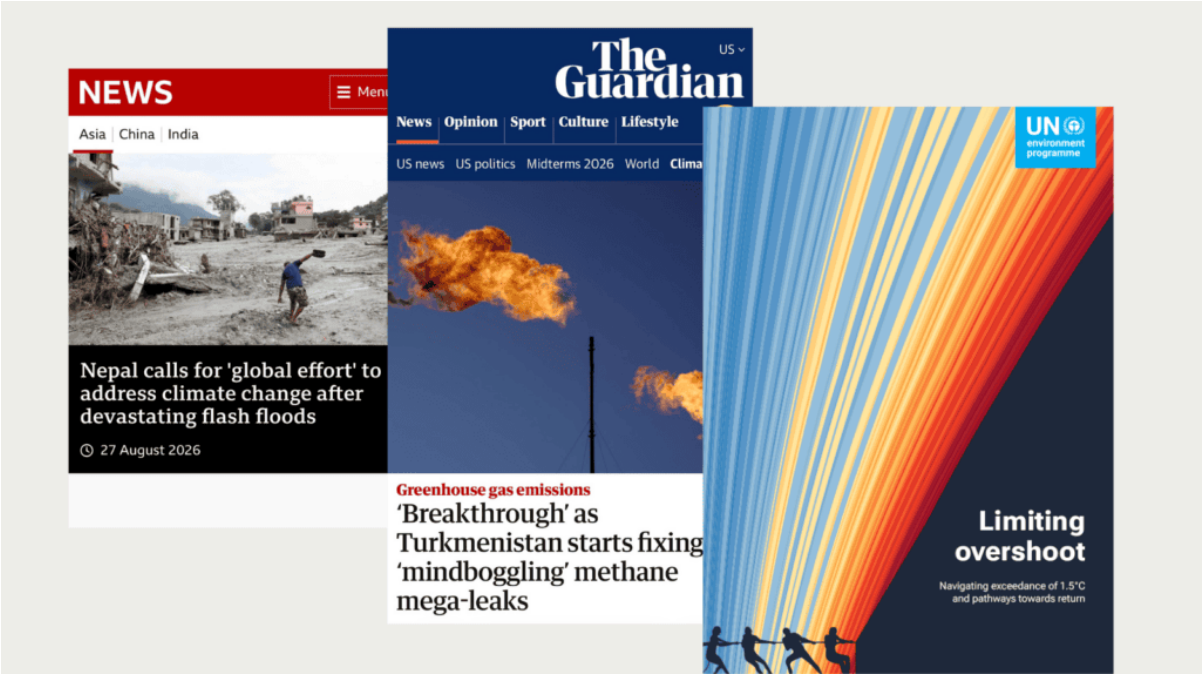


It was the best of times, it was the worst of times — this week, like most weeks.

The UN Environment Programme's new report, "Limiting Overshoot: Navigating exceedance of 1.5°C and pathways toward return" was simultaneously big news and yet met with stony silence in many quarters of the media. The report narrates what it means that we're entering an era of 1.5°C overshoot and highlights the choices that remain available.

IMO this summary of the UN report provided by **Ayana Elizabeth Johnson** for the "What If We Get It Right?" Substack is your best bet for the TL;DR version. Johnson breaks it down this way:

- We will soon pass 1.5°C of planetary heating.
- Carbon Dioxide Removal (CDR) won't save us.
- Fossil fuels have got to go.
- We need to fix agriculture.
- We need to majorly invest in adaptation.
- And some blame where it's due.

Look no further than the continuing news from Nepal, where climate change helped melt the permafrost that held a glacier in place, to see how this unfair and unsustainable new abnormal is playing out in real time. The cost of recovery is $5

Billion from that recent disaster that has left thousands dead or missing. “Those who have contributed the least are suffering the most,” a senior Nepali official said.

Meanwhile, here in the U.S., the federal government just acknowledged we had the hottest summer on record: NOAA says the average temperature for June–August 2026 was the warmest for the contiguous U.S. in the 132-year record, exceeding the previous records, set in 1936 and 2021.

But wait, there is some potentially very good news from Turkmenistan — not a sentence one types frequently!

Turkmenistan’s secretive state government, which runs nearly all of the oil and gas operations there, appears to have begun some important repairs on aging facilities to prevent massive methane leaks. There’s evidence from UN data that Turkmenistan has started plugging several big leaks, in a move that’s been hailed as a possible breakthrough, **Damian Carrington** reports for the Guardian.

This development comes after several years of bad news and being revealed as one of the worst, chronic super-emitters of the potent greenhouse gas. For instance, when UCLA’s STOP Methane Project released a Top 25 global list of super-emitting methane plumes for 2025, the majority of that list (15 of 25!) consisted of oil and gas sites in Turkmenistan. Now that looks to be changing.

Carrington was also a guest on the Guardian’s podcast, talking about how reducing methane is “a quick way to slow climate change, so why isn’t everyone doing it?” As climate writer **George Monbiot** noted “it’s not often you can pinpoint real, positive change a journalist has caused. But as Turkmeni sources state, Carrington’s persistent and probing coverage of this issue has been critical to a change of policy, with massive implications.” It also points to the incredible power of satellite data in the hands of journalists.

