

Our Recap and Update on Climate News

One of the prevailing themes of the year has undeniably been climate change. Understandably so, as climate change is speeding up rather than slowing down. The gravity of the situation is so extreme that even lexicon employed to describe it needs to be reevaluated. Several scientists and organizations advocate for terms such as 'climate emergency', 'climate crisis', or 'climate breakdown' over the more benign 'climate change'. Moreover, 'global heating' is deemed a more precise term than 'global warming'. Scientists warn that we have a mere 12 years to reverse the situation before it spirals beyond control.

We informed you about the Paris Agreement, an international treaty aimed at curbing escalating temperatures, but it regrettably remains largely ineffectual. Few nations are adhering to their commitments, and last November, the United States expressed its intent to withdraw from the Agreement. While governmental progress may be sluggish, private enterprises and grassroots movements are not. Let us recap and update some of these inspiring stories.

The Ocean Cleanup Project

In an article from last year, we delineated the Ocean Cleanup Project, conceived by the innovative Boyan Slat, which launched a device for ensnaring the plastics adrift in the Pacific Ocean's Great Garbage Patch. Despite initial challenges, the culmination of its trial phase this November showcased its efficacy in capturing and collecting floating plastic debris. The project is progressing successfully.



Picture: Boyan Slat, founder of the Ocean Cleanup

Concurrently, the Ocean Cleanup has introduced a new invention dubbed the River Interceptor. This solar-powered device halts the flow of plastics downriver into the oceans. This is Boyan Slat's next ambitious endeavor: to tackle the 1,000 most contaminating rivers (accountable for approximately 80% of oceanic plastic pollution) by the end of 2025.

Strike For Climate

This year witnessed no climate initiative more prominently than the Fridays for Future strikes, inspired by Greta Thunberg. We previously spoke about them in February, and since then, the movement has burgeoned in scale. In September, Greta delivered a scathing rebuke to world leaders at the UN Climate Action Summit, castigating their inaction. "How dare you!" she exclaimed. "You have stolen my dreams and my childhood with your hollow words!" Her audacity galvanized countless individuals to demand governmental action.



Picture: Young climate activists at a Fridays for Future strike

Additionally, Greta Thunberg's nomination for the Nobel Peace Prize underscores the acknowledgment that environmental advocacy contributes to world peace. Ultimately, the Nobel Prize was bestowed upon Ethiopia's Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed for his effort to foster peace between his nation and Eritrea.

Earth Day

Curiously, Prime Minister Ahmed is also renowned for his Green Legacy Initiative, an reforestation campaign. As part of this initiative, Ethiopians planted over 350 million tree seedlings in a single day this July, setting a world record. Many scientists believe reforestation as one of the most efficacious strategies to combat climate breakdown. Tree planting is also a focal point of Earth Day initiatives, as we wrote about two years ago. Next year marks the 50th anniversary of Earth Day, and its Canopy Project aims to plant 7.8 billion trees - one for each inhabitant of the planet.

Encouraging news such as these prove a notable surge in climate activism in 2019. Hopefully, this signs the onset of a global paradigm shift, wherein individuals take proactive charge of their environment and future.

- In 2019 climate change
 - exhibited a decelerating trend thanks to the work of private enterprises such as The Ocean Cleanup
 - garnered plenty attention in global discourse, mainly due to the activist youth
 - exhibited an accelerating trend and occasioned numerous catastrophic climate events
- Boyan Slat launched the River Interceptor
 - as an augmentation to his existing Ocean Cleanup Project
 - as an alternative to combat ocean pollution
 - to mitigate the impact of climate change on river ecosystems
- Greta Thunberg spoke at the UN Climate Action Summit
 - commending world leaders for their measures
 - admonishing world leaders for their measures
 - spurning world leaders for their measures
- The 2019 Nobel Peace Prize
 - was given to Ethiopia's Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed for his world-record breaking reforestation campaign
 - had as main goal the recognition of the efforts of world leaders in addressing climate-related conflicts
 - solidified the idea that climate activism is key to achieving peace
- The Green Legacy Initiative and the Canopy Project
 - will probably yield the most dramatic results in the fight against climate change
 - are endorsed by the UN to achieve similar environmental objectives (reforestation)
 - have different approaches to addressing deforestation and habitat loss
- 2019 has been
 - characterized by a resurgence of climate change denial rhetoric, seen, for example, in the US leaving the Paris Agreement
 - marked by unprecedented setbacks in climate combating, as climate change substantially sped up this year
 - heralded as a pivotal year for galvanizing global climate activism