



Image Credit: NASA

Hope, optimism, humility and awe have been in short supply. This week, I felt all of these things not once but twice — first while sitting in the dark at the movies and again while watching the NASA livestream of Artemis II's lunar flyby. There is nothing like space exploration to change your frame of reference.

First, the Hollywood version: I was pleasantly surprised by “Project Hail Mary,” the Ryan Gosling sci-fi blockbuster based on the Andy Weir book of the same name, in which an affable, unambitious science teacher finds himself on a mission to save the world(s) from a mysterious infection known as the “[astrophage](#).” The plot centers on a climate crisis, though not our current iteration. In the movie, the sun is slowly dying as astrophage eats away at its strength, leading to a sort of global cooling that threatens to starve humanity. Having written an obscure dissertation that touches on the subject, Gosling's character must accompany the small crew on a suicide mission to send back samples to help scientists on Earth develop solutions to this climate crisis.

The narrative is equal parts sweet, terrifying, and goofy. Think “ET” meets “Cast Away” except instead of Tom Hanks talking to a volleyball, Gosling is chatting,

through AI translation, with an alien life form that teams up with him to save the galaxies.

The movie's too slapstick to be taken uber seriously, but the fact that its central hero is a molecular biologist who shows curiosity and [intellectual humility](#) to help solve climate change makes it an ideal parable for how to approach our own climate crisis. Notably, a stoic global administrator named Eva Stratt — not unlike the international climate bureaucrat archetype that often occupies Kim Stanley Robinson stories — is empowered by nations of the world to make the hardest decisions on behalf of humanity. And (SPOILER ALERT) it's a parable of *success* not failure, as **Solitaire Townsend** [writes here](#). "If we're going to change the climate story from tragedy to triumph, we could do far worse than to take our cues from a slightly awkward scientist and a very charming alien, floating in the dark, stubbornly and brilliantly, figuring it out." Amen.

Kudos to Amazon MGM Studios, directors Phil Lord and Christopher Miller, writer Drew Goddard, and all the producers for making such a movie at this moment of peril with little bravery for telling climate stories. Hollywood is on something of a roll: Last month, Pixar released "Hoppers" which brings a "beautiful environmental message" to audiences, as **Sammy Roth** [writes](#).



The lunar surface as seen during the Artemis II lunar flyby, while Earth sets in the background. Image Credit: NASA

This week also brought us the real-life story of hero scientists who sent back some totally unreal photos and videos. We watched the crew of NASA's Artemis II livestream from the Orion space capsule — which they named "Integrity," citing the need for trust, respect, and humility to be successful in their missions — while they looped around the moon, putting these astronauts farther into space than humans have ever ventured before, surpassing the previous record for the farthest distance traveled from Earth by humans: 248,655 statute miles away from Earth.

It was clearly moving for the four astronauts. "I had an overwhelming sense of being moved by the moon," mission specialist **Christina Koch** said while surveying the moon from the window. "It is a real place, and when we have that perspective and we compare it to our home of the Earth it just reminds us how much we have in common — everything we need the Earth provides, and that is in and of itself somewhat of a miracle."

From space, you don't see boundaries or countries or even people, as the Apollo 8 crew described it upon returning from the moon's orbit way back in 1968. "A blue

marble” floating in the “inky black void,” they called it. That voyage brought us the so-called Earthrise photo that has been called “the most influential environmental photo ever taken.” It changed our POV forever.



The OG Earthrise. Credit: NASA

“I suddenly realized that everything in life is irrelevant,” Apollo 8 astronaut **Jim Lovell** [famously recalled](#). “When you’re in a room your world revolves around those walls. When you’re outside, then your world revolves around what your eye can see. When you’re in a spacecraft you think in terms of oceans, of islands.” Such was the power of Earthrise in the late Sixties to help galvanize an environmental movement.

Hopefully [the latest photo dump from NASA’s Artemis II](#) can have a similar effect, because we could really use it. They captured a total solar eclipse seen from a few thousand miles above the surface of the moon. They saw meteoroids hit the moon.

And captured stunning Earthrise photos. They are feeding [viral video](#) after [viral video](#) on social media of observers marveling over the Milky Way. If you haven't yet taken the time, do so now and let them blow your mind.

Welcome to *The Drain*, a weekly roundup of environmental and climate news from Legal Planet. Our song this week is ["An Ending \(Ascent\)"](#) by Brian Eno.

