

The Trump administration’s attack on wind energy feels dumber and dumber every day. Let’s see if we can make it make some sense. After that, the major headlines of the week.

Last Friday, his Transportation Department withdrew $679 million for offshore wind projects at 12 ports. Last month, the administration sent a stop-work order to Revolution Wind, a major wind energy project off the coast of Rhode Island that is fully permitted. Halting construction grabbed headlines because the company behind the project, Ørsted, says it’s 80% built with 45 out of 65 wind turbines installed. The administration also plans to reconsider the already-approved permit for a Massachusetts offshore wind farm called SouthCoast Wind, and to rethink the federal approvals for the New England Wind 1 and 2 projects off of Martha’s Vineyard.

Trump, and most congressional Republicans, have obsessively targeted wind and solar projects as unreliable and expensive despite all facts to the contrary. This has contributed to the cancellation of more than $18 billion in clean energy projects this year, and thousands of job losses — mostly in Republican districts.

How do they defend this? Interior Secretary Doug Burgum told CNN that the

Revolution Wind project is a security threat because the wind farm could hide undersea drone attacks. (Not according to the Pentagon’s review.) Then there’s the whales. At a recent cabinet meeting, Health and Human Services Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. said that wind turbines were dangerous because they were “wiping out the whale population” in the Atlantic. (Nope.) This is the same RFK Jr. who was investigated for allegedly cutting off the head of a dead whale with a chainsaw and strapping it to his mini-van to take home. He is also investigating whether wind turbines emit harmful electromagnetic fields. You feel yourself getting dumber, right? And “the birds are dying all over the place,” Trump says. Except they’re not. (Climate change is a much bigger risk, says the Audubon Society.)

And yet we’re seeing a whole-of-government approach to killing wind energy development, involving departments like HHS that don’t have anything to do with wind. We seem to be approaching a scenario where federal agents show up at a wind farm ribbon-cutting celebration to confiscate the red bows and large scissors. “This is a new level of idiocracy,” Rep. Jared Huffman of California told NPR. If we are in an energy crisis, we should welcome energy projects. Trump’s own declaration of an energy emergency seeks “to expedite the completion of all authorized and appropriated infrastructure” especially in “in our Nation’s Northeast and West Coast.” Now it’s ordering agencies to kill Northeast energy production.

Energy reporters, climate desks, and newsletters have been taking their best stab all month at explaining this seemingly irrational antipathy. So, has anyone gotten close? I think the war on wind is clearly an incoherent strategy if viewed strictly through a policy lens. Let’s try on a trifocal lens: a combination of petty vendetta, strategic hardball, and “us versus them” retribution.

He Hates These Windmills!

I keep thinking about the scene in the 1979 movie “The Jerk” where Steve Martin’s character finds himself under attack by a sniper’s bullets. They whizz by him and pepper the motor oil cans stacked next to him. “He hates these cans!” Martin yells. “Stay away from these cans!” But the shooter’s not trying to put holes in the cans. “He’s trying to put holes into you,” the gas station manager yells. Trump doesn’t want to hit the “windmills” so much as he wants to hit the people who like the windmills. After buying a golf course in Scotland, Trump famously fought the Aberdeen Bay Wind Farm “monsters” as bad for tourism. After fighting for years in court he lost. He’s a sore loser. That seems like part of the story.

War is a Negotiating Tool

Matthew Zeitlin’s account in Heatmap News tells another part of the story. He quotes an energy analyst who suspects that the Revolution Wind stop work order will be used as a negotiating chip but eventually will be lifted, as was the case of the Empire Wind project off New York, noting that “The Empire Wind case suggests President Donald Trump’s administration uses stop-work orders to exert pressure on East Coast Democratic governors regarding specific issues.” In this scenario, Zeitlin predicts we can expect the Revolution Wind project to be held as leverage until the governors of Rhode Island and Connecticut cough up something of value. This week, governors of five states responded with a statement. “Efforts to walk back these commitments jeopardize hardworking families, wasting years of progress and ceding leadership to foreign competitors,” they said publicly. Who knows if there’s some private negotiating. Fighting words, they are not. Which brings us to the power play.

