

Green Mission News

August 2011 Green Mission News

External Article Links:

- Collaborating with other brands to reduce environmental impacts.

<http://responsibility.timberland.com/product/>

- Founded by Chef Ann Cooper, the *Food, Family, Farming Foundation*

www.foodfamilyfarming.org/

- Garden for the Environment is San Francisco's Organic Demonstration Garden

<http://www.gardenfortheenvironment.org/>

- Introduction to Food System Coalitions

http://aginnovations.org/images/uploads/SLO_FPC_simplified.pdf

- USDA slinks on GMOs

<http://www.gaia-health.com/articles451/000489-gm-wins-usda-monsanto.shtml>

- Agroecology is a coherent concept for designing future farming systems as it is

strongly rooted both in science and in practice, and because it shows strong connections with the principles of the right to adequate food

http://www.srfood.org/images/stories/pdf/officialreports/20110308_a-hrc-16-49_agroecology_en.pdf

- Zero Landfill Is Not Zero Waste

www.jgpress.com/archives/_free/002380.html

- The Urban Food Revolution:

<http://www.vancouversun.com/life/Exporting+Urban+Food+Revolution/5168932/story.html>

- Meeting the challenge of feeding the world and cooling the Earth

<http://www.tni.org/article/meeting-challenge-feeding-world-and-cooling-earth>

Here's what an hour's worth of ocean trash looks like

<http://www.grist.org/list/2011-07-26-heres-what-an-hours-worth-of-ocean-trash-looks-like>

- They Might Be Giants (2 min., cartoon video) - Science is Real

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ty33v7UYYbw>

- Bad Food? Tax It, and Subsidize Vegetables

http://www.nytimes.com/2011/07/24/opinion/sunday/24bittman.html?_r=1&pagewanted=all

-Five Ways to Save Billions -- and Boost the Nation's Health

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/neal-barnard-md/snap-program-budget_b_913570.html

-Non-GMO Month Retailer Webinar August 31st

<http://www.nongmoproject.org/2011/07/26/non-gmo-month-retailer-webinar-august-31st/>

- Q&A with Megan Westgate of Non-GMO Project - Boulder Daily Camera

Q. Aren't certified organic crops supposed to be free of GMOs? Why is Non-GMO certification necessary?

www.dailycamera.com/lifestyles/ci_18553038

- Non GMO Verified Products

Developed in partnership with the Non-GMO Project, a non-profit ... Thank you for shopping Whole Foods Market and your support of the Non-GMO Project! ...

www.wholefoodsmarket.com/.../MW_MAD_Non_GMO_Veri...

- The plastics industry will do anything to keep you using plastic bags

<http://www.grist.org/list/2011-07-27-the-plastics-industry-will-do-anything-to-keep-you-using-plastic>

- A Conversation with Dan Imhoff: An Introduction to the Farm Bill-Part 1 (video, 6 min.)

<http://cookingupastory.com/a-conversation-with-dan-imhoff>

Full Length Articles Below:

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Thomas Jefferson Quotations:

c. 1781.(Notes on the State of Virginia) "Cultivators of the earth are the most virtuous and independent citizens."

1785 Aug. 23. (to John Jay) "Cultivators of the earth are the most valuable citizens. They are the most vigorous, the most independent, the most virtuous, and they are tied to their country and wedded to its liberty and interests by the most lasting bands."

1785 Oct. 28. (to James Madison) "It is not too soon to provide by every possible means that as few as possible shall be without a little portion of land. The small landholders are the most precious part of a state."

1787 December 20. (to James Madison). "I think our governments will remain virtuous for many centuries; as long as they are chiefly agricultural; and this will be as long as there shall be vacant lands in any part of America. When they get piled upon one another in large cities, as in Europe, they will become corrupt as in Europe."

1793 July 21. (to Martha Jefferson Randolph). "When the earth is rich it bids defiance to droughts, yields in abundance and of the best quality."