War and Energy



Last night was the deadline for Trump's war-crime-level threats about bombing the energy infrastructure of Iran. He called it off for 2 weeks and oil prices plunged, for now.

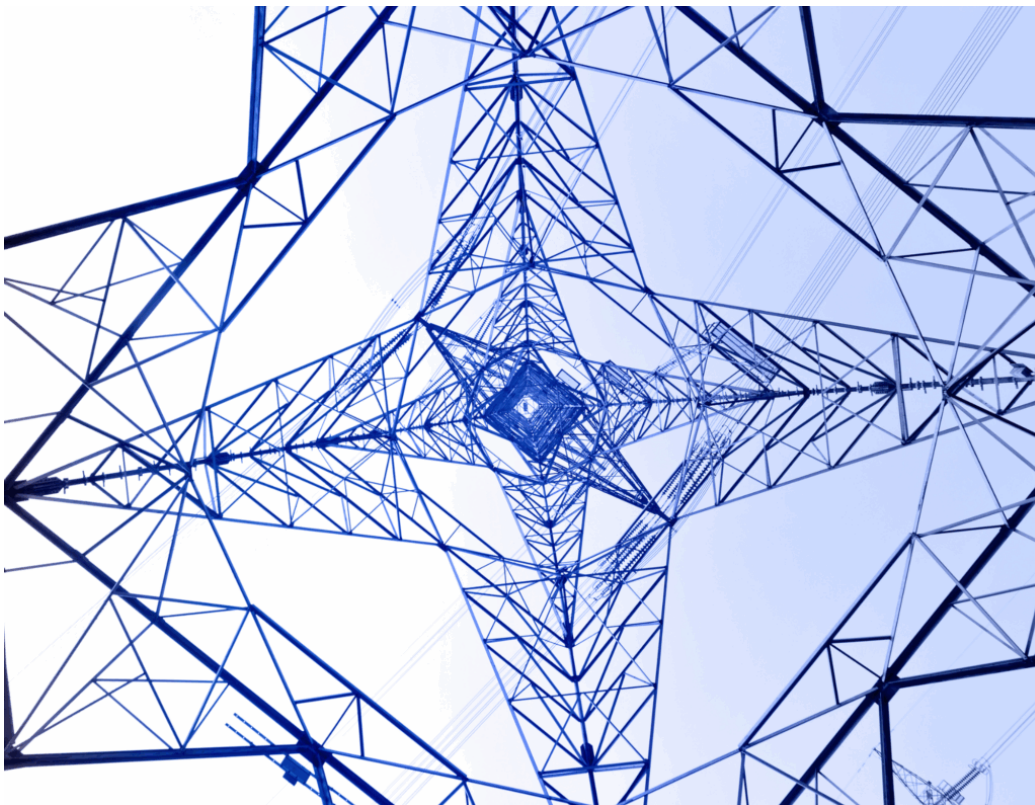
But the despicable war on Iran is boosting the fortunes of renewable energy and the countries that have invested in clean energy. "Achieving energy security is now an overwhelming imperative," **Jonathan Mingle** [writes](#) for an NYT opinion essay. The war "could be what pushes many world leaders and households to turn against fossil fuels for good," [writes Justin Gerdes](#), citing the president of South Korea.

The International Energy Agency has [started publishing](#) a country-by-country look at emergency measures taken because of the war.

Residents of Hawaii may see their bill grow by as much as 30% thanks to being closer to Asia, Matthew Zeitlin [reports](#).

Eighty-five countries of the world previously sought a roadmap to phasing out fossil fuels and many of them are meeting this month in Colombia for a conference to begin a global transition away from oil, gas and coal. **Mark Hertsgaard and Kyle Pope** [note that](#) the [First International Conference on the Just Transition Away from Fossil Fuels](#) will not be governed by UN rules, which require consensus.

More Energy



The small Wisconsin city of Port Washington voted overwhelmingly yesterday to restrict data centers, in [a first-of-its-kind referendum](#) that Politico reports “could offer a blueprint for AI infrastructure opponents around the country.” Voters approved the measure by a roughly 2-to-1 margin, [according to unofficial results](#).

