

Replacing high-carbon fossil fuels with clean energy while also adapting to climate change — that’s the ballgame. But we may not get to the ninth inning in one piece if we don’t deal with methane first.

That’s one takeaway from the COP30 UN climate summit. Pick your metaphor — and there are many — but methane is Enemy No. 1 right now, because the extremely potent greenhouse gas is responsible for nearly a third of global warming but has a shorter life than carbon dioxide, breaking down in about 20 years. That’s why mitigating methane is also referred to as pulling a climate emergency brake.

“Cutting carbon dioxide is a marathon, but methane is a sprint,” Durwood Zaelke, head of the Institute for Governance and Sustainable Development, tells the Guardian’s **Fiona Harvey**, employing a track-and-field metaphor.

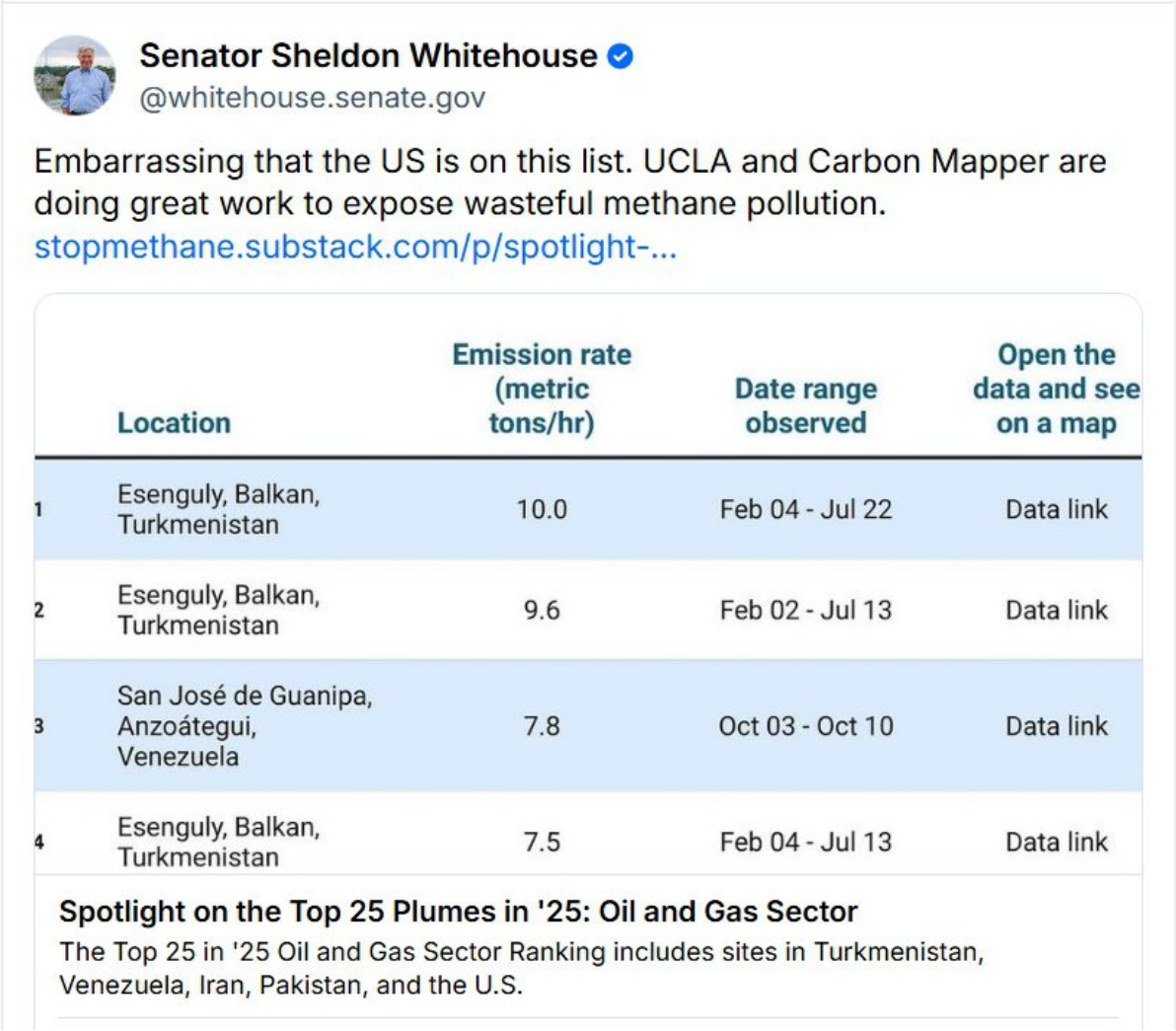
The good news: we’re gaining ground. Nearly 160 countries joined the Global Methane Pledge to cut methane emissions 30% by 2030, and many private companies say they plan to measure, monitor, and reduce methane. Huge leaks can be eliminated with today’s technology for relatively cheap or with cost *savings* to operators.