1797 March 10. (Transactions of the American Philosophical Society). "The movements of nature are in a never ending circle. The animal species which has once been put into a train of motion, is still probably moving in that train. For if one link in nature's chain might be lost, another and another might be lost, till this whole system of things should evanish by piece-meal; a conclusion not warranted by the local disappearance of one or two species of animals, and opposed by the thousands and thousands of instances of the renovating power constantly exercised by nature for the reproduction of all her subjects, animal, vegetable, and mineral."

1800. (A Memorandum Services to My Country). "The greatest service which can be rendered any country is to add an useful plant to it's culture."

1803 Nov. 14. (to David Williams) "The class principally [effective] is that of agriculture. It is the first in utility, and ought to be the first in respect. The same artificial means which have been used to produce a competition in learning, may be equally successful in restoring agriculture to its primary dignity in the eyes of men. It is a science of the very first order. It counts among it handmaids of the most respectable sciences, such as Chemistry, Natural Philosophy, Mechanics, Mathematics generally, Natural History, Botany. In every College and University, a professorship of agriculture, and the class of its students, might be honored as the first. Young men closing their academical education with this, as the crown of all other sciences, fascinated with its solid charms, and at a time when they are to choose an occupation, instead of crowding the other classes, would return to the farms of their fathers, their own, or those of others, and replenish and invigorate a calling, now languishing under contempt and oppression. The charitable schools, instead of storing their pupils with a lore which the present state of society does not call for, converted into schools of agriculture, might restore them to that branch qualified to enrich and honor themselves, and to increase the productions of the nation instead of consuming them."

1810 June 27. (to Joseph Dougherty) "I think it the duty of farmers who are wealthier than others to give those less so the benefit of any improvements they can introduce, gratis."

1813 June 24. (to John Wayles Eppes). "The earth belongs to the living...The soil is the gift of god to the living."

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Published on Friday, July 1, 2011 by The Independent/UK

Extreme Weather Link 'Can No Longer Be Ignored'

Scientists to end 20-year reluctance with study into global warming and exceptional weather events

by Steve Connor

Scientists are to end their 20-year reluctance to link climate change with extreme weather – the heavy storms, floods and droughts which often fill news bulletins – as part of a radical departure from a previous equivocal position that many now see as increasingly untenable.

In this April 19, 2011 file photo, smoke rises from an uncontrolled wildfire burning near Possum Kingdom, Texas. It was a spring to remember, with America pummeled by tornadoes, floods, wildfire, snowmelt, thunderstorms and drought. (AP Photo/LM Otero, File)

Climate researchers from Britain, the United States and other parts of the world have formed a new international alliance that aims to investigate exceptional weather events to see whether they can be attributable to global warming caused by greenhouse gas emissions.

They believe that it is no longer plausible merely to claim that extreme weather is “consistent” with climate change. Instead, they intend to assess each unusual event in terms of the probability that it has been exacerbated or even caused by the global temperature increase seen over the past century.

The move is likely to be highly controversial because the science of “climate attribution” is still in the early stages of development and so is likely to be pounced on by climate “sceptics” who question any link between industrial emissions of carbon dioxide and rises in global average temperatures.

In the past scientists have been extremely reluctant to link a single extreme weather event with climate change, arguing that the natural variability of the weather makes it virtually impossible to establish any definitive association other than a possible general consistency with what is expected from studies based on computer models.

However, a growing number of climate scientists are now prepared to adopt a far more aggressive posture, arguing that the climate has already changed enough for it to be affecting the probability of an extreme weather event, whether it is an intense hurricane, a major flood or a devastating drought.

“We’ve certainly moved beyond the point of saying that we can’t say anything about attributing extreme weather events to climate change,” said Peter Stott, a leading climate scientist at the Met Office Hadley Centre in Exeter.

“It’s very clear we’re in a changed climate now which means there’s more moisture in the atmosphere and the potential for stronger storms and heavier rainfall is clearly there.” Kevin Trenberth, a distinguished senior scientist at the US National Centre for Atmospheric Research (NCAR) in Boulder, Colorado, also believes the time has come to emphasise the link between extreme weather and the global climate in which it develops.