Welcome to The Drain, a roundup of environmental and climate news. This week’s song is “Time is Up” by Poppy (feat. Diplo), one of 500+ songs on my climate playlist (on Spotify and Apple Music).

MORE MEDIA

Jeff St. John, Canary Media’s chief reporter and policy specialist, is launching a

new newsletter called California Wire. He says it'll get into the nitty-gritty of the state's clean energy transition. St. John has been a must-read on all things clean energy with a particular expertise for West Coast energy policy, so this is great news. Subscribe here.

Do you know about **the Washington Sun**? If you saw the news two weeks ago that the Trump administration was quietly working to give part of Yosemite National Park to a developer, then you benefited from their reporting. Formerly called NOTUS, the expanding site is now called the Washington Sun, and they have 110 journalists in their newsroom. They report this week that Trump is planning to significantly reorganize the National Park Service.

KERA public media and Grist announced the hire of reporter **Celeste Guajardo** to cover the impacts of climate change in North and West Texas, from worsening extreme weather to shifting energy systems and economies. Guajardo will be based at KERA in Dallas and starts in October. It's the latest in the continued expansion of Grist's Local News Initiative.

SCOTUSblog is adding a SCOTUSblog Plus. What does Plus include? "Our daily newsletter, SCOTUStoday; extra deep dives on the court; live insight behind our coverage, from those reporters and experts most familiar with it; super interesting stats on the court you won't be able to get anywhere else; and even text alerts on the latest decisions, orders, and assignments from the court as they're announced."

DATA CENTERS

If there's one place in the world that data centers aren't sucking up all the oxygen in the room, it's COP31. "Data centers are driving skyrocketing electricity demand — but they're not factoring into global climate talks," writes **Sara Schonhardt** for POLITICO's Surge newsletter.

U.S. EPA is considering a rule that could treat some temporary gas turbines as mobile equipment rather than stationary pollution sources, Axios reports today.

New Hampshire's Republican Gov. Kelly Ayotte says she will propose a likely multiyear moratorium on data center development in the state, noting that such facilities would mean higher electricity bills for residents.

Massachusetts Gov. Maura Healey announced new regulations surrounding the

development of prospective data centers this week. “Data centers will need to get local community support to secure state permits, including having a community benefits agreement in place with the host community,” NBC Boston reports.

Ohio has emerged as one of the top states for data center developers, with roughly 100 of the facilities already up and running and nearly 150 more on the way. But many of those planned facilities may never get built, reports **Kathiann M. Kowalski** for Canary Media.

Emily Atkin at HEATED asked the big tech co’s what they had to say about new research showing that their AI tools and cloud computing could massively boost carbon emissions from fossil fuel production. Their answers were less than substantial.

Big Tech can do better by addressing three key aspects of their operations, writes USC’s **Allison Agsten** in an op-ed at CalMatters. Those aspects are: “early and transparent communication, life-changing community benefits, and use of green energy.”

LITIGATION



Mark your calendars and bookmark this long read: The Supreme Court will hear oral

arguments on October 5 in *Suncor Energy v. County Commissioners of Boulder County*, a very big climate case. My UCLA Law colleagues **Alejandro Camacho** and **Cara Horowitz** have the Legal Planet Guide to Suncor v. Boulder. They lay out the parties, the arguments, and the most likely outcomes. The guide will be updated so bookmark it for future reference.

Pipeline giant Energy Transfer has not yet been charged, but it is already moving to head off a criminal case over the monthslong jet fuel leak into a Pennsylvania neighborhood's drinking water source, **Marianne Lavelle** reports for Inside Climate News.

The Ninth Circuit this week refused to revive a building industry coalition's lawsuit challenging the state of Washington's regulations that discourage natural gas appliances in new construction. The appellate court held in a published opinion that the government officials the coalition sued are "shielded by sovereign immunity," Law 360 reports.

A federal judge last week temporarily blocked an EPA effort that would have let Congress and Trump overturn California's longstanding clean car rules and waiver authority. And she did so in spectacular fashion. My UCLA Law colleague **Ann Carlson** explains what makes the ruling remarkable at Legal Planet. "Judge Howell's opinion supporting her grant of a preliminary injunction is an interesting mix of complex, technical administrative law analysis and a fiery rebuke of EPA's actions and arguments."

Carlson is quoted by POLITICO about the detriment done to the auto industry: "This back-and-forth whiplash in vehicle emissions policy is not good governance," Carlson said. "We need a steady signal about the direction the auto industry is supposed to go, and we've obviously had anything but that."

The plan to convert L.A.'s largest natural-gas-fired power plant to a hydrogen and gas plant has now drawn lawsuits from environmental groups. **Hayley Smith** reports for Boiling Point that one lawsuit from the Communities for a Better Environment, the Sierra Club, the Los Angeles Waterkeeper, Food and Water Watch and Physicians for Social Responsibility says the plan doesn't adequately define or analyze the project as required by CEQA. (Full disclosure: a student team from a UCLA Law clinic provided research support for this suit.) A second lawsuit, filed last week by the Center for Biological Diversity, makes similar claims.