The bad news: we are not sprinting fast enough. A report out this week from the **UN Environment Programme** shows methane emissions from oil and gas operations, agriculture, and waste dumps are rising. Projected 2030 emissions are now lower than earlier forecasts due to new national laws, industry regulations, and market shifts. But current national climate goals would only get us an 8% reduction by 2030. "Only full-scale implementation of proven and available control measures will close the gap to the Global Methane Pledge's target of a 30% cut from 2020 levels by 2030" the report says. Another analysis published at COP by the Climate Action Tracker coalition shows that adhering to methane pledges would avoid nearly 1 degree C from projected temperature rises this century.

With all this mind, my UCLA Emmett Institute colleagues and I just launched **the STOP Methane Project**. We call it a user-friendly ranking of super-polluting methane emissions across sectors. The goal is to help make otherwise invisible emissions visible. We'll do this through a range of "Top 25" lists generated from publicly available, science-based information about the most extreme emissions sources, disseminated in a form that's easily understandable by journalists, operators of emitting facilities, legal and regulatory authorities, and the general public, to provide accountability and to motivate and assist in identifying and acting on the highest-priority emissions to cut, with breakdowns by emissions sector and region. You can see the lists and subscribe to our Substack here.

We just released our Spotlight on the Top 25 in '25: Oil and Gas Sector. The Top 25 sites are mostly in Turkmenistan — but also Venezuela, Iran, Pakistan, and the U.S. That's right. Why is a Texas gas well on this list of extreme methane emissions?

UCLA's STOP Methane project also got a big shoutout from **Sen. Sheldon Whitehouse** during a COP30 event on methane mitigation in Brazil. "Accountability matters," Whitehouse said, calling the launch of our rankings "a really important step." He used a different, non-sports metaphor, comparing methane trackers to "fire fighters who need to go to a location to put out the fire."



Senator Sheldon Whitehouse ✓
@whitehouse.senate.gov

Embarrassing that the US is on this list. UCLA and Carbon Mapper are doing great work to expose wasteful methane pollution.
stopmethane.substack.com/p/spotlight-...

	Location	Emission rate (metric tons/hr)	Date range observed	Open the data and see on a map
1	Esenguly, Balkan, Turkmenistan	10.0	Feb 04 - Jul 22	Data link
2	Esenguly, Balkan, Turkmenistan	9.6	Feb 02 - Jul 13	Data link
3	San José de Guanipa, Anzoátegui, Venezuela	7.8	Oct 03 - Oct 10	Data link
4	Esenguly, Balkan, Turkmenistan	7.5	Feb 04 - Jul 13	Data link

Spotlight on the Top 25 Plumes in '25: Oil and Gas Sector
The Top 25 in '25 Oil and Gas Sector Ranking includes sites in Turkmenistan, Venezuela, Iran, Pakistan, and the U.S.

There’s so many NGOs, philanthropies, and science groups dedicated to driving down methane, it feels like a team sport is probably the winning metaphor. Think of this as a full-court press on methane.

Speaking of Whitehouse, the Democratic senator from Rhode Island was holding it down as the lone U.S. government representative at the climate summit (he says the State Department made it harder for his congressional colleagues to attend). If you missed it, Whitehouse’s social media feeds were filled with videos of him walking the halls while munching on empanadas, visiting the China pavilion and reflecting on American’s abdication of leadership. Now that the senator is back in Washington, the United States government is truly missing in action at the UN climate talks.

