



Are you tired of the words “100 days”?

“In his first 100 days the Trump administration has slashed federal agencies, canceled national reports, and yanked funding from universities,” [Grist](#) puts it. “One hundred days of anti-environmental mayhem,” [says Dan Farber](#) at Legal Planet. My UCLA colleague [Ann Carlson](#) is quoted by the New York Times in [a very comprehensive Opinion Essay](#) that asked 35 legal scholars about [Trump’s “lawless presidency”](#) during the first 100 days.”

“They’ve done more damage to the environment in these 100 days than they managed to do in the whole first term,” Christine Todd Whitman, EPA administrator for President George W. Bush tells Newsweek. Trump signed fewer laws in his first 100 days than any modern predecessor, [the LA Times notes](#), while setting a record for issuing executive orders. Twenty of those orders are related to environmental policy, reports Heatmap News, which told the story in [5 charts](#). Columbia Law’s [Climate Backtracker](#) has them in a handy spreadsheet. Trump has accomplished

one-third of Project 2025's goals — and 57% of goals related to EPA — according to the [Project 2025 Tracker](#). Yet the supposedly important price of a dozen eggs rose from \$4.95 to \$6.23 in 100 days, according to a [BBC fact check](#) of Trump lies. An estimated 4 million Americans protested over two weekends in April. After 100 days, “we can finally declare that America realizes what is happening—and cares enough to stop it,” [writes Dahlia Lithwick](#). I'm not sure the 100-day metric made famous by FDR in 1933 is worth much at this point. But the Economist says it best with [the cover](#) of a bloodied American eagle and the tagline “Only 1,361 days left.” The Drain is a weekly roundup of environmental news that aims to drain the proverbial Flood Zone and the last 100 days have seen a deluge.

So, how are *environmental journalists* doing after these first 100 days?

The state of environmental journalism is weird, weakened, and worried. It's also more important than ever and the people doing it know it. That's the sense I'm getting from talking to folks who attended the annual conference held by the **Society of Environmental Journalists (SEJ)** last week.

Hundreds of reporters, researchers, and communications pros went to Tempe, Arizona for a [4-day event](#) of fantastic-looking panels, field trips, and networking hosted at Arizona State University. The theme was “heat, water, and growth” as it related to the Southwest's environmental stories, but it's also just a chance to take the pulse of the global community of people who tell climate and environmental stories. Panels covered how weather reporting is changing; how to collaborate with underserved communities so they trust your coverage; and the problems that AI creates for audiences. It was particularly heartening to see journalists in the student newsroom led by The Arizona Republic do such an amazing job of [covering](#) the SEJ panels. I did not go, but I asked people who were there to share with me their big takeaways. Here's what several of them identified as the trends in discussions and presentations for the benefit of the rest of us who care about environmental journalism:

## ***Silence***

Trump 2.0 has created myriad issues for environmental journalists, including the silencing of sources — people inside and outside of government who typically help the flow of trustworthy information reach audiences. Many scientists and researchers with grant funding at stake have clammed up. If it's any indication,

many of the SEJ speakers and panelists themselves dropped out of the event at the last minute, perhaps nervous to be quoted or share the stage with reporters. The President of Arizona State University Michael Crow was one panelist who unexpectedly backed out even though ASU was the host. His office told me in an email that “his schedule changes by the day, or even the hour,” though they didn’t say what came up that day, just that “ASU’s “commitment to the conference and the cause is clear,” having worked on the event with SEJ for 2 years. Politicians and environmental groups however also declined to participate. “People who would normally jump at the chance to speak to a group of journalists about their efforts on behalf of the environment backed away from having the spotlight on their work,” Joan Meiners, a climate journalist for The Arizona Republic and former scientific researcher, [told](#) the crowd.

## ***Anxiety***

During SEJ’s Membership Forum, they presented word cloud surveys and when asked about the state of the industry, the keyword was “anxiety.” On top of the administration’s antagonism to the environment, the press, and the environmental press, there is anxiety about job security and business stability. Freelance journalists now make up the largest percentage of SEJ members, I’m told, so just staying employed or under contract feels tenuous. Compare this to three years ago, when many national and local outlets were hiring staffers to stand up, or expand, a climate desk. [I wrote in 2023](#) that “the state of climate journalism is strong.” Now, some outlets have retrenched as coverage priorities have changed. This all has journalists feeling as vulnerable as other climate specialists.