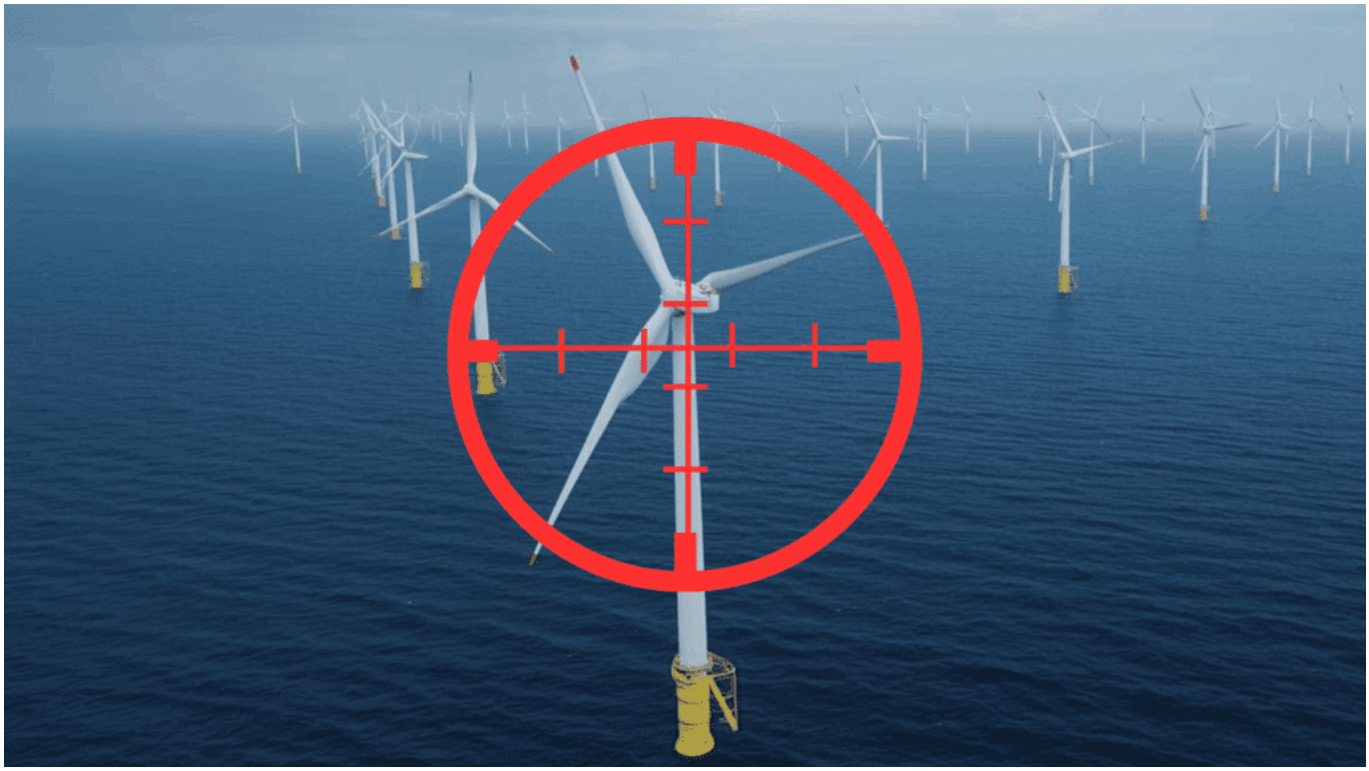
Wind Appears Weak

If there’s anything Trump seems to detest more than wind whipping his hair around, it’s weakness. And the wind industry looks weak. The industry is more nascent and vulnerable than the solar industry. It has been outspent and outorganized by the fossil fuel industry, which famously fueled Trump’s reelection. Wind companies and their associations have been slow to “adopt a wartime footing,” **Justin Gerdes** notes in his Quitting Carbon newsletter. “The project developers, manufacturers, and investors that have worked so hard to build these industries need to mobilize the resources to safeguard their future,” he writes. Even as the Administration wages all-out war on the industry with a flimsy legal rational, the wind companies are issuing mild-mannered statements about “considering a range of scenarios, including legal proceedings.” They’re bringing a paper hand fan to a gunfight, facing an authoritarian administration whose policy czar literally thinks the executive branch is immune to oversight.

Trump Traffics in “Us Versus Them”

Remember the war on coal? Conservatives railed against the Obama administration for waging war on the coal industry. Trump has talked for years about bringing back coal, but it’s easier said than done. Energy market realities stand in the way. It’s far

easier to score political points by killing an industry related to the “green new scam” than to revive coal. This way the Trump administration can go maximalist with its “us versus them” rhetoric while getting some retribution on environmentalists and Biden projects. That’s why it’s often framed as solar vs. farmers and wind vs. fossil fuels.



For these reasons, among others, we don’t need to spill more ink on the policy incoherence of Trump’s war on wind. It’s impossibly dumb (and dangerous) from a policy perspective. But there’s a *political* problem here that could make it dumb for other reasons — one that is worth lots of future press coverage and advocacy: not all Republican voters see wind as “us versus them.”

There are some Trump-voting fishermen who’ve made peace with Revolution Wind and other wind projects because part-time construction work is helping pay the bills. “It’s madness,” one Trump supporter tells Canary’s **Claire Fieseler** about the halt to construction.

