
Ibirapuera Park in São Paulo, Brazil

“Crazy.” That’s how one young Brazilian described what’s happening in Belém to get ready for COP30, the annual UN climate negotiations which will take place in the Amazon this November. We struck up a brief conversation while I was visiting the Museu Afro Brasil in São Paulo, a museum that chronicles the history and culture of Brazil through art and artifacts with a focus on slavery and the African diaspora.

The woman I spoke with was from Belém in the state of Pará, which will be hosting the UN conference. She was referring to the mad scramble to build hotels, roads, and other infrastructure to welcome the 50,000 or so international delegates. Another young woman she was with chimed in that the construction is happening “so fast” and that the projects will be good for the people of Belém, because it’s stuff they want.

Such is the complicated nature of not just COP30.

I’m in Brazil this week for the GCF Task Force meeting, an international gathering of 400 or so state officials, civil servants, Indigenous leaders, NGO and private sector partners who work on protecting tropical forests. And I’ve been chatting with people I meet about the upcoming UN climate negotiations. I wrote last week that no one is

ready for COP30.

What I did not appreciate until visiting is just how much some Brazilians *do* want to be hosting the climate talks. For one thing, some key infrastructure is indeed coming online, things like new water, sewage and drainage networks, paving of side roads, construction of bridges, footbridges, and a bicycle lane, as CNN Brasil reports.

Then there was this BBC headline from March that you probably saw in some form: "Amazon forest felled to build road for climate summit." The new four-lane highway at issue would cut down Amazon rainforest "for COP30," seeming to capture the hypocrisy of Brazil hosting the megaevent. Except if you read more closely, it becomes clear that the road construction project was actually proposed as early as 2012 as a way to significantly ease traffic congestion for Brazilians. As one colleague from São Paulo put it, every summer people in this area get jammed up for hours trying to go on a vacation with their families. That's not about clear-cutting a forest for climate diplomats. But much of the early media coverage has looked for stories that reinforce the criticism of, and even hypocrisy in, Brazil hosting.

"The problem is not Belém, the problem is COP," is how **Eduardo Taveira** put it to me. Taveira is the Amazonas State Secretary for the Environment. He has an eloquent post here on the subject. In rough translation: The question should not be whether Belém has the capacity to host the UN climate conference, but why does the COP not fit in cities like Belém that suffer the impacts of climate change on a daily basis? "Less party and more results," Taveira says.

As another person I met here put it, the climate crisis is messy and complicated, why not let the UN delegates come and see it all on display? When Los Angeles hosts the 2028 Olympics, you can bet the city will be trying to hide our homeless crisis from the world. I don't think that Brazil intends to hide much from the world in November; they want the world to come see the challenges and the opportunities they face. "Denying the climate crisis will not make it disappear," Brazil President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva said last month. "When we want to mobilize efforts around a common goal, in Brazil we use the indigenous word *mutirão*. We want to make COP30 a great *mutirão* in support of the implementation of the climate commitments," he said.

Maybe Brazil doesn't have to be ready for COP. And maybe hosting it here means

that the UN climate talks will have to change.

This week, my UCLA colleague **Mary Nichols** has a powerful opinion essay over at The Conversation about how the real progress has recently been outside the rooms where the official U.N. negotiations are held, not inside, and how states are picking up the slack where nations are failing. She outlines some of the concrete successes of the GCF Task Force member states and gives a shout out to the GCF's 15th Annual Meeting in Rio Branco this week.

Speaking of forests, massive fires fueled by climate change led global forest loss to smash records in 2024, report **Manuela Andreoni** and **Alexander Villegas** for Reuters.

Meanwhile, Brazil's COP30 presidency has appointed 30 envoys to liaise with "priority sectors and regions" ahead of the UN climate summit in November, among them champion surfer Maya Gabeira, and Brazil's first lady Janja Lula da Silva, reports Climate Home News. It's being billed as an expanded, "outside-the-box" approach to climate diplomacy. Beto Verissimo, Head of Belem-based rainforest conservation organization Imazon, is the liaison for forests. Jonathan Pershing, a longtime U.S. climate diplomat, and Xia Zhenhua, the veteran climate envoy from China who was central to U.S.-China climate cooperation are also named, notes **Sarah Schonhardt** for E&E News.

Here's what else I see…

Good news

A Cleaner China: For the first time, the growth in China's clean power generation has caused the nation's carbon dioxide (CO2) emissions to fall despite rapid power demand growth. The Carbon Brief analysis, based on official figures and commercial data, shows that China's CO2 emissions have now been stable, or falling, for more than a year.

Empire Strikes Back: The Trump administration actually reversed course and will allow the massive New York offshore wind project known as Empire Wind to proceed after lobbying by New York Gov. Kathy Hochul and Norwegian energy firm Equinor. The governor had to patiently sit through three roughly one-hour calls with President Donald Trump, **Jake Spring** reports for the Washington Post. Thousands of jobs and hundreds of thousands of homes powered by clean energy was at

stake.

Nonprofits Win Back Green Grants: A federal judge said on Monday he would order the Trump administration to restore $176 million granted by Congress to 13 nonprofit groups and six municipalities nationwide. Inside Climate News reports that the decision, by a U.S. District Court judge for the District of South Carolina, represents one of the first final judgments in a case challenging the Trump administration, as it has fired employees, frozen funding and dismantled agencies. The nonprofits received funding for climate and environmental work through Biden-era federal programs that were wrongly frozen.

National 'Rule of Law' Day: Last Friday, many if not most of the nation's law schools held commencement ceremonies. (The timing has a lot to do with the timeline for state bar exams.) If you follow universities and law schools on social media, the result was a blitzkrieg of heart-warming graduation videos and images. Given the assault on law firms and the rule of law, these images and videos celebrating future lawyers were a salve for this moment.