## ***Urgency***

Another prompt in the word cloud exercise asked what members value most about important professional organizations like SEJ, and it was “community.” From what I’ve seen, journalists in this space are more comfortable than ever in sharing their own personal experiences of the climate crisis hitting close to home. Gathering together is a reminder that the work they do matters incredibly.

## ***Identity***

The definition of a journalist keeps changing. Younger people are more open to leaving the newsroom for communications jobs — or even advocacy jobs — around the edges of the profession without leaving the field entirely. I’m told there are discussions about how to define a “journalist” for the purposes of membership. Personally, I find this definition more fluid in climate journalism specifically because it is accepted by most newsrooms that beat reporters believe fiercely in

environmental protections and the need for solutions without crossing over into being a policy advocate. Not to mention that one-fifth of US adults now get their news from social media influencers — that number is far higher for young adults, with TikTok users increasingly turning to the platform for news.

## ***Approach***

As I [wrote about last week](#), social science research shows that a big majority of people want to see action on climate and extreme weather disasters. But terminology and delivery can get in the way of reaching a wider audience. During a panel called “Engaging Readers on Climate in an Age of Distraction,” Justin Worland, a senior correspondent for TIME magazine, [recalled](#) speaking to a college class and being told his stories were way too long. “We have 27 seconds now as opposed to 1200 words,” said John Marshall, of Potential Energy Coalition, a climate-oriented marketing firm who noted that climate journalists can do a lot with their diction. “Natural gas ranks at 72% in popularity, while methane gas is 27% in popularity,” he said. Same thing, different words. Localizing the national trends is also key. When the federal government retreats, cities, counties and states pick up the slack. One colleague said that nearly every SEJ panel they attended ended with this sentiment that action will come from municipal governments during Trump 2.0. It’s a good reminder of where to look for stories and also where to push for change.

Here’s what else has happened in the last 7 days...

- **No Climate Assessment:** The Trump administration has unceremoniously dismissed all the expert authors of the next authoritative look at how climate change is affecting the US. UCLA climate scientist **Daniel Swain** [criticized](#) the move as a “devastating turn of events” expected to pave the way for an “actively harmful ... sham report” about “how beneficial global warming is for Americans; all the benefits that melting ice sheets and increasingly severe wildfires and severe heat waves bring to the American people.”
- **Bad endangerment math:** EPA Administrator Lee Zeldin appears to be betting that he can upend the very important endangerment finding without arguing against the overwhelming climate science just citing costs, [reports](#) **Jean Chemnick** at E&E. Better hope your cost calculations are correct, Administrator!
- **Rescinding the IRA:** The House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee released a budget proposal that attempts to claw back nearly \$9 billion in

grants, reports **Emily Pontecorvo** for [Heatmap News](#).

- **No tornado aid:** Trump denied federal disaster relief funds to the people of Arkansas, which saw dozens of people die from a series of deadly tornadoes last month, as legislators plead for him to reconsider, the Guardian [reports](#).
- **China is going bigger and bigger** while the US goes much much smaller. China will set out new goals for emission cuts by 2035 “covering the entire scope of the economy, including all greenhouse gases,” — not just CO2 — ahead of the COP30 summit, Xi said this week. [Bloomberg has the story](#), which some declared the story of the week if not the year.
- **Cue the fast (laugh) track:** The Interior Department said last week that it would [fast-track approvals for projects involving coal, gas, oil and minerals](#) to something like 2 weeks. CBD plans to sue. Which is the second time this newsletter has used that phrase in 2 weeks. “Show me the energy developer that is going to feel confident going forward under this laughable approach,” said Rep. Jared Huffman of California, the top Democrat on the House Natural Resources Committee, in a statement.
- **How well is Trump’s attack on congestion pricing going?** The U.S. DOT last week said it took the rare step of replacing the federal lawyers defending it in a lawsuit over New York’s congestion pricing. The 3 assistant U.S. attorneys on the case had “warned that Sec. Sean Duffy was using a shaky rationale to end the tolling plan and was “exceedingly likely” to fail, the lawyers wrote,” according to a memo quoted by the NYT.
- **Sabotaging US Manufacturing:** In the first three months of this year, firms have abandoned plans to build nearly \$8 billion worth of clean energy projects, [Canary Media reports](#), noting they are “mostly factories that would have produced everything from grid batteries to electric vehicles.”
- **Contradiction clogs Trump’s attack on plastic straws:** The document laying out the administration’s case “devotes a robust eight pages to highlighting their health and environmental dangers... in particular, the dangers of PFAS, a class of thousands of synthetic chemicals that are used to make paper straws” and yet it’s not clear the administration cares about PFAS turning up in tap water around the country, reports **Hiroko Tabuchi** [for the NYT](#).
- **Reaching new lows:** Trump’s recent executive order directs the administration to expedite mining permits under the Deep Seabed Hard Minerals Resource Act of 1980 and to establish a process for issuing permits along the U.S. Outer Continental Shelf.
- **“I’m not opposed to bikes but...”** The Secretary of Transportation says he