What else is happening at COP30 in the final days? Brazil released a "summary of views and ways forward on tricky issues outside the formal agenda on Sunday night," according to Climate Home News. "They include the gap in ambition to 1.5 C, climate finance and trade measures." The goal is to fold them into a package at a plenary session today (Wed). So, today is viewed as "crunch day" to make progress on such an agreement, with Brazil President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva set to fly back to Belém.

Regarding a phase-out of fossil fuels, 82 countries throughout Europe, the Pacific islands, Latin America and Africa are tiptoeing toward a "roadmap" that various countries could agree to, "ratcheting up the stakes for United Nations climate change negotiations that end this week," writes Politico's **Zack Colman**.

South Korea joined a group of 60 countries pledging to wean itself off coal, the dirtiest of dirty fossil fuels



COP30 is "like every other international climate extravaganza" in that "it is simply a

mechanism for poor nations, which are poor because they are badly governed, shaking down wealthy nations for massive wealth transfers," opines the Washington Examiner in an Op-ed that blames Gov. Gavin Newsom for a "system of Californian climate colonialism."

It's not just right-wingers taking aim at the governor. "Newsom basically gets to be our international spokesman by default, not on merit. And unchallenged in settings such as the conference in Brazil, he has an unfettered license to trash the likes of Trump while praising himself," writes **Tom Philp** at Sac Bee, who cites California's climate ambitions being out of reach, lack of public transit support, and failure at high-speed rail. At his Climate Colored Goggles newsletter, **Sammy Roth** slams Newsom for not being ambitious enough on climate by rethinking the state's 2035 EV mandate.

But as my Emmett Institute colleague **Ann Carson** told LAT's **Melody Gutierrez**, Newsom's appearance in Brazil is symbolically important as the federal government targets California's decades-old authority to enforce its own environmental standards.

COP30 is like most COPs in that fossil fuel lobbyists are all over the place. One in every 25 participants at the Brazil summit is a fossil fuel lobbyist, according to **Kick Big Polluters Out**. "More than 1,600 fossil fuel lobbyists have been granted access to the Cop30 climate negotiations in Belém, significantly outnumbering every single country's delegation apart from the host," **Nina Lakhani** reports for the Guardian.

The Tropical Forests Forever Facility was a major story last week at COP30. Grist's **Frida Garza** and **Miacel Spotted Elk** have a look at why some Indigenous communities think the TFFF doesn't go far enough. There've been protests by Indigenous peoples, including last week in front of the main entrance**. "**The standoff ended peacefully after COP30 bosses, including president André Corrêa do Lago, joined the protesters and shepherded them to a meeting with environment minister Marina Silva," reports Climate Home News.

Meanwhile the world remains on track for a catastrophic 2.6-degree Celsius increase in temperature, according to the Climate Action Tracker Update and the Global Carbon Project.

Former VP **Al Gore** gave a speech and presentation at COP30, "33 years and 5 months after the Earth Summit in Brazil… a full-circle moment," as he called it. "We

are using it as an open sewer for 175 million tons of man-made global warming pollution spewed into it every single day… the accumulated amount today will trap as much extra heat as would be released by 750,000 first-generation atomic bombs exploding on the Earth every 24 hours. Literally insane we're allowing this to continue," Gore said.

And **Pope Leo XIV** said in a video message played for religious leaders gathered in Brazil that humans are failing in their response to global warming and that God's creation "is crying out in floods, droughts, storms and relentless heat."

Welcome to The Drain, a weekly roundup of environmental and climate news from Legal Planet. Our song this week is "Life's a Gas" by T-Rex. Here's what else is going on…

California Climate Politics



Tom Steyer. Photo: Gage Skidmore (CC BY-SA 2.0) https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Tom_Steyer_%2848011290647%29.jpg

The crowded field of candidates vying to be California's next governor just saw the addition of a climate activist and a billionaire businessman — but that's one candidate, not two. **Tom Steyer** joined the wide-open 2026 governor's race.

