



Three years ago, I [made the case](#) that Taylor Swift should write a climate anthem because movements need their own music. It hasn't happened yet.

But if you dig a little deeper than the Billboard Hot 100, there are songwriters today who include environmental messages in their music and they follow in the footsteps of pioneers from the last century like Joni Mitchell and Marvin Gaye. That's why I've been listing a "song of the week" for every edition of The Drain, my weekly roundup of environmental and climate news.

***Here in time for Earth Day is a Climate Playlist from The Drain (on [Apple Music](#) and [Spotify](#)). It's an eclectic mix and some are more explicit than others.***

Some are obvious (Miley Cyrus' "1 Sun) and biting (Tracy Chapman's "The Rape of the World") and quite literal ("Kyoto Now!" by Bad Religion) while others are more tongue-in-cheek (YACHT's "Dystopia" and Childish Gambino's "Feels Like Summer").

Some of these songs touch on environmental themes only abstractly, like the underwater sludge and the hole-in-the-sky motifs from "Monkey Gone to Heaven" by Pixies. In Billie Eilish's "all the good girls go to hell", the climate-infused lyrics are

blatant but brief (“hills burn in California” and “once waters start to rise”).

I'm taking some liberties here and there. Some of these bangers weren't likely intended to have any climate message, but that can be easily adopted (Paramore's “Emergency”). And some are just sad songs that capture mourning and depression (“Farewell Transmission” by Songs: Ohia) or love and longing (“Fire” by Waxahatchee) so well that they hit a more universal truth that fits my purpose here. Whether rage, anger or joy, emotions are powerful motivators.



Let me know what you think and if there's a climate anthem I should add to this ongoing playlist. Here's what else is going on...

## Good News

During March, the U.S. got more electricity from renewables than it did from natural gas, which is typically the single-largest source of energy on the U.S. grid, Canary Media's **Dan McCarthy** [reports](#).

The largest renewable energy project ever built in the U.S. has begun generating electricity. SunZia has quietly begun sending enormous amounts of wind power to California, **Benjamin Storrow** [reports](#) for E&E News. It's the culmination of “a two-decade push to deliver wind power generated in New Mexico to consumers in

California" and it could [produce](#) roughly 1 percent of the nation's electricity needs.

Sales of EVs are surging in Europe. Over 224,000 battery EVs were registered last month, as businesses and consumers respond to soaring oil prices, Business Green [reports](#).

100 percent of Oakland Unified School District's buses are electric. You read that right, all 74 buses are [fully electric](#) as of the start of the school year this August, making Oakland the first-in-the-nation all-electric school bus fleet, [according](#) to State Sen. **Josh Becker**.

The 105-megawatt Pastoria Solar Project, a sparkling new solar plant, is [set to open next month](#) and will help cleanly power the essential Edmonston Pumping Plant, which connects water to 27 million people in Southern California.

Maryland will likely soon be the first state to impose air conditioning standards in apartment buildings. A [bill that passed](#) the state Legislature last week, which Democratic Gov. Wes Moore is expected to sign, comes amid record-breaking heat.

In China, some EV owners now have the option to just swap out a low battery for a fully charged one, instead of waiting at a charging station. The whole process only takes about three minutes, **John Ruwitch** [tested it out](#) for NPR in a story that was longer than the battery swap itself.

## **The Courts**



Secret memos obtained by **Jodi Kantor** and **Adam Liptak** for [a big story in the NYT](#) detail the origins of the court's "shadow docket" rulings on presidential power: Chief Justice John Roberts' eagerness to block climate policy. Over just 5 days, the justices basically decided the issue behind closed doors and through memos. And in the entire chain of correspondence, not a single justice, conservative or liberal, mentioned the dangers of a warming planet as one of the possible harms the court should consider.

Speaking of the Supreme Court, the justices [ruled Friday](#) that energy companies like Chevron facing lawsuits over environmental damage to the Louisiana waterfront from oil and gas production can move those cases from state to federal court, which are often friendlier.

Republican lawmakers [have introduced](#) federal legislation literally called the "Bill To Shield American Energy Producers From Leftist Climate Litigation" that would give oil and gas companies immunity from any laws or lawsuits that aim to hold them accountable for their role in the climate crisis.