“The environment in which all storms form has changed owing to human activities, in particular it is warmer and more moist than it was 30 or 40 years ago,” Dr Trenberth said.

“We have this extra water vapour lurking around waiting for storms to develop and then there is more moisture as well as heat that is available for these storms [to form]. The models suggest it

is going to get drier in the subtropics, wetter in the monsoon trough and wetter at higher latitudes. This is the pattern we're already seeing.”

The Met Office and NCAR have joined forces with other climate organisations, including the influential US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Organisation (NOAA), to carry out detailed investigations of extreme weather events, such as the vast flooding in Pakistan last year, to see whether they can detect a climate change “signal” as a likely cause.

A group of their researchers has formed a coalition called the Attribution of Climate-Related Events which is preparing a report on the subject to be published later this year at a meeting of the World Climate Research Programme in Denver. They hope in future to assess each extreme weather phenomenon in terms of its probability of being linked with global warming and then to post the result on the internet.

“There is strong evidence if you look across the world that we are seeing an increase in heatwaves and floods and droughts and extreme rainfall and extreme temperatures,” Dr Stott said.

“The evidence is clear from looking at the observational records globally that extreme temperatures and extreme rainfall are changing. But you can’t jump from that and say that a specific event is straightforwardly attributable because we know that natural variability could have played a part.

“We’ve been developing the science to be increasingly more quantitative about the links and make more definitive statements about how the risk has changed. You look sensibly about these things by talking about changing risk, or changing probability of these events.”

Dr Stott had his colleagues have already carried out studies of the 2003 heatwave in Europe, in which up to 35,000 people died of heat-related illnesses, as well as the devastating UK floods in 2000 which cost £1.3bn in insurance claims and destroyed 10,000 homes following the wettest autumn in England and Wales since records began in 1766.

In both cases, the scientists found that the contribution of man-made greenhouse gases to global warming substantially increased the risk of such extreme events occurring. The group is also investigating the exceptional warm April in Britain this year, which was the warmest since central England records were kept in 1659 and 0.5C warmer on average than the previous warmest April.

Also this year, an unprecedented number of tornadoes across the southeastern US and the flooding of major rivers such as the Mississippi and Missouri led many people to question whether they were exacerbated by global warming. In the past scientists would have been reluctant to link single weather events such as these with climate change, but Dr Trenberth believes this is wrong.

“I will not say that you cannot link one event to these things. I will say instead that the environment in which all of these storms are developing has changed,” Dr Trenberth told The Independent.

“It’s not so much the instantaneous result of the greenhouse effect, it’s the memory of the system and the main memory is in the oceans and the oceans have warmed up substantially, at depth, and we can measure that. I will assert that every event has been changed by climate

change and the main time we perceive it is when we find ourselves outside the realms of the previous natural variability, and because natural variability is so large this is why we don't notice it most of the time.

“When we have things that occur usually 4 per cent of the time start to occur 10 per cent of the time, that’s when we begin to notice. The main way we perceive climate change is in changes in the extremes? this is when we break records.”

A report by the insurance company Munich Re found that 2010 was one of the worst years on record for natural disasters, nine-tenths of which were related to extreme weather, such as the floods in Pakistan and eastern Australia and heatwave in Russia, which is estimated to have killed at least 56,000 people, making it the most deadly natural disaster in the country’s history. “This long-term trend can no longer be explained by natural climate oscillations alone. No, the probability is that climate change is contributing to some of the warming of the world’s oceans,” said Peter Höppe, author of the Munich Re report.

Making the connection

Tornadoes, US, 2011 More than 220 people were killed by tornadoes and violent storms that ripped through south-eastern United States in April; 131 were killed in Alabama alone. Fifteen people died in Tuscaloosa and sections of the city were destroyed.

Heatwave, UK, 2011 April was the warmest since 1659, when records in England began. Sun-lovers flocked to St Ives, above, but fears of drought were raised. Rainfall in the UK that month was only 52 per cent of the long-term average.

