

CLIMATE NEWS

From Sheldon Whitehouse, Barbara Boxer, Jeff Merkley, and Brian Schatz
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Climate Change Threatens to Kill Off More Aspen Forests by 2050



The beloved aspen forests that shimmer across mountainsides of the American West could be doomed if emissions of greenhouse gases continue at a high level, scientists warned in a new paper published in the journal *Nature Geosciences*. The new paper analyzed the drought and heat that killed millions of aspens in Colorado and nearby states a decade ago. Such conditions could become routine across much of the West by the 2050s unless global emissions are brought under control, the study found. "I think of aspens as a good canary-in-the-coal-mine tree," said Dr. William R. L. Anderegg, the Princeton University researcher who led the new study. "They're a wet-loving tree in a dry landscape. They may be showing us how these forests are going to change pretty massively as that landscape gets drier still." The study found that large aspen die-offs are a near-certainty only if greenhouse gas emissions continue at the same runaway pace as over the last decade. If global emissions are brought under control, the chances will improve that large stands of aspens could be preserved. The new finding adds to a growing body of work suggesting that forests worldwide may be imperiled by climate change. ([New York Times](#))

Vatican Hosts Summit Against Climate Change

Top officials from the Vatican, the Secretary-General of the United Nations and leading scientists came together on Tuesday at a summit in Vatican City to make the case that the fight against man-made climate change is a moral issue. "The wealthiest countries, the ones who have benefited most from fossil fuels, are morally obligated to push forward and find solutions to climate-related change and so protect the environment and human life," said Cardinal Peter Turkson, who heads the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace. The summit, arranged by the Pontifical Academy of Sciences, is the prologue to Pope Francis' June encyclical — one of the highest forms of papal expression — that will promote climate change action, framing it as a moral and religious imperative. The final statement prepared by conference attendees warned that the December U.N. climate summit in Paris might be the last chance for nations to come together to keep human-caused warming under the target of 3.6 degrees Fahrenheit. "Climate-change mitigation will require a rapid world transformation to a world powered by renewable and other low-carbon energy and the sustainable management of ecosystems," the statement read. ([USA Today](#))

Study: Climate Change Causes 75% of Extremely Hot Days

If you find yourself sweating out a day that is monstrously hot, chances are you can blame humanity. A new report in the journal *Nature Climate Change* links three out of four such days to man's present influence on climate. The authors, from leading Swiss university ETH Zurich, examined how human-caused climate change effects the occurrence of temperature and precipitation extremes. The study calculated that 18 percent of current extreme rain events are caused by global warming. By mid-century, if emissions continue at current pace, people around the world will be able blame at least 93 percent of super hot days and about 39 percent of heavy downpours on human-caused climate change. "This new study helps get the actual probability or odds of human influence," said University of Arizona climate scientist Dr. Jonathan Overpeck, who wasn't part of the research. "This is key: If you don't like hot temperature extremes that we're getting, you now know how you can reduce the odds of such events by reducing greenhouse gas emissions." ([US News](#))

Southern Company Announces New Solar Projects

Georgia Power, Gulf Power, and Southern Power are combining to add more than 160 MW of solar power to Southern's portfolio. The Florida Public Service Commission authorized Gulf Power to develop utility-scale solar generation at three military bases: Eglin Air Force Base in Fort Walton Beach (30 MW); and Navy facilities Holley Field in Navarre (40 MW) and Saufley Field in Pensacola (50 MW). Additionally, Southern Power has acquired a controlling interest in the 32-MW Lost Hills-Blackwell Solar Facility in California from First Solar. And Georgia Power recently broke ground on a 30-MW solar installation at Fort Benning near Columbus, Georgia. "Investing today in sustainable energy innovations will make a better tomorrow for customers," Southern Chairman, President and CEO Thomas Fanning said in a statement. "We are inspired by the momentum we are developing with these new partnerships to deliver clean energy and real, measurable results." Southern said its renewable portfolio includes 42 solar projects in six states. ([Utility Dive](#))

