mary Nichols told Politico,** “If what he’s doing is getting folks to appreciate [California’s cap and trade program], then that’s a silver lining,” our **Julia Stein** also told the **California Climate** newsletter.

Energy

- Last week saw a lot of attention to the Trump admin trying to halt the Empire wind energy project when it has federal permits. “This fully federally permitted project has already put shovels in the ground before the President’s executive orders” Gov. Hochul responded. “I will not allow this federal overreach to stand. I will fight this every step of the way.”
- California’s solar rooftop panels and big desert installations generated nearly as much electricity as its gas plants last year, according to data analyzed by Canary Media’s **Julian Spector**, who writes about why this year could be the first time that solar takes the lead over gas.
- Valero Refining Co. said it notified the California Energy Commission of its plans “to idle, restructure, or cease refining operations” at its Benicia refinery by April 2026. “California could lose about 20% of its oil refining capacity in 12 months — with potentially significant implications for prices at the pump,” is

how **SF Chronicle** is framing it.

Amazon & COP30

- Some good news and bad news about deforestation in Latin America: Tree cover is declining generally, but there's new data from University of Maryland about where it's returning. "The data shows that while Latin America overall lost more tree cover than it gained from 2015 to 2023, progress is being made compared to historical trends," writes **WRI**. "Among the 18 countries participating in Initiative 20×20, three countries gained tree cover from 2015 to 2023, 10 remained neutral and five experienced losses."
- A March report from the Environmental Investigation Agency (EIA) tracked the equivalent of 1,828 shipping containers of illegal wood sourced in the state of Pará, in the Brazilian Amazon. **Mongabay** reports that the culprit is fraud by those who are supposed to be tracked by using forest origin documents.

China

- Spain proudly announced plans to intensify relations with China. President Emmanuel Macron of France urged European companies to stop investing in the United States, and the European Union announced it is sending a delegation to Beijing in July. Trump may have handed China the future, writes **David Wallace-Wells** in It's Not Hard to Imagine a Chinese-Led Global Economy. And **Ezra Klein and Thomas Friedman** on the same China dynamic: *"We are screwed, we are getting this wrong/ There is too much consensus."*
- **Alex Wang** spoke with Corporate Knights for a feature on how China's energy transition engine is driving change in the Global South especially in South America, where China has surpassed the U.S. as a trading partner.

Other stories, studies, policy papers worth your time

- A new study found that electrifying the San Francisco Bay Area's Caltrain commuter rail line reduced riders' exposure to carcinogenic black carbon by an average of 89%
- A huge project bringing U.S. liquefied natural gas through the Mexican states of Chihuahua and Sonora to the Gulf of California continues to face strong resistance from environmental activists, **Monga Bay** reports
- **Miguel Miguel**, an environmental justice advocate, scientist and native

Angeleno became director of Sierra Club California last week and sat down for a Q&A with Politico's **Alex Nieves** for the California Climate newsletter
- Lawmakers across the political spectrum, including conservative Republicans, are advancing right-to-repair bills this year in all 50 states, Grist reports.

Media Industry News

- Today is the first day of the annual Society of Environmental Journalists conference, in Tempe Arizona, and our **William Boyd** is speaking on a panel about tropical forests ahead of COP30.
- **Canary Media** is turning 4 years old — which is more lasting power than most new restaurants let alone nonprofit media startups!

Lastly, I wrote a summary of UCLA's recent "Charging Ahead" symposium that includes embedded videos of all the panels. If you're feeling less than hopeful this day after Earth Day, I suggest you give them a watch.

Yeah, OK fine, there was some greenwashing garbage too.



But that's just because Tesla's profits dropped 71%, proving definitively that the 89% are paying attention and speaking up.