Drought, Brazil, 2005 The Amazon region suffered the worst drought in more than a century. The floodplains dried up and people were walking or using bicycles on areas where canoes and river boats had been the only means of transport.

Floods, USA, 2005 Katrina was one of the five deadliest hurricanes in the history of the US, and it caused the destruction of New Orleans when levees were overwhelmed. Some 90 per cent of residents of south-east Louisiana were evacuated.

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Published on Saturday, July 2, 2011 by In These Times

Pesticides and Farm Labor Yield a Bitter Harvest

by Michelle Chen

Shortly after the group of Mexican “guestworkers” arrived at a Tennessee tomato farm, they realized that their job was killing them, literally. In addition to being crowded into filthy trailers with no source of clean water, they and their living quarters were regularly showered with poison. Despite requirements for protective equipment, they had to go into the fields while exposed to pesticides. Risking abuse and retaliation for challenging their boss, some tried to use cellphones to record the spraying. In the end, they got their evidence, but then got fired. The workers' struggle, which led to a lawsuit filed earlier this year, illustrates all the paradoxes of America's natural bounty. No form of labor is more ingrained in humanity than farm work, but the

people who grow our food are being eaten alive every day by the toxins of modern industrial farming. Though consumers are more anxious than ever these days about the effects of pesticides on the food we eat, they seldom consider the health hazards facing the workers who feed our consumption. Yet the further you get up the production chain, the greater the danger. Farmworker Justice has petitioned the Environmental Protection Agency to demand the bilingual labeling of pesticides for Spanish-speaking workers, many of whom cannot read English. The fact that after generations of importing migrant labor even this most rudimentary safeguard is still lacking, shows how little the government and employers value workers' health. We should all know better by now. Various studies, including a new one on Monsanto's infamous Roundup Ready, have shown major threats from the chemicals sprayed on crops. In the Lake Apopka area of Florida, exposure of black farm workers to pesticides has been linked to horrific patterns of disease and birth defects, on top of the backbreaking labor they suffered. Their attempts at seeking legal redress have so far failed.

One monitoring project in Washington State, published by the Farm Worker Pesticide Project, found that one in five workers surveyed suffered "significant nervous system impacts." The health risks were exacerbated by incompetent enforcement of safety standards at the federal and state levels, and threadbare regulations on protective gear for farmworkers. Finally, there was an endemic failure to promote safe alternatives to the harmful chemicals used in industrial agriculture.

The politics of the food system therefore disproportionately impact farm workers (including a huge number of families with children), yet they have virtually no political power, and don't have the option of selecting just organic fruit when they're working the farms in a chemical haze. The consumer advocacy organization Environmental Working Group (EWG) published its "Dirty Dozen" list of chemical-laden produce, but it doesn't get at the core of the problem, according to Tom Philpott at MoJo:

My only concern about campaigns like EWG's Dirty Dozen is that they keep the spotlight on consumers and off of another population segment that deserves protection from the produce industry's pesticide habit: farm workers....

The agrichemical industry's response—embraced by farm owners, government regulators, and global aid institutions—was to promote pesticides that break down rapidly. But these alternatives, known as "non-persistent" chemicals, are much more dangerous at the time of application. That is to say, they're much safer for consumers, and much more dangerous for farm workers.

In fact, such dangerous working conditions are encouraged by our food system and regulatory infrastructure.

This week, a bill in California to enable card-check voting on farms, which would facilitate union organizing, was vetoed by Democratic Gov. Jerry Brown, who while governor in the 1970s signed legislation giving farmworkers in his state the right to unionize through secret ballot. The defeat suggested that the loyalties of even supposedly "progressive" politicians lie more with powerful business lobbies than with voiceless farm workers. The consequences ultimately wind up on our dinner tables.

Karl Tupper with the Pesticide Action Network of North America, takes pesticide concerns from the grocery aisle to the larger context:

My point is two-fold. 1) The scandal isn't cilantro, or apples. It's 2 million people doing the third most dangerous job in the country for sub-poverty wages, while facing pesticide exposure. 2) We can't shop our way out of this: pesticides are a public policy issue.

