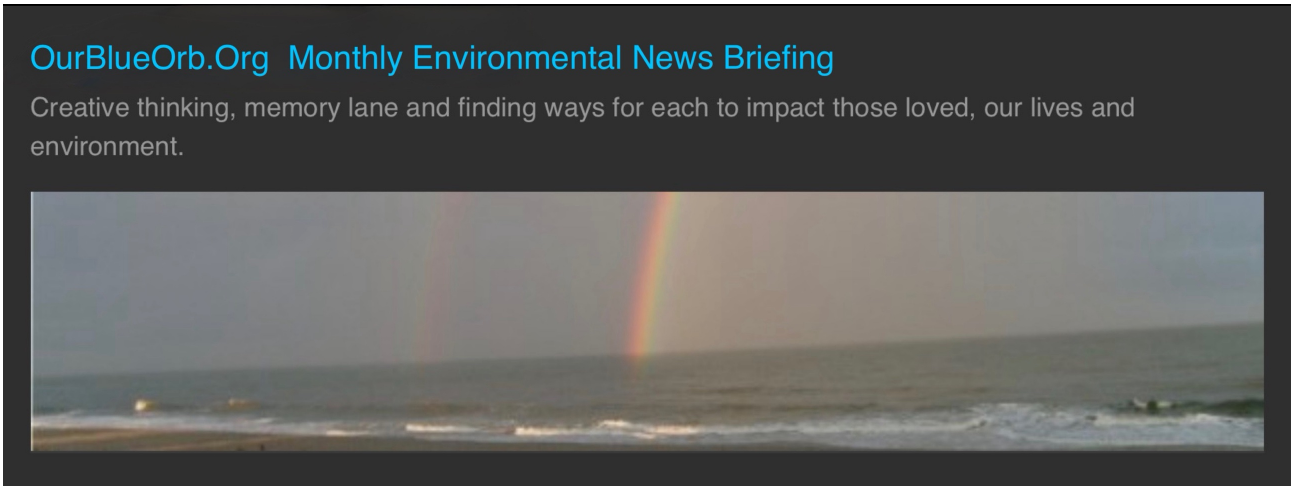
OurBlueOrb.org Monthly Environmental Briefing

All THE Breaking Environmental News That Matters

August 29, 2026



The OurBlueOrb.org 08.29.2026 Monthly Briefing

Environmental News & Research Worth Your Attention

There is no shortage of environmental news.
There is a shortage of people paying attention to it.

This month's OurBlueOrb.org Monthly Environmental Briefing arrives at a moment of genuine urgency with the trajectory of recent environmental history. The rollback of environmental protections continues at unprecedented speed. Corporate negligence continues to exact its toll on communities and ecosystems. And yet… the science of solutions is advancing, forests are recovering wherever political will exists, and young people are stepping forward.

That is exactly what a Renaissance of Environmental Momentum looks like in practice. Not a single dramatic moment but an accumulation of actions, decisions, and demands from people who refuse to look away and demand environmental sustainability and justifiable regulation.

What will a Renaissance of the Environmental Movement mean?

The environmental movement of the 1970s produced real, documented results. The Clean Air Act. The Clean Water Act. The EPA. The banning of DDT. The recovery of the bald eagle. These were not accidents — they were the product of sustained public pressure, bipartisan political will, and citizens who refused to look away.

Last century's environmental momentum has been lost. Regulations built over decades are being systematically weakened. The EPA's authority is under direct legal attack by the private sector and even our own government. Corporate interests have gained unprecedented influence over environmental policy.

The Renaissance of the Environmental Movement is a clarion call to rebuild that momentum — not as nostalgia but as necessity. It is a grassroots effort to reconnect citizens with the environmental stakes of this moment, to support the organizations doing real work, and to demand accountability from elected officials at every level.

Read what follows. Share what moves you. Stay engaged.

Senator Nelson was right. This is exactly why Earth Day was born. Now is the time to work together so the promise of Earth Day is fulfilled… together we shall cause a rebirth of a nationwide commitment and demonstration of citizen concern for the environment so large that it will again shake the political establishment out of its environmental lethargy and, finally, force this environmental issue permanently into the political arena.

The reality of where we are now is that every month, scientists publish research that should stop us cold. Journalists document decisions being made in our name that will affect every living thing on this planet. Most of this never reaches the people who need to hear it most.