Like Hawaii, which has the right to sue fossil fuel companies in state court, a US District Court for the District of Hawaii [said](#) last Wednesday. It ends a Trump administration lawsuit that tried to limit the state's ability to go after the companies, Bloomberg Law [reports](#).

Environmental groups have [filed six lawsuits](#) against the Trump administration and the so-called “God Squad” over its decision to exempt oil and gas drilling in the Gulf of Mexico from complying with the Endangered Species Act

Oregon's [Climate Protection Program](#) faces a new lawsuit challenging the state's authority to impose financial penalties on carbon emitters. The lawsuit by gas utilities, trade associations and labor unions alleges the program will drastically increase energy costs for businesses and consumers, Axios [reports](#).

The NAACP is suing Elon Musk's xAI for installing a massive gas plant to power its data center near Memphis without obtaining the required air permits and putting the nearby community at risk, Bloomberg Law [reports](#).

Conservative legal analyst **Sarah Isgur** is out with a new book called [“Last Branch Standing”](#) and is [doing the rounds](#) talking about what has gone wrong with the Roberts court in the Trump era and she has suggestions for how the justices could fix their credibility.

## Energy and EVs



European governments are calling for a much faster deployment of clean energy to combat fossil fuel shocks as the Iran energy crisis shows no end in sight. Today, the

EU's 27 foreign affairs ministers met to sign off on an updated policy directive.

California led the nation in new volume of distributed solar by adding 2 GW, followed by New York with 1.2 GW and Maine with 1.1 GW, [according](#) to PV Magazine. Maine is now the state with the highest per capita distributed solar capacity, with growth driven heavily by community solar development.

In Texas, the world's largest data center project, not only backed by Trump allies at Fermi America but literally bearing Trump's name, has been stalled by delays and logistical hurdles that could stop it before it even starts, **Amy Harder** [reports](#) for Axios. **Michael Thomas** [shares on X](#) that the project was supposed to complete the first million square feet this month but satellite images, show the project hasn't begun construction of its first buildings.

In New York, Rockland County approved a subsidy for the expansion of a JPMorganChase data center near the New Jersey border. In return for nearly \$77 million in tax breaks, the project promised to create exactly one permanent job, **Colin Kinniburgh** [reports](#) for NY Focus.

Paying off TotalEnergies is a total scam: New documents [reviewed by](#) Heatmap's **Emily Pontecorvo** show that "Americans' side of the bargain appears to be worthless. Trump's deal to buy back the multinational energy company's U.S. offshore wind leases costs us \$133,333,333.

In the first year of Trump 2.0, two federal programs critical to the growth of solar energy production — REAP and the clean energy tax credit — have been rolled back and it's hurting farmers. AP and Grist [analyzed the data](#) and found that USDA hasn't awarded a dollar in rural energy grants or loan guarantees that some rural farmers were relying on.

Last year was bad for zero-emissions trucks. But medium-duty trucks, think delivery trucks, saw a 62 percent surge in zero-emission vehicle registrations year over year, **Alexander Kaufman** notes at Heatmap News.

Recent months have been good for Hyundai whose U.S. EV sales jumped 40% between February and March, which the company [attributes](#) to higher gasoline prices.

## Public Lands

The Senate [voted along party lines](#) to revoke a 20-year mineral withdrawal protecting 225,378 acres of public lands in the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness watershed in Minnesota from toxic mining.

They used the Congressional Review Act to do so. It's a dramatic new example of how in Trump 2.0, Republicans have stretched the CRA's deregulatory powers, **Jeva Lange** [writes](#).

**Earthjustice** [says](#) it is weighing legal options because the move "puts one of the country's most visited Wilderness Areas in danger of permanent pollution from a proposed sulfide-ore copper-nickel mine that Chilean mining giant Antofagasta has long sought to develop directly upstream of the Boundary Waters."

## Los Angeles and California



Last week Mayor Karen Bass [unveiled her new climate action plan](#). It's a comprehensive document with lots of policies for decarbonization, water

conservation, extreme heat, and nature-based solutions.