Currently, it's private and grassroots efforts that are breaking ground in environmental justice for farmworkers. Along with labor-based groups like Farmworker Justice and United Farm Workers, grassroots movements like the Coalition of Imokalee Workers have raised public awareness of agricultural labor conditions and the link to public health as well as corporate power.

In Washington, the pioneering Excluded Workers Congress is pushing the POWER Act, which would aim to "protect the right of immigrant workers to expose labor violations without fear of retaliation" by boosting regulatory safeguards and legal protections for exploited immigrants. Groups like the Pesticide Action Network and Beyond Pesticides have mobilized consumers and workers across the planet to push for a safer food system. And all the way over in Pakistan, an international campaign known as the Better Cotton Initiative seeks to introduce more sustainable growing practices to the country's cotton fields, moving farmers away from pesticides and improving community health.

It's odd that, even as we ruin our natural resources, Americans still hold romantic visions of the heroic farmer; perhaps it's our natural yearning to connect with earth despite modern society's alienation from our ecological genesis. To truly understand environmental health, then, we must think broadly about environmental justice. Locally and globally, from seed to stomach, we are all what we eat.

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Michelle Chen's work has appeared in AirAmerica, Women's International Perspective, Extra!, Colorlines and Common Dreams. She is a regular contributor to In These Times' workers' rights blog, Working In These Times. She also blogs at Racewire.org.

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Connecting Extreme Weather Dots across the Map

Talking about the weather isn't small talk any more.

by Janet Redman

I took a cross-country road trip in late June that became a race to outrun the triple-digit heat waves that have literally buckled highways between the Midwest and the East Coast. The record-breaking scorcher was an apt send-off. As I weaved my way across the United States, I found the consequences of extreme weather everywhere I looked.

After the heat, the first sign of something unusual came in Iowa. There, every creek I crossed seemed to overflow its banks. Water pooled in cornfields.

By the time I reached Nebraska, radio advisories warning about bridges closed due to swollen waterways seemed routine.

Late one night, I pulled under an overpass between Sydney and Potter, Nebraska to find refuge from hail big enough that it cracked my windshield. There, I met an off-duty police officer who said he's spending more and more time cleaning up after an increasing number of tornados and micro-bursts like the one we were trapped in.

Meanwhile, the drought-wracked southwest was blazing. New Mexico was experiencing the largest wildfire in state history, and an all-out battle was being waged by firefighters to steer the flames away from Los Alamos National Laboratory, where radioactive material for making nuclear weapons is housed. Now the concern is contaminated soil being washed into the Rio Grande by flash floods in deforested canyons. Fires in New Mexico, Arizona, Texas, Florida, Georgia, and Colorado are adding up to a record-setting wildfire season.

This year's waves of floods and fires followed the unprecedented series of tornados that hammered towns in Missouri, Alabama, Kansas, Arkansas, Minnesota, and Massachusetts. Talking about the weather isn't small talk any more. Something is amiss.

But for some reason we're loathe to take the next step and connect the dots of extreme floods, heat waves, droughts, and storms popping up across the map to reveal the bigger picture: climate change.

For years, scientists have told us that as the planet warms up, we can expect changes in whole patterns of weather and in trends like how much moisture the atmosphere will hold. Some places will get dryer, others wetter, and others hotter. In its 2010 State of the Climate report, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration traced some 41 indicators showing that broad shifts and individual extreme events that have occurred over the past year are indeed consistent with scientists' predictions of a warmer world.

Notably, for the first time two studies published in the journal *Nature* have demonstrated a cause-and-effect relationship between climate change and increased rain and snow events, and thus with increased flood risk.

The question before us now is not whether the natural disasters making headlines across the United States are somehow connected, but why we are so reluctant to connect them.