Last week, the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals affirmed the dismissal of a lawsuit (*Sterling v. City of Jackson*) against the city of Jackson, Mississippi, which alleged the city knowingly let residents drink lead-contaminated water. **Sophie Hurwitz** reports for Mother Jones that Judge Kurt Engelhardt, a Trump appointee, ruled that depriving the residents of clean water and solid public health information "while grievous, do not infringe upon any deeply rooted constitutional right."

That decision "demonstrates the importance of state action to recognize and protect environmental rights within state constitutions," said **Maya K. van Rossum**, Founder of Green Amendments For The Generations, a national movement for constitutional recognition of environmental rights.

Judge Brenda K. Sannes, an Obama appointee and chief judge for the Northern District of New York, ruled that New York's climate superfund law which she termed an "unusual and sweeping statute" was unenforceable. She wrote in the 63-page decision that its ambitions surpassed the limits of state law, the New York Times reports.

EVs

Autonomous EV service **Waymo** just expanded and thousands of passengers reportedly signed up for rides last week when the fully electric vehicles launched in San Diego, Denver and Tampa.

Meanwhile Tesla's Cybercab (a two-seater without a steering wheel or brake pedals) is set to start picking up members of the public in two states. But as Ariann Marshall notes for Wired, the vehicle "is already under investigation by the US federal government, which is probing whether it meets federal safety standards." My UCLA Law colleague **Ann Carlson** tells WIRED it is likely "an indication that NHTSA is super frustrated with Tesla."

The past year and a half has been a "grim moment for what was a booming industry in Georgia." But the EV makers are making some adjustments. Grist and WABE report that battery makers throughout the state have started shifting to producing storage batteries for electricity in addition to ones made to power vehicles.

The world's EV leader, China, is expected to see oil demand fall by 600,000 barrels a day — almost 9 percent — in 2026. Reuters says that would mark a third straight annual decline. In fact, the term "oil demand destruction," or a long-term drop in

consumption, is becoming a common phrase there.

LOS ANGELES + CALIFORNIA

Who says climate change is not on the ballot? At a climate town hall, LA Mayor Karen Bass and L.A. City Councilmember Nithya Raman both sat for about 45 minutes to individually answer questions from **Erin Stone**, an LAist senior reporter focused on climate and environment. Bass painted herself as a proven fighter for environmental justice issues in the past. Her challenger, Raman, said progress on environmental goals has stalled in City Hall.

Sammy Roth wrote for Climate-Colored Goggles that LA deserves a new mayor and that anyone concerned about climate change should vote for Nithya Raman. In his previous gig as climate columnist for the LA Times, Roth was always direct about politics. But I'm confident this is more of a direct endorsement than he would have been allowed to give at the Times.

UCLA's **Marta Segura**, who was until recently the city of LA's chief heat officer, also attended the mayoral town hall and wrote about it because her name and her work came up during the Q&A with Mayor Bass. "I wrote this to set the record straight because this is a very pivotal time, and we need the kind of leadership that doesn't point fingers, retracts false statements, and actually understands systems change in local government."

Coastal areas of Southern California, especially Long Beach and OC beaches, got walloped over the weekend. You probably saw the dramatic footage on social media. Ten-foot sand berms — which Long Beach had spent weeks shoring up with bulldozers after August's king tides washed them away — held up for only a few minutes, writes **Jack Dolan** for Essential California newsletter.

If you live in a certain part of the Bay Area, Google might help you buy a new heat pump — and could offer you as much as $10,000 to do it. **Adele Peters** explains why the tech giant is funding a new program that makes households a key part of energy infrastructure.

The New York Times is focusing on how California has warmed to (or maybe reheated its interest in) nuclear due to the challenges in meeting ambitious climate goals. That keeping Diablo Canyon open is "even on the table in California is a testament to the substantial change in public views of nuclear energy, which for

decades has been reviled by the liberal lawmakers and environmental groups that wield tremendous power and influence in the state," **Ivan Penn** writes.

Mother Jones has identified California's top 100 users of Roundup and says some of them may surprise you (hint: it is not *wonderful*.) Glyphosate is the key ingredient in professional-grade Roundup weedkiller, and the most widely used herbicide in the world.

Who's behind the secretive multimillion-dollar campaign to crush California's landmark plastics law, SB 54? Leading the blitz is a seven-month-old coalition called Californians for Affordable Packaging, **Suzanne Rust** reports for the LAT.

At Heatmap News, **Emily Pontecorvo** has ideas for Gov. Newsom, or more likely Gov. Becerra, to rein in the rising cost of California's climate-fueled wildfires and hence make electricity more affordable. It's based on a new paper from Energy Innovation and GridLab lays out 20 options

Joy Chen who helped found the nonprofit Every Fire Survivor's Network after the Eaton Fire struck Altadena has become one of the most visible advocates for wildfire survivors in Sacramento. POLITICO sat down for a Q&A with Chen who they describe as "the pickleball organizer who helped kill Newsom's wildfire plan."