hasn't seen enough data to believe in the benefits of bike lanes. So [Streetsblog's Kea Wilson](#) "put together an explainer to help him out — mostly using information from his own department."



## Climate Era Budgets

- The costs of the Eaton and Palisades fires to LA County are expected to approach \$2 billion — \$500 million in immediate costs plus lost revenue and recovery spending — the county's chief executive said this month. The City of Los Angeles is dealing with a nearly \$1 billion budget shortfall for next year that stemmed partly from fire costs.
- L.A. Mayor Karen Bass is calling for major cuts to city resources that focus exclusively on addressing the local effects of climate change, [Erin Stone reports](#) at LAist. "Eliminating the city's landmark climate action office, called the [Climate Emergency Mobilization Office](#), or CEMO. That includes potentially cutting the city's first [chief heat officer, Marta Segura](#), who directs the office."

There's a hearing on Thursday, May 1, at 9 a.m. at City Hall specifically discussing the elimination of the Climate Emergency Mobilization Office.

- Last week, Mayor Bass was again in Sacramento asking for more help from state officials and [couldn't even get](#) on Gov. Newsom's schedule. We'll learn more in mid-May what kind of relief for LA is in the governor's revised budget, but it's a tough budget year for the state too.
- Meanwhile, Congress has [yet to move on Newsom's \\$40 billion request](#) for federal aid, reports CalMatters' **Alexei Koseff**.

Just to editorialize for a second, that's shameful. Within four days of Hurricane Katrina's landfall, President Bush signed a \$10.4 billion aid package.

This all serves as a reminder that the costs of climate pollution are not abstract, they are borne by local governments and us taxpayers. Climate change will lead to municipal bankruptcies. That's the motivating force behind the growing number of state climate lawsuits wending through the courts. It's also a reason California lawmakers are considering joining Vermont and New York in passing a climate superfund law, also known as Make Polluters Pay legislation.

The Polluters Pay Climate Superfund Act, AB 1243 (Addis), made it through its first committee this month. Then yesterday in the Assembly Judiciary Committee, Assemblymember Dawn Addis pulled the legislation. "I have decided to postpone the committee vote to allow more time for meaningful conversations with stakeholders and will continue to push this policy forward," she said in a statement. Sen. Caroline Menjivar, whose twin bill was moving through the Senate, also pulled it for now, reports **Blanca Begert** for [Politico](#).

## Climate Liability

- A new paper published [in the journal Nature](#) connects the dots from our climate probs to specific polluters. It uses climate modeling combined with publicly available emissions data to contrast the current climate and its impacts to what it would be like without the heat-trapping gases a company's activities released into the atmosphere. The study details the "scientific and legal implications of an 'end-to-end' weather attribution that links fossil fuel producers to specific damages from warming" and could further back up Polluters Pay legislation. "Using scope 1 and 3 emissions data from major fossil fuel companies, peer-reviewed attribution methods and advances in empirical climate economics, we illustrate the trillions in economic losses attributable to

the extreme heat caused by emissions from individual companies” **Justin Mankin** and **Christopher Callahan** write. Chevron gets particular focus by the study and [the NYT coverage.](#)

- [A joint resolution passed by the state House and Senate](#) in Hawai'i calls on the state's insurance providers to limit rate increases on Hawai'i families by taking the fossil fuel industry to court for damages from climate disasters.
- Gas stations across Colorado would have had to post a sticker warning drivers that their fuel use contributes to climate change under legislation that died in the state senate but that had narrowly passed the state House earlier this month, [the Denver Post reports](#). [House Bill 1277](#) squeaked out of the chamber with 33 votes, the minimum needed to clear the chamber; 30 representatives voted no, with some Democrats joining Republicans. A Colorado Senate committee killed the bill, which had the backing of dozens of environmental groups but faced fierce opposition from industry and the governor's office.