My theory is that it's just too scary. If we admit that these extreme weather events have something to do with a global system, it feels too complicated to do anything about or prepare ourselves for. If we accept that climate change is something caused by the way we consume and produce everything from food to fuel, then we also have to admit that we need to fundamentally change the way our economy works.

But no matter how daunting the challenge of climate change, we have to get our heads out of the sand. If we don't, the rising waters will drown us.

We need to demand investment in ideas and infrastructure that will reduce our emissions and create good jobs like rapid public transit, renewable energy systems, energy efficient buildings, and local food production.

We have to rein in the power of corporate interests like coal, oil, gas, and big agriculture that take government handouts with one hand and push us deeper into ecological chaos with the other. And we have to strengthen the social safety net that will catch and care for families when the inevitable natural disasters hit vulnerable communities.

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Published on Wednesday, July 20, 2011 by [YES! Magazine](#)

The Cyclists Who Beat an Airplane: A Tale of Carmageddon

During Los Angeles' freeway-free weekend, little went quite as expected.

by Brooke Jarvis

Over the weekend, Los Angeles—perhaps America's most famously car-choked city—briefly became a modern transportation morality play.

Los Angeles' famous gridlock. (Photo by Pranav Bhatt)

The city closed ten miles of the 405, a heavily congested freeway that typically handles 500,000 vehicles each day, so it could demolish an overpass bridge. Traffic was predicted to be spectacular. City officials—and, at their request, celebrities—issued dire warnings of a coming "Carmageddon"—a word that sums up just how thoroughly people expected L.A. to unravel without the freeway.

In response, JetBlue offered a special deal: \$4 flights from Burbank to Long Beach. At under 40 miles, it was the shortest flight route the airline had ever offered.

The flights sold out in three hours.

Flying? Across L.A.? A group of cyclists decided to call attention to more sensible transit possibilities by issuing a modern-day John Henry challenge: on their bikes, they would beat the plane to the other side of the city.

And they did. The cyclists, part of a group called Wolfpack Hustle, made the ride in an hour and thirty-five minutes. Another member of the group drove to the airport, arrived the requisite hour early, waited in the security line, boarded the plane, landed, and took a cab (which apparently got lost) to the finish line—arriving more than an hour after the cyclists, and after a challenger who made the trip by public transit and walking, and another who rollerbladed it.

That's right: On Sunday, an airplane got its butt kicked by bicycles, metro rail, and a pair of rollerblades.

Of course, the flight was a publicity stunt, not a serious suggestion about city-scale alternatives to car supremacy. The sheer ridiculousness of using an airplane to solve a problem caused by too many cars is pretty obvious, especially during this summer that has so dramatized the dangers of a warming climate. (Cars, of course, are about the least climate-friendly way to get around a city—or they were, in the innocent days before the advent of intracity plane travel.) But the flights did symbolize the conventional wisdom that Los Angeles just can't function without its current car-centric transportation infrastructure.

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In the end, though, Carmageddon didn't so much bear out the myth as turn it on its head. Los Angeles residents figured out, at least for the weekend, how to live without the freeway. Some took to bikes and public transit; some simply stayed closer to home. Roads, in fact, were clearer than usual, and both the mayor and *The New York Times* revised the apocalyptic moniker, calling the weekend more of a "Carmaheaven."

"It's like we live in a small town today," Bel-Air resident Michele Cohn told the Los Angeles Times. "I wish it were like this all the time."

More than a few in Los Angeles, it seems, were left wondering if it could be—if the congested car city could become a place where people could live closer to their jobs, where most trips could be made on bikes and transit, and where a car-free weekend would be a regular possibility, not a reason for panic.

"Today was perfect," *Wolfpack Hustle* wrote on its Twitter feed. "The ride was beautiful and scenic, our race inspired people to rollerskate, to take trains, to walk to the finish. Meanwhile... our politicians and police covered and bit their nails, telling people to stay home and avoid this beautiful weekend."

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Brooke Jarvis wrote this article for YES! Magazine, a national, nonprofit media organization that fuses powerful ideas with practical actions. Brooke is YES! Magazine's web editor.