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THE 4CP NEWSLETTER

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“The climate is a common good, belonging to all and meant for all. At the global level, it is a complex system linked to many of the essential conditions for human life”.

Pope Francis, Laudato Si



Pope Francis addressing a plenary meeting of the United Nations Sustainable Development Summit 2015 at United Nations headquarters in Manhattan, New York, Sept. 25. Photo © Mike Segar/Reuters.

THE ROAD TO PARIS

Actions throughout the world urging policy makers to address climate change are ramping up in anticipation of the international climate talks taking place in Paris November 30 through December 11. Known as COP21 (21st meeting of the Conference of the Parties), preparations for the talks, which include pledges by many countries to significantly reduce their carbon emissions, are raising optimism that these talks will not fail as so many others have. Here are a few of the stories taking place in the lead up to Paris.

THE POPE

Pope Francis' long-awaited encyclical on climate change, Laudato Si (On Care for our Common Home) was published in June, and during a subsequent 8-day tour of South America he spoke frequently about the urgency of caring for the environment.

In September, on the Pope's first visit to the U.S., he spoke about the environment in an historic address to a joint session of Congress and the following day at the United Nations, saying “Any harm done to the environment... is harm done to humanity”. ~SOURCE

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THE UNITED NATIONS

The United Nations session addressed by the Pope was not a routine meeting; it was the United Nations Sustainable Summit, at which 17 global sustainable development goals, hammered out by many nations over a period of years, were ratified. They include 3 primary objectives to be accomplished over the next 15 years: end extreme poverty; fight inequality and injustice; and fix climate change. See all 17 [HERE](#).

THE PRESIDENT

“Climate change is no longer some far-off problem. It is happening here. It is happening now. We’re not acting fast enough.” These words were spoken by President Obama, who traveled to locations including New Orleans and Anchorage on an 11-day tour in August to urge action on climate change to prevent and mitigate devastation to coastal communities. In Anchorage, he challenged political leaders in unusually blunt language to act boldly on climate change or “condemn our children to a world they will no longer have the capacity to repair.”



The President speaks at the GLACIER Conference in Anchorage, Alaska, August 31st. Photo © U.S. Department of State.

“The time to heed the critics and the cynics and the deniers is past,” the President said.

The trip to Alaska is the latest in a series of efforts by the President to draw attention to global climate change and position the U.S. as a leader on the issue. The White House recently finalized the Clean Power Plan, which mandates emission reductions from power plants, and announced initiatives to expand solar power and billions of dollars in private sector commitments to finance renewable energy production.

Yet just weeks before, Obama gave approval to Shell Oil for exploratory drilling in the Alaskan Arctic for the first time in 20 years – a move that raised the hackles of environmentalists, who accused his administration of hypocrisy; however, in a move that surprised many in late September, Shell announced it was withdrawing from the Arctic for the “foreseeable future”. [~SOURCES 1, 2](#)

BUSINESS

On July 27th, thirteen of the largest companies in the United States joined forces with the Obama administration to launch the **American Business Act on Climate Pledge**. In their pledge, the companies voiced support for a strong agreement in Paris at COP21 and announced significant new clean energy and climate change actions. Together their commitments included 140 billion in new, low carbon investment and more than 1,600 megawatts of renewable energy. Pledges also included company specific goals to cut emissions by as much as 50%, purchase 100% renewable energy, and pursue zero net deforestation in supply chains. Pledging companies, such as Apple, Bank of America, Cargill, Coca-Cola, GM, Microsoft, and UPS, represent \$1.3 trillion in revenue and a combined market cap of \$2.4 trillion – and lots of jobs. Their actions take direct aim at the fossil fuel lobby’s claims that fighting climate change will destroy jobs and hurt the economy. A second round of pledges from more companies is expected in the fall. If there is another strong showing, this will increase the pressure on other large enterprises to follow suit. [~SOURCE](#)

CHINA

In September, during a state visit made by Chinese President Xi Jinping to Washington D.C., he and President Obama announced further commitments to emissions reductions, including a cap and trade emissions market to be up and running nation-wide in China by 2017. China has already been conducting pilot programs in a number of cities. In addition China pledged to provide more than \$3 billion to help poorer countries finance their own emissions reduction efforts. [~SOURCE](#)

PA HOUSE MEMBERS

Shortly before the Pope’s visit, 11 Republican members of the U.S. House of Representatives co-sponsored a resolution saying that climate change is real, that human activity is a contributing factor,

and Congress should take action.

The resolution was introduced by NY Rep. Chris Gibson who said that addressing environmental issues is a core conservative principle. Three of the eleven members taking this leadership stand, contrary to the party line, were from our area: Representatives Fitzpatrick, Costello and Meehan. [~SOURCE](#)

CALL TO ACTION: Please let these members know you support and appreciate their leadership on climate.

▶ MORE STORIES ON CLIMATE AND CLEAN ENERGY

PA CLIMATE IMPACTS

In their latest report, PennFuture highlighted the Climate Change Impact Assessment report from the PA Department of Environmental Protection (DEP). It is truly a frightening report, because it shows that the Commonwealth already has a long record of human-induced warming of some 1.8 degrees Fahrenheit over the past 110 years. At the rate of current acceleration of PA warming, the report predicts a 5.4 to 6.3 degree warming level across the state by mid-century.