More importantly, look at windy Iowa where one GOP lawmaker now faces some severe headwinds in reelection for siding with Trump. As **Josh Siegel** reports for Politico, Iowa gets nearly two-thirds of its electricity from wind turbines while paying

some of the lowest power bills in the nation. Rep. Mariannette Miller-Meeks who’s been a “leading GOP champion in the House for an ‘all-of-the-above’ energy strategy supporting the growth of renewables alongside fossil fuels” now faces a challenge. Because she cast a crucial vote for Trump’s tax and spending bill that wiped out billions of dollars in economic incentives for Iowa’s 50-plus wind-related companies. Democrats see room for hope. Not in talking about “jobs, jobs, jobs” but talking about “bills, bills, bills.”

And it doesn’t stop at Iowa. “Check your electric bill lately? Rep. Mark Amodei just voted for it to *go up,*” declares a billboard in Reno, Nevada. Ads like it are targeting potentially vulnerable Republicans in more than a dozen other districts in Arizona, California, Colorado, Iowa, Michigan, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Texas. Heatmap News’ **Emily Pontecorvo** takes stock of these energy affordability campaigns popping up.

As I and my Emmett Institute colleagues have been writing since December, the new front in climate messaging is energy affordability and environmental groups can be on the offensive. This summer, advocacy group Climate Power issued a strategy document advising state and local elected officials how to talk about clean energy based on the group’s polling. Respondents rated messages about “the cost of wind power already being up to 50% cheaper than electricity from fossil fuels” as persuasive.

So, look for whether the wind industry locks arms with the people making those arguments. Look for whether more companies follow the Swedish energy firm Vattenfall in going on the offensive with public relations campaigns, like their hilarious Samuel L. Jackson video. And look for whether the companies mobilize for the upcoming Sun Day, celebrating the promise of renewable energy. Because wind desperately needs a win.

Welcome to The Drain, a weekly roundup of environmental and climate news. Our song of the week is Bob Seger’s “Against the Wind.” Here’s what else to read while you listen.