Animal Freeways: The state of Colorado has emerged as a leader in building wildlife crossings, which can save animals, money and human lives, **Catrin Einhorn** reports for the New York Times' 50 States, 50 Fixes series. Since 2015, it has built 28 new large game crossing structures, according to the state Transportation Department. LA's under-construction 101 freeway crossing for mountain lions is big and splashy but Colorado is doing the work on behalf of lots of animals, including mule deer, coyotes, and baby black bears.

Bad news

A Less Grand Canyon: The National Parks Conservation Association has calculated the Trump administration's proposed cuts to the National Park Service budget could result in more than a 75% reduction to the National Park System. With 433 national park units across the country, that would essentially wipe out budgets and staffing for at least 350 national park units.

Safe-ish to swim: Public agencies, advocacy groups and scientists have analyzed samples of seawater and sand to try to determine whether January's firestorm has made it less safe to be at our region's beaches and they don't have a definitive answer. That's because the tools we have to measure beach pollution may not fully capture the kinds of fire-related toxins that we experienced, **Corrine Purtill** writes

for the LA Times.

Big Ugly Bill: House Republicans got their party-line tax and spending package out of the Budget Committee late Sunday night. It cuts green energy tax breaks among many other things. Two of the GOP's favorite energy sources — geothermal and nuclear — could suffer, reports **Dan McCarthy** for Canary Media. Top House Republicans want to put the legislation on the House floor by Thursday, when lawmakers are set to leave for a weeklong recess. Heatmap news writes that the House Rules Committee started holding its hearing on the package Wednesday morning at 1 a.m. That's far from the end of the line, however.

Energy Costs Rise: The U.S. Energy Information Administration projects that retail electricity prices are expected to continue a rapid rise this year, with the average price increasing 13 percent from 2022 to 2025. Between 2013 and 2023, the agency said, electricity prices had tracked with inflation but are now expected to rise faster than inflation through 2026. Trump's policies are contributing to these forecasts, despite campaigning to bring costs down. The rate of increase could be even higher in the Pacific region, where prices are forecast to rise 26 percent, E&E reports. The anti-clean energy provisions in Trump's budget bill could raise household energy costs by as much as 7 percent, reports HEATED.

Waive goodbye: Senate Republicans are about to kill California's vehicle emissions rules, and state officials are going back to the drawing board. My UCLA colleague **Ann Carlson** listed at least six reasons why everyone should care that Congress might use the CRA to overturn California waivers. U.S. Senator Alex Padilla says he's placing holds on EPA nominees in exchange. *"If this attempt is successful, the consequences will be far-reaching, not only for our clean energy economy, the air our children breathe, and for our climate, but for the future of the CRA and for the Senate as an institution."*

California

- Where does Los Angeles get the biggest share of its electricity? A nuclear power plant in Arizona and **Sammy Roth** took a tour.
- California Assembly Speaker Robert Rivas on Friday shook up the Coastal Commission. Politico reports Rivas appointed Monterey County supervisor Chris Lopez to the seat previously held by Justin Cummings, a Santa Cruz County supervisor, and Chula Vista Councilmember and San Diego State University

administrator Jose Preciado to the seat held by Paloma Aguirre, who is the Imperial Beach mayor.

- California State Parks granted Sable Offshore — the new owner of Santa Barbara's disaster-prone pipeline — permission to begin repair work on park land without requiring a full environmental review. This is the same pipeline that failed catastrophically in 2015, reports KEYT. Sable says that as of May 15, 2025, it has restarted production at the Santa Ynez Unit.
- Sable in fact went back to drilling off of Santa Barbara just days before the 10-year anniversary of the oil spill, LAT reports.
- Relatedly, the Santa Barbara Board of Supervisors voted to approve developing a ban on new oil and gas production and a phaseout of existing operations in a 3-1 vote during its recent meeting in Santa Maria. Noozhawk posted a commentary from SB Supervisor Laura Capps on the decision. If the Board of Supervisors approves a ban, Santa Barbara County would stop issuing new drilling permits throughout the region and begin phasing out active oil operations. Before the vote, **Leah Stokes** and **Paasha Mahdavi** wrote about why it's time to phase out oil drilling in SB.

Climate Liability

- The City of Chicago can, a federal judge has ruled, move forward with suing big oil in state court, another small win for municipalities seeking to hold the fossil fuel industry accountable for climate deception.
- A Dutch NGO announced last Tuesday that it is launching a new case against Shell, with the core demand that the oil giant immediately stop investing in any new oil and gas fields. The same NGO won a historic court verdict in 2021 in a pioneering climate lawsuit against the oil major, Inside Climate News reports. It argues that Shell has failed to change course to align its business activities with the objectives of the Paris Agreement
- California bills in the senate and assembly are on hold for the moment, but the Golden state is just one of 11 states considering climate superfund legislation this session, Grist reports in a roundup. Maryland's bill is the only one to pass the legislature this year, although it hasn't yet been signed by the governor.
- The Damages podcast by **Amy Westervelt** and Drilled has a roundup episode of where we stand on U.S. climate lawsuits, as well as an upcoming new season dropping June 3rd, "all about the energy transfer versus Greenpeace case and the Countersuit in Europe where Greenpeace has invoked the EUs anti SLAPP statute to sue energy transfer for harassment."

Other stories, studies, policy papers worth your time

- Leaders of the Cotuhé Putumayo Indigenous reservation in the Colombian Amazon, say that they do not know about the carbon credit project taking place on their land, which has sold more than 3 million credits. The major purchaser behind the project is a subsidiary of Chevron, reports Mongabay La am and CLIP and published at Drilled.
- Gas stoves increase the chances of getting cancer, with nearly double the risk for kids than for adults, new research shows.