## California

- [Alexander Kaufman has a story at Latitude Media](#) about a suite of 4 California bills that aim to draw the geothermal industry growing in Nevada and Utah to the Golden State.
- AB 942, a bill that reduces the energy credits given to homeowners with rooftop solar panels “is pitting union electrical workers and the state's big utilities against people who benefit from the solar credits,” [Melody Peterson reports in the LAT](#), focusing on the author's previous work for So Cal Edison. A hearing on the bill is scheduled for April 30.
- Assemblymember Cottie Petrie-Norris' [AB 825](#), to establish a state financing program to pay for transmission, should clear its hearing today at the Utilities and Energy Committee she chairs, despite utility opposition, [Politico predicts](#).
- Despite huge advances over the decades, Los Angeles is still the nation's smoggiest city, according to [a report](#) released a day after Earth Day by the American Lung Assn. The same report finds that at least 156 million Americans, about 46 percent of the population, live with unsafe levels of ozone, particulate pollution or both.
- **Ian James** takes us on a rare journey [inside the mountain tunnel that carries water to Southern California](#).

## More Energy!

- There's bipartisan agreement that the utility bills are too damn high: a

nationwide survey of about 2,000 adults, conducted by nonprofit PowerLines and Ipsos in March finds 73% of respondents feel concerned about rising utility bills. “Nearly two-thirds of surveyed billpayers said they have seen their gas and electric bills rise over the last year, and 63% reported feeling more stressed as a result of energy costs,” [Canary Media reports](#).

- A new article published in [Nature Energy](#) analyzes LA’s efforts to make its transition to 100% clean energy more equitable — and outlines five takeaways that could help guide similar efforts in other cities. Led by [Rachel Sheinberg](#), a PhD student at UCLA’s IoES, the paper examines the outcomes of the [LA100 Equity Strategies](#) initiative — a two-year collaboration between UCLA, the [Los Angeles Department of Water and Power](#) and 14 local community-based organizations.
- Connecticut is facing its own affordability energy session in the legislature, opponents of a 80-page bill say it could devastate the state’s renewable energy progress, [Canary Media](#) reports.

## “Abundance”

- Last week’s California Senate Housing Committee where legislators were evaluating a slew of new bills to boost housing production was a “sobering indication” of where housing abundance meets California’s political realities, [wrote my Legal Planet colleague Ethan Elkind](#). “Let’s hope that this legislative session doesn’t result in the same inaction we’ve seen over the years that has led California into what is fast becoming a humanitarian catastrophe.”
- **Ezra Klein** and **Derek Thompson**’s book “Abundance” has generated a lot of interesting critiques, especially from the left, so Ezra Klein invited **Zephyr Teachout** and **Saikat Chakrabarti** to debate housing abundance and environmental protections [on his podcast](#).

## □ Other stories and studies from all over

- **Canada’s** election of Mark Carney is a big deal for the planet, as my UCLA colleague **Jonathan Zasloff** [wrote for Legal Planet](#). It also means two big North American countries have elected leaders with deep green credentials: Carney and Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum, an energy engineering Ph.D. and past contributor to United Nations climate science reports, [Bloomberg notes](#).
- **Maryland** says it has reached [a big conservation goal](#) six years ahead of schedule, making it the first to do so in the “30 by 30” initiative. “Nearly 1.9

million acres of land has been permanently protected from development, and the state has set a new target, to conserve 40 percent of its land by 2040,” **Cara Buckley** reports for the NYT Climate Fix newsletter.

- **Montana** is on the brink of passing housing laws that all but remove multi-family parking mandates within most large- and medium-sized cities, legalize six-story apartment buildings on most commercial land, limit excessive impact fees, reduce construction defect liability risk, professionalize historic reviews, require equal treatment for manufactured homes, and re-legalize rural ADUs and single-stair residential buildings,” according to [Sightline Institute](#). The bills are bipartisan and head to the governor’s desk. BUT then again Republican lawmakers in the state are also pushing a suite of bills that could gut the state’s ability to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, [Inside Climate News reports](#).
- **Ethiopia** may ban internal combustion engines, reports [Electrek](#). “Ethiopia’s Transport and Logistics Ministries have announced that automobiles cannot enter Ethiopia, unless they are electric.”
- **UK** scientists are reportedly preparing to experiment with solar geoengineering as part of a £50 million [government](#) funded initiative. The [project](#) is set to be given the go-ahead within weeks

On that note if you want to understand the strange new politics of geoengineering, [check out this by my colleague Ted Parson](#).

Thanks for reading this 100-day-long edition of The Drain.