More Energy Stories

A first-of-its-kind analysis of permit applications to Texas’ main oil and gas regulator reveals “a rubber-stamp system that allows drillers to emit vast amounts of natural gas into the atmosphere,” ProPublica and Inside Climate News report. Oil companies

applied for more than 12,000 flaring and venting permits, while the state rejected just 53 of them, a 99.6% approval rate, according to the data.

A group of more than 85 scientists have now issued a joint rebuttal to that recent U.S. Department of Energy report about climate change, detailing the various troubling errors that the DOE and EPA are now using to try to misrepresent climate science, **Julia Simon** reports for NPR.

Americans for Prosperity, the group affiliated with billionaire fossil fuel executive Charles Koch, said this week it will carry out a national tour of events with members of Congress and an advertising campaign for permitting reform (especially for fossil fuel energy projects) that it’s dubbing “The Road to Prosperity.”

Rewiring America last week launched the Save on Better Appliances campaign, a nationwide effort to help homeowners and renters lock in the soon-to-disappear federal incentives. Some 1,600 people signed up to become volunteer energy coaches this year, **Hayley Smith** writes for the LA Times.

Meanwhile Americans are dying when they don’t have access to cooling, as **Nina Lakhani** reports from Arizona. Nationwide, one in five of the lowest-income households have no access to air conditioning, while 30% rely solely on window units, according to exclusive analysis by the National Energy Assistance Directors Association for the Guardian.

The EPA



The D.C. Circuit Court of Appeals on Tuesday ruled that the EPA can legally hold back billions of dollars in federal grants to reduce greenhouse gas emissions issued under the Biden administration. It’s a big blow to the idea of federal green bank funding for emission-reducing projects around the country. The three-judge panel overturned a lower court’s injunction temporarily requiring the EPA to resume payments, ruling that most of the plaintiffs’ claims were contract disputes and thus belonged in the Court of Federal Claims, writes **Alexander Kaufman** at Heatmap News.

A federal judge on Friday tossed out a lawsuit brought by two dozen nonprofit groups and localities whose environmental justice grants were terminated by EPA, Politico reports.

The Trump administration plans to propose a new Clean Water Act rule that could “eliminate federal protections for many wetlands across the U.S.,” according to an internal EPA presentation obtained by E&E News.

And the EPA has fired at least eight EPA employees who signed that open letter to Admin. Lee Zeldin and congressional leaders warning that the agency had abandoned its mission.

California

The California Legislature wrapped up its seven inning stretch for this session — Gov. Newsom and lawmakers have until Sept. 12 to pass legislation — so we saw stories about which bills were held back and which ones have survived.

There’s hope for a cap-and-trade reauthorization deal. Top advisors to Newsom and Senate President Pro Tem Mike McGuire projected some confidence that a deal would come together within the next three weeks on a panel with Politico’s **Debra Kahn** at a Sacramento Policy Summit.

California energy regulators on Friday put the brakes on plans requiring oil companies to pay a penalty if their profits climb too high and my UCLA colleague **Julia Stein** provides nuance and context to the Associated Press story about what it means for California’s climate ambitions.

A recent hearing in federal court in Beaumont, Texas, focused on whether California AG Rob Bonta and nonprofit allies had defamed Exxon Mobil in its lawsuit over its recycling claims and practices. Exxon has countersued in a “sharp escalation” of its legal strategy and Bonta wants that suit tossed or moved to California, writes **Karen Zraick** for the NYT.

More than 600 employees at Yosemite and Sequoia and Kings Canyon national parks voted to unionize — 97% of those who voted — following mass firings and staff departures, **Lila Seidman** reports for the LA Times.

The Chiquita Canyon Landfill in LA County has spewed high levels of toxic gases and climate super-pollutants for years. **Liza Gross** writes for Inside Climate News about the health impact on some Angelenos and asks why local residents’ pleas for help from state officials remain unanswered. And a federal judge ruled on Friday that Los Angeles County met all of the legal requirements for a preliminary injunction, including demonstrating harm to residents and establishing that an injunction serves the public interest.