Decisions are being made right now that will determine what kind of world is left for those not yet born.

The OurBlueOrb.org Monthly Briefing exists to close that gap.

What follows is the environmental news worth your attention this month — the research, the setbacks, the breakthroughs, and the stories that demand to be heard.

Read one. Read all of them. Share what moves you with everyone in your world. Don't forget those who need to wake up.

It remains your responsibility to speak up and be heard. The planet is counting on all of us — especially those who don't yet know how important it is to be engaged.

SENATOR NELSON WAS RIGHT — This Is Exactly Why Earth Day Was Born.

THE ENCOURAGING — Proof That Positive Action Works

1. Brazil Slashes Amazon Deforestation to 13-Year Low: Deforestation alerts in the Brazilian Amazon fell to their lowest level in 13 years. Brazil's National Institute for Space Research detected alerts covering 2,874 square kilometers in the twelve months to July 31 — down more than a third from the previous year and 55.6% below the decade average. Positive News, August 14, 2026: https://www.positive.news/society/good-news-stories-from-week-33-of-2026/

2. New Process Turns Plastic Waste Into Hydrogen Fuel: Scientists developed a chemical process that transforms three of the most common plastics into high-purity hydrogen without sorting them first — while simultaneously trapping the carbon released in the process. ScienceDaily, July 31, 2026:

https://www.sciencedaily.com/news/earth_climate/environmental_science/

3. Finland Slashes Emissions With Innovative Sand Battery: Finland deployed sand battery technology that dramatically reduced emissions by storing renewable energy in heated sand for later use. Positive News, July 31, 2026: https://www.positive.news/society/good-news-stories-from-week-31-of-2026/

4. Breakthrough Stainless Steel Could Slash Green Hydrogen Costs: Scientists created an unusually corrosion-resistant stainless steel that could replace costly titanium components in green hydrogen production — potentially reducing structural material costs by roughly 40 times. ScienceDaily, August 11, 2026: https://www.sciencedaily.com/news/earth_climate/environmental_science/

5. Scientists Discover Bacteria That Lock Toxic Uranium: Researchers found that deep underground bacteria trap toxic uranium before it spreads — with about 95% of dissolved uranium disappearing within days when microbes were introduced to contaminated mine water. ScienceDaily, August 9, 2026: https://www.sciencedaily.com/news/earth_climate/environmental_science/

6. Giant Sequoias: More Fire May Be the Answer: New research suggests controlled fire may be the best tool for saving giant sequoias — reversing decades of fire suppression policy. ScienceDaily, July 26, 2026: https://www.sciencedaily.com/news/earth_climate/environmental_science/

7. India Rethinks Grasslands as Carbon Treasure: India is shifting away from the colonial-era conception of its grasslands as wastelands and beginning to document their biodiversity value and carbon storage capacity. Yale Environment 360 via ASLA, July 30, 2026: https://www.asla.org/news-insights/dirt/climate-biodiversity-news-(august-2026)

8. Bloomberg Youth Climate Action Fund Opens Applications: Bloomberg's Youth Climate Action Fund opened applications for young people ages 15 to 24 — offering mentorship and funding between $1,000 and $5,000 to design and deliver climate projects. City of Redmond Environmental Sustainability Newsletter, August 2026: https://www.redmond.gov/m/newsflash/Home/Detail/3026

9. Amazon Atlantic Forest Deforestation at Historic Low: Brazil's Atlantic Forest recorded just 8,658 hectares of deforestation in 2025 — the lowest since monitoring began in 1985 and a 40% drop from the previous year. Ecology Good Climate News: https://ecologi.com/resources/blog/latest-good-news

10. California Mandates Corporate Carbon Disclosure: California's Climate Corporate Data Accountability Act requires companies generating over $1 billion in annual revenue to disclose their direct carbon emissions and supply chain emissions beginning in 2026. https://onderlaw.com/blog/corporate-greed-negligence-and-the-climate-crisis-why-transparency-is-key/

11. Solar Is Now the Cheapest Form of Energy in Human History: Solar power has crossed a threshold that would have seemed impossible forty years ago. Last year the world added enough solar capacity to power Canada for an entire year. In May 2026, solar outpaced coal's monthly power share in the United States for the first time ever. The cost of utility-scale solar now runs $38 to $78 per megawatt-hour, compared with $48 to $109 for new natural gas. Scientific American (Stephanie Pappas), August 18, 