And Maine is poised to be the first state to freeze construction of large data centers. A new bill would create a moratorium on data centers of at least 20 megawatt until November 2027, so the state can assess the impact the AI boom is having on the power grid and the environment, the WSJ [reports](#).

Of course, regulation matters more in states where data centers are concentrated. Legislative responses are continuing apace in the top five states for data center fights – Virginia, Pennsylvania, Texas, Georgia and Indiana, **Jael Holzman** [reports](#) for Heatmap News. Virginia “is almost certainly the furthest ahead on regulating data centers, but is also far from enacting any blanket restrictions.”

A [ProPublica investigation looks](#) at 15 laws that have either been passed or are currently being debated in 11 states that threaten to remove long-standing tools for the public to hold corporations (especially fossil fuel companies) accountable. “Most of these bills are part of a coordinated effort” linked to Leonard Leo, [reports](#) **Abrahm Lustgarten**.

Balcony solar keeps winning fans in statehouses. Dozens of states in the U.S. are considering legislation to allow residents to use DIY plug-in solar. [Follow the efforts](#) at this Canary Media tracker from **Sarah Shemkus**.

Brazil could be the next big country to deploy offshore wind while the Trump administration is busy paying developers not to build wind energy. Brazil has established guidelines for the regulation of offshore wind development, which include rules for defining development areas, allocating sites and structuring permitting procedures, offshorewind.biz [reports](#).

A startup called Merino Energy is aiming to bring heat pumps to the masses with the Merino Mono, an all-in-one, wall-mounted heat pump that can plug into a 120-volt outlet and be installed in just one hour, [reports](#) **Emily Pontecorvo** for Heatmap News.

Middle and high school students in Palo Alto are urging officials to tell residents about the harms of gas stoves and the benefits of cleaner cooking, Canary Media’s **Alison Takemura** [reports](#). Meanwhile, one California power provider [has demonstrated](#) that homes can ditch fossil-fueled appliances without pricey electrical service upgrades after all.

EVs



Three Democratic senators (Tammy Baldwin, Elissa Slotkin and Chuck Schumer) urged Trump to bar Chinese automakers from building vehicles here and to prevent Chinese cars assembled in Mexico or Canada from entering the U.S., Reuters [reports](#).

Polestar, the Swedish-based and Chinese-owned electric car maker, says that the Polestar 3 flagship electric SUV will soon be assembled exclusively in the U.S. InsideEVs [reports](#) it will make it the only American-made EV in the company's portfolio.

And a BYD spokesperson [tells](#) InsideEVs that the Chinese company has deployed 5,000 of its new, second-generation Flash charging stations, which delivers unheard-of EV charging speeds.

A new report by Idle Giants finds that “legacy heavy-duty truck manufacturers—specifically Daimler Truck, TRATON, and Volvo Group—are currently failing to secure their competitive futures by pursuing low-volume, high-price

strategies for electric trucks.” [The researchers find](#) that these companies are shooting themselves in the foot by limiting their ability to build necessary scale, while their policy advocacy is undermining government support that could help them achieve it.

Meanwhile, Tesla’s electric trucks are going into production after a decade of chatter. But challenges remain, Latitude Media [reports](#).

Los Angeles and California

The poster features a background image of a traffic jam with cars in a smoggy atmosphere. A white text box at the top contains the text: "JOIN US FOR A BOOK TALK" in yellow, "SMOG AND SUNSHINE" in large black letters, "THE SURPRISING STORY OF HOW LOS ANGELES CLEANED UP ITS AIR" in smaller black letters, and "UCLA LAW'S ANN CARLSON" in yellow. Below this, on the left, is a white box with the date and time: "APRIL 10, 2026", "12:15 - 1:30 PM", and "RECEPTION TO FOLLOW", along with a QR code. In the center is a circular portrait of Ann Carlson, a woman with glasses. On the right is a 3D rendering of the book cover, which has a purple top half with the title "SMOG AND SUNSHINE" and a bottom half with a sunset scene and the subtitle "THE SURPRISING STORY OF HOW LOS ANGELES CLEANED UP ITS AIR" and the author's name "ANN CARLSON".

From April 8-15, Los Angeles will come alive with 200 or so community-led events under the banner of LA Climate Week. See the whole [event calendar here](#). One event is a [book talk](#) this Friday by my UCLA Emmett Institute colleague **Ann Carlson**, whose “Smog and Sunshine” came out yesterday.