This magnitude of warming means more demand for electricity in the future and that agriculture may have a hard time adapting to higher temperatures, including heat stress for livestock and difficulty growing some crops. Additionally, there are likely to be new pests and fungi that will affect agriculture.

The report suggests that we may not be able to avoid all of these effects, but if we act now and together, we can make a difference.

To see the complete report, go [HERE](#).

GREEN AVIATION JET FUELS?

The EPA presented plans to control greenhouse gases from aircraft in a notice in the Federal Register in August. A hearing was held in Washington, DC in August about the proposal. Aircraft contribute 11% of transportation emissions and 3% of total US emissions. The EPA proposal covers aircraft from small to the largest. [~SOURCE](#)

The US Navy has been experimenting with biofuels to replace petroleum-based aircraft and ship fuels for several years now. The trials have been successful with targets to have 50% of propulsion provided by biofuels by 2020. The objective is to have sufficient cellulosic biofuel from woody plants vs. food crops such as corn and soy beans. [~SOURCE](#)

EXXON EXPOSED

According to investigative research by Inside Climate News, Exxon scientists had begun reporting to upper management as early as 1977 that continued burning of fossil fuels could result in catastrophic global warming and that as much of 80% of known fossil fuel reserves might need to remain in the ground.

Exxon is reported to have continued extensive research about the potential climate impacts of increasing CO₂ emissions throughout the 1980s, creating computerized climate models based on a combination of mathematics, physics, and atmospheric science, and even publishing papers in peer-reviewed journals confirming the risks of global warming.

The research, which circulated within the company through the early 1980s, reflected Exxon's growing interest in understanding when the climate implications of increased CO₂ emissions would begin to spur policy changes.

But beginning around 1989, Exxon began arguing that the models were too uncertain to serve as the basis for public policy changes, and subsequently became a major funder of denial tactics and organizations. [~SOURCE](#)



A conical flask of "green" jet fuel made from algae. Photo courtesy Wikimedia with permission from Honeywell.

CLEAN POWER PLAN

The draft version of the EPA's Clean Power Plan (CPP) was released in June of 2014. The plan seeks to reduce the amount of carbon dioxide emissions by existing power plants. Each state is required to create a plan by September 2016 to meet state specific targets set by EPA. More than 4.3 million comments were submitted by stakeholders ranging from asthma sufferers to coal plant operators. After considering the feedback, the EPA released the final rule in early August 2015, including significant changes that were mostly applauded by environmental groups.

At least 15 states, led by coal-heavies West Virginia, Kentucky and Wyoming are suing to stop the plan from taking effect, while Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell sent a letter to all state governors telling them not to submit the required plans. The rule gives EPA the ability to impose a plan in states that fail to create their own.

PA Governor Wolf and DEP Secretary Quigley are moving forward to support the Clean Power Plan, starting with a series of "listening sessions" in September and October, with Quigley saying the department will have a draft plan prepared by next spring.. ~SOURCE 1, 2

FOSSIL FUEL DIVESTMENT UPDATE

A coalition of organizations announced at a press conference in September that divestment pledges worldwide have now exceeded \$2.6 trillion, 50 times more than just one year ago. A spokesperson for the Rockefeller Brothers Fund was quoted as saying "Given that we fight climate change, to us, investing in fossil fuels is somewhat akin to a cancer-fighting foundation investing in tobacco". The Rockefeller Fund pledged to divest its portfolio from fossil fuels immediately following the People's Climate March last September which drew some 400,000 climate activists to the streets of New York City. ~SOURCE

BASIC QUESTIONS ABOUT SOLAR ENERGY

Renewable Energy World, a weekly Internet blog, suggests a series of questions that homeowners should consider if they are contemplating adding solar energy to their electricity portfolio. They include such items as:

- Why do I need a building permit for solar?
- Can I use the power from my solar system during a blackout?
- If I sell my house, how will the new buyer value my solar installation?
- Is there a catch to a "no money down" deal?

These and other home solar questions are provided by Renewable Energy World on their [WEBSITE](#).

▶ EVENTS OF NOTE

4CP SPEAKER SERIES MEETINGS:

The speaker series returns to Room 240 at the West Chester Borough Building in November. Please visit our table at the Phoenixville Green Earth Festival on October 17th (detail below).

Nov 2015 Speaker Series – Ann Faulds, Penn State University, Associate Director of PA Sea Grant, presents: Helping the City of Chester Adopt Climate Adaptation Planning Elements. Learn how the City of Chester developed and adopted climate adaptation plans to address present and future risks posed by flooding and extreme heat. Faulds is an aquatic biologist with twenty-five years' experience in science instruction, coastal outreach, and aquatic resource education. She heads the Chester Pennsylvania Sea Grant Office which focuses on improving the environmental and economic health of Pennsylvania's eastern coast, 112 miles of coastline along the Schuylkill and Delaware Rivers in Bucks, Philadelphia, and Delaware counties.



OTHER AREA EVENTS

October 17 – The Phoenixville Green Team presents the Green Earth Festival, 9am – 2pm at the Phoenixville Farmer's Market. Look for great food and music, demonstrations, children's activities and local exhibitors of eco-friendly products, services and information.

Nov 9 – Sierra Club speaker series at Community College presents Michael Mann, Distinguished Professor of Meteorology at Penn State University noted

for his hockey stick depiction of long term global temperatures. 7:00 pm, Auditorium of the Community College of Philadelphia, 17th and Spring Garden. Co-sponsored by the Sierra Club and CCP Coalition for a Sustainable Future.