For decades, Steyer ran a San Francisco hedge fund and then devoted his time to environmental advocacy and politics, even running for president in 2020. His entrance will get a lot of media coverage that focuses on how his personal wealth will reshape the race, but it's just as notable for how Steyer will occupy a climate lane in the race and eject a different type of debate about energy affordability. In his campaign launch video, Steyer says he's proud of "taking on the oil companies" and that "Californians deserve a life they can afford." His activism through NextGen America "elevated Steyer's profile in recent years from little-known hedge fund manager to global climate activist," CalMatters notes, and he "has spent millions to pass progressive ballot measures to uphold California environmental laws." His entrance also sets up an interesting debate between him and candidates like former LA Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa, who has positioned himself as desperately moderate and friendly to the oil and gas industry.

At the Ninth Circuit, an important climate disclosure law is on hold. Yesterday, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit halted implementation of California's **Senate Bill 261**, a landmark law that requires big business entities to publicly disclose their climate-related financial risks and countermeasures. The related SB 253 gets to proceed. ESG Dive's **Zoya Mirza** has the details. The U.S. Chamber of Commerce and other business groups filed an emergency application with the U.S. Supreme Court last week

In California, we added 1,200 megawatts of battery energy storage to its electrical grid over the last six months, another feather in Newsom's cap at COP30. **Hayley Smith** reports for the LA Times that the battery power further builds on its nation-leading capacity and pushing the state closer to its clean energy goals.

David Hochschild, Chair of the California Energy Commission, shared that PG&E came and removed his home's gas meter at his request "since our family has now gone all-electric with cooking, heating/cooling and water heating, as well as driving."

Patagonia released a 130-page "Work in Progress Report" detailing its environmental impacts, supply chains, labor conditions and much more. "It's by far the most detail the company has ever publicly released, and it's much more

transparent than is the norm for privately held companies, or even some publicly traded ones," Ventura County Star's **Tony Biasotti** reports. Some sustainability advocates were quick to call it an acknowledgement of past greenwashing, but many more are applauding the report as laudable truth-telling.

Energy & Climate Elsewhere

In Massachusetts, we have an example of a so-called energy affordability bill that backtracks on climate goals and efficiency. "The legislation would make the state's 2030 emissions target nonbinding, slash funding for energy-efficiency programming, reinstate incentives for high-efficiency gas heating systems, and limit climate and clean-energy initiatives that impact customers' utility bills," reports **Sarah Shemkus** for Canary Media.

In Pennsylvania, Gov. Josh Shapiro agreed to withdraw from the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative, the Northeast's version of a carbon cap-and-trade program.

In New York, Gov. Hochul approved a new gas pipeline championed by Trump and cut a deal that will keep a gas-fueled cryptocurrency miner running for 5 more years. Plus, the Empire State will delay enforcement of its landmark rule limiting gas in new buildings until a legal dispute is settled. It's "the latest in a string of moves from Gov. Hochul to 'govern in reality' around energy," **Alison F. Takemura** reports for Canary Media.

Off the coast of New Jersey, the Leading Light Wind offshore project is going belly up. Their attorneys filed a letter on Nov. 7 to the New Jersey Board of Public Utilities informing the regulator it no longer sees any way to complete construction and wants to pull the plug, reports **Jael Holzman** at Heatmap News.

Congressional lawmakers — including Republican Sen. Kevin Cramer of North Dakota — are pushing back on Trump administration plans to end greenhouse gas reporting requirements for top polluters, known as the Greenhouse Gas Reporting Program.

A new analysis of consumer credit data by **The Century Foundation** and **Protect Borrowers** finds the average overdue balance on utility bills climbed from $597 to $789 — a 32 percent increase since 2022.

Can we really electrify everything in a world of increasingly high electricity prices? **Katie Brigham** looks into it for Heatmap News. Industrial decarbonization may favor carbon capture and sequestration pathways over electrification-driven approaches, sources tell Brigham.

Lawmakers nationwide should “lower power bills by cutting utility profits, rewarding the companies for boosting efficiency, and unleashing solar and storage,” writes **John Farrell** in an essay for Canary Media.

Los Angeles and the January Fires



What a wet and wild November! The week-long rain storm in Southern California brought 13.57 inches to San Marcos Pass near Santa Barbara, and somewhere between 3-7 inches to the Palisades and Eaton burn scars, **Jacob Margolis** reports for LAist. That’s good news for dampening LA’s fire season.