After being lobbied, Gov. Newsom is advancing a clean jet fuel plan that could funnel hundreds of millions in road dollars to a struggling oil refinery, **Alejandro**

Lazo reports for CalMatters. “The credit, drawn from funds voters designated for highways and local streets, could also raise gas prices for most drivers.” Hearing tomorrow.

“I want to love public transportation, but it’s difficult,” writes **Andrew Campa** for the LAT Essential California newsletter. Campa tested transit routes from Riverside and Fullerton to LAX and had some challenges involving restrooms, charging outlets, and delays. Metrolink and LA Metro should [read his report](#).

Even after one of California’s largest toxics cleanup efforts, nearly 70% of remediated homes near the former Exide battery smelter in Southeast L.A. still exceeded the state’s soil lead threshold, a study from UC Irvine [has found](#).

A new bill, AB 1938, authored by Assemblymember Jacqui Irwin would designate state surfing reserves using the California Coastal Act, **Laylan Connelly reports** for the Orange County Register.

California Assemblymember Marc Berman recently introduced the Home Energy Choice Act (AB 2313), a bill that would require utilities to offer customers a financial incentive to electrify their homes rather than replace aging gas service lines. My UCLA Emmett Institute colleague **Elias van Emmerick** has [co-written a new analysis](#) about the bill.

Trump Administration

Even though the importance of science was on display from the moon this week, science is again on the chopping block. The Trump administration [released its proposed budget](#) for 2027. The budget blueprint includes [significant cuts to NASA](#), but it targets even more severe limits for other science-focused agencies, with no agencies spared.

John Timmer reports that the document is laced with blatantly political language and resurfaces grievances that have been the subject of right-wing ire for years.

In [a fact sheet](#) entitled, “Ending the Green New Scam,” the White House says “President Trump is committed to eliminating funding for the globalist climate agenda while unleashing American energy production.”

The EPA has published a rule that would roll back a piece of Biden’s methane

regulations for oil and gas drillers, and says it's working on a more dramatic reversal, **Rachel Frazin** [reports](#) at The Hill.

The U.S. Forest Service is [closing](#) 57 of its 77 research facilities in 31 states under a reorganization plan announced this week, threatening science that looked at how wildfires, drought, pests and global warming are putting pressure on forests.

It will shut down six of eight U.S. Forest Service research facilities in California as part of a major national reorganization that could leave the state underequipped to manage escalating wildfire and drought threats, SF Chronicle [reports](#).

EPA Administrator Lee Zeldin said last week that the federal government would try to curb levels of microplastics and pharmaceuticals in the drinking water of hundreds of millions of Americans. Environmentalists [told](#) the New York Times essentially that it's a good first baby step but were skeptical the administration would follow through.

Zeldin and many of the administration's go-to climate skeptics are taking part in a Heartland Institute symposium or as **Brad Johnson** [calls it](#) "the 16th annual weirdly pathetic climate denier lovefest taking place Wednesday and Thursday at Hotel Washington. It will have the same dozen conspiracy theorists (now very old) as usual, this time with the U.S. EPA Administrator and the governor of West Virginia."

Media and Communications



The Associated Press, one of the world's oldest and most influential news organizations, is offering buyouts to about 5% of its U.S.-based journalists. AP's media writer [reports](#) it is part of an acceleration away from the focus on newspapers and their print journalism that sustained the company since the mid-1800s.

McClatchy journalists say no to AI. Sacramento Bee staffers have refused bylines over a new AI tool, the Wrap [reports](#), as colleagues at the Miami Herald and Charlotte Observer harbor concerns too.

CBS News is laying off national environmental correspondent **David Schechter**, leaving no one at the network dedicated to covering climate change, [according](#) to Media Matters. "Schechter was not just covering climate as an abstract issue. He was reporting on how it was affecting people in real time and who was being left exposed."

Canary Media just turned 5! Canary [launched](#) on the premise that "the energy transition, the greatest economic and industrial transformation of our lifetimes, deserved a newsroom entirely dedicated to covering it" and does so without a

paywall.

Wanna learn how activists can leverage strategic communications in campaigns like the one to push Disneyland to electrify its rides? Activist/organizer **Zan Dubin** speaks with award-winning journalist and media strategist **Tracy Wholf** for [this LA Climate Week event](#) devoted to that topic.