Tomorrow City Council member Nithya Raman, who is challenging Bass, is releasing her campaign's climate platform, I'm told. We'll dig into the details in a future newsletter.

Even though California lawmakers rolled back electric-building requirements for fire survivors, some in Altadena and the Palisades are rebuilding all-electric anyway for health and climate reasons. **Blanca Begert** [has a story looking](#) at how new incentive programs and subsidies are helping fire survivors rebuild without gas infrastructure in their homes. And the group Resilient Palisades is [doing great work](#) in publicizing the options for survivors to save money and rebuild all-electric.

On Friday, the Board of Forestry and Fire Protection rolled out a looser set of "Zone Zero" rules, targeting the first five feet around homes in fire-prone areas. POLITICO [reports](#) that the "new draft represents a compromise: homeowners would still have to clear out most combustible materials, but could keep some well-maintained plants." Instead of roughly three years, homeowners could now have up to five to comply though it applies to new construction immediately.

San Diego, once a poster child for drought, is looking to become a water exporter that sells it to others thanks in part to the Claude "Bud" Lewis Carlsbad Desalination Plant, The Wall Street Journal [reports](#).

A California judge ruled last Friday that the Trump administration's order that Sable ship its offshore oil to market does not release it from the limits she previously placed on the operation, **Noah Baustin** [reports](#) for POLITICO. Santa Barbara Superior Court Judge Donna Geck on Friday ruled that the restart ran afoul of her previous court order. Geck's ruling follows similar logic as challenges to Trump's war on wind projects, my UCLA Law colleague **Allan Marks** [told the LA Times](#), "that the pipelines cannot legally be restarted without complying with state permitting requirements."

The Bowtie Wetland Demonstration site is one of many planned projects to renaturalize and open up the Taylor Yard industrial area around the LA River and KCRW's **Alexandra Applegate** [filed a report](#) from the river.

## Climate Politics

High fossil fuel prices are driving some U.S. state leaders to propose rolling back climate goals but it's faulty logic and they are inaccurately blaming clean energy for rising electricity prices, Bloomberg [points out](#).

This [new report](#) by three former policy thinkers from the Biden administration, and [shared](#) with Heatmap News, provides an inside perspective on what worked and what went wrong with the Inflation Reduction Act and the nearly 30 clean energy tax credits. The goal is to share insights with future policymakers and officials for next time.

A recent [paper](#) by the Energy Institute at Haus shows why voters don't think the way economic experts do when it comes to pricing pollution. "They may prefer standards because they misunderstand policies' total costs and the allocation of these costs between power plants and customers," Joseph Shapiro [writes](#).

## Media and Communications



Japan [has a new term](#) for extreme heat. “Cruelly hot” or “kokusho-bi” in Japanese, is what the weather agency will now use, as heatwave days become increasingly frequent in the region. By using this designation, the Japan Meteorological Agency “will more effectively call for vigilance against extremely high temperatures.”

Some 44 percent of American adults worry a great deal about global warming or climate change, [according to Gallup](#), which is near a record level in polling data that goes back to 1989. Other polling puts the number higher, still it's interesting because Gallup [calls](#) this a high point.

A new low for oil & gas sponsorships in major league baseball? **Sammy Roth** [writes a column](#) connecting racism and environmental justice, reporting that the Texas Rangers have installed a statue at their ballpark modeled after a law enforcement officer infamous for enforcing segregation. Among other big oil connections, the Rangers' majority owner is Ray Davis, co-founder of Energy Transfer, the oil and gas company that operates the [Dakota Access Pipeline](#).

Do links hurt publishers sharing their stories on social media? Absolutely, at least when it comes to X, Nieman Labs [reports](#).

The Onion has reached a deal [to acquire](#) Infowars (yes, really), the conspiracy theory media empire of Alex Jones.

A [new project](#) by public radio host and podcaster **Elise Hu** called WINDSWEPT is a coming-of-age documentary film about “growing up after your world burns down.” The film follows four teens from different communities who were displaced by LA's wildfires in January 2025, as they cope with extraordinary loss, all while navigating the ordinary challenges of adolescence.