Edison International Chief Executive **Pedro Pizarro** sat down with LA Times reporter **Melody Peterson** for a pretty direct Q&A. Pizarro acknowledges the company’s equipment seems to be the cause of the Eaton fire and promises swift

payouts to fire victims willing to forgo lawsuits, saying the utility's equipment probably sparked the blaze.

New LA Fire Department Chief Jamie Moore supports a full investigation into how LAFD handled the Lachman Fire, which ultimately became the Palisades Fire, according to comments made during a meeting of the L.A. City Council's Public Safety Committee last week.

State Farm is facing another investigation into its handling of Eaton and Palisades fire insurance claims — this time a civil investigation focusing on "potential violations" of the state's unfair competition law , which prohibits unlawful or unfair business practices, LAist reports.

More good news: Will Rogers State Historic Park reopened this week following the damage from the Palisades fire. The community celebrated with a plant-and-pull service on Tuesday.

Earlier this month, the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors adopted the 2025 OurCounty Sustainability Plan, what it calls "the nation's most ambitious regional sustainability roadmap."

Last week, the Los Angeles World Airports Board of Airport Commissioners approved a $1-billion phase of spending for its new "roadway improvement plan" ahead of the 2028 Olympics. In theory it's supposed to "streamline traffic flow at airport entrances and exits and reduce jams," but UCLA Institute of Transportation Studies' **Jacob Wasserman** tells the LA Times that induced demand means it won't last. "They're pushing this through aggressively with the same contractor that screwed up the people mover," Streets for All founder **Michael Schneider** told the LAT.

And tomorrow (Thursday) the Loyola Center for Urban Resilience (CURes) is hosting its inaugural Cities and the Environment symposium.

Trump administration

The same FEMA chief who was MIA during the Texas flood disaster seems to have missed his own resignation. A DHS spokesperson issued a statement thanking David Richardson "for his dedicated service" and wishing him well at future endeavors, but when E&E News asked Richardson about his departure on Monday morning, he replied "I have no idea what you're talking about." He is in fact now out.

This week the Trump EPA proposed a revised definition of waters of the US that it views as in line with the US Supreme Court's 2023 ruling in *Sackett v. EPA*, "putting the second Trump administration's stamp on wetlands protections," Bloomberg Law reports.

The government shutdown is over, but the systematic dismantling of the nation's public lands and national parks is about to get worse, environmentalists tell **Alex Wigglesworth** at the LAT Boiling Point newsletter. Fun fact I did not know, Wigglesworth is a resident of the Mojave Desert outside of Joshua Tree.

Nearly a fifth of EPA's workforce has opted into President Donald Trump's mass resignation plan as he pushes to reduce the federal government's payroll, reports **Kevin Bogardus** at E&E News. About 2,620 employees have taken the "deferred resignation" offer at EPA.

Media and Advocacy News



"Last Week Tonight with John Oliver" does public media. It's as good as any explainer on the absurdity of defunding America's public media, and much funnier.

The clean energy company Palmetto is buying *The Cool Down*, a climate and sustainability news site known for its lifestyle focus and how-to guides, reports **Robinson Meyer**.

The Hollywood Climate Summit sent a save the date: June 2-4.

Third Act SoCal and Covering Climate Now are convening a free webinar on the future of climate journalism with some of the best in the biz: "Panelists will link the value of robust journalism to a strong Democracy." Register here: https://tinyurl.com/2p52b29h

Adrian Martinez has a heart-felt and informative remembrance of the late environmental activist **Jesse Marquez** at his "Through the Smog" Substack. "Nobody worked harder than Jesse. His battery to grind through comment period after comment period drafting voluminous letters providing evidence and reason opposing industries' lack of will to address aggressive public health crises was second to none."

What the hell happened to the Sierra Club?" asked my UCLA colleague **Jonathan Zasloff**, blogging about the recent NYT investigation. It was easily the most viewed Legal Planet post in the last week.

LAT reporter **Tyrone Beason** tagged along as 500 California middle schoolers participated in the Future Green Leaders Summit, a day-long event featuring live entertainment, hands-on workshops and a career fair to get students excited about climate-related careers. It's organized by the Southern California Regional Energy Network, which is administered by Los Angeles County and paid for by California Public Utility ratepayers.