Some environmentalists and animal rights advocates are celebrating a hard-fought $30 million conservation deal in Point Reyes that “could pave the way toward a more pristine version of the park, with more space and water for native and endangered species, more amenities for recreators, and a more sustainable use of public land,” **Twilight Greenaway** reports for the San Francisco Standard.

And multiple wildfires now comprise the “TCU September Lightning Complex” in Northern California. The blazes have consumed nearly 12,000 acres as of Wednesday morning partly due to thousands of lightning strikes.

Rest of the World

This summer was the hottest on record in the UK, where unprecedented average temperatures were made about 70 times more likely by human-induced climate change, the Met Office says. The heat and wildfires has transformed summer in Europe and “begun to force difficult questions about the economic and cultural costs of adapting to a dangerously warming planet,” **Claire Brown** writes for NYT.

Apple can no longer advertise its Apple Watch as a “CO2-neutral product,” at least not in Germany after a court ruling there this week upheld a complaint finding that the claim was greenwashing. Climate scientist **David Ho** has been *watching* this story since 2023. Apple based its ‘carbon neutral’ claim on a Paraguay project to offset emissions, but the court found Apple couldn’t guarantee most of the contracts past 2029.

Scientists see “mega-drying” regions that are immense and expanding — one stretching from the western United States through Mexico to Central America, new research based on 22 years of satellite data shows. **Ian James** has the story.

Spain’s Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez announced a new climate pact for his country to respond to natural disasters such as wildfires, floods and storms by creating a new national agency.

The European Chemicals Agency recently expanded its proposal to restrict so-called “forever chemicals” from eight new industrial and commercial sectors.

The collapse of a critical Atlantic current can no longer be considered a low-likelihood event, according to one of the most read stories from the Guardian last week.

An article in Nature Communications set out to quantify how deforestation and global climate change interact to observe shifts in the transformation of the Amazon.

Media News



I’ve been writing about **Ann Carlson**’s forthcoming book “Smog and Sunshine: The Surprising Story of How LA Cleaned Up Its Air”. Last week, **Patt Morrison** also announced she has a forthcoming LA Times podcast series on LA’s successful battle against smog. She talked with Sammy Roth about it on the Boiling Point podcast.

NYT’s **Hiroko Tabuchi** put herself to the test for a first-person piece about a University of Connecticut laboratory that tests the impact of a warming world on the human body as death and illnesses are increasing from heat exposure.

Lawyer **Jingjing Zhang** got a nice profile by Inside Climate News for having “fought polluting Chinese companies for decades” and now she’s teaching lawyers across the Global South how to do the same.

Heatmap News launched what they call Climate 101, a primer on some of the key technologies of the energy transition.

Amid public media cuts, High Plains Public Radio is building a model for how to pay

“to cover more rural news with fewer resources” by building a deeper bench of paid contributors, Nieman Labs writes.

Hannah Steinweg, public policy and business development manager for California-based Rivian talked with Politico’s **Alex Nieves** about what California should do to boost EVs.

Craig Segall and **Hannah Safford** write for the Federation of American Scientists that the abundance agenda “isn’t really about whether or not regulations are good… It’s about unfreezing our politics by being clear and courageous about our goals for a society that works better and is capable of big things.”



The team that brought you Climate.gov is fighting back by building **Climate.us** — an independent, nonprofit successor to Climate.gov that will share and archive climate science. And they’re seeking donations.

Join others in defending science by attending **UCLA’s “Suspended Science Fair”** highlighting the science impacted by cancelled research grants. Two events Sept 10-11.

See **Bill McKibben** speak on his book tour supporting “Here Comes the Sun” including a stop in Santa Monica on Sept. 18 at 8pm.

Last Chance Alliance is running a campaign to tell California State Parks not to sign off on Sable Oil’s controversial plan to restart a pipeline off the coast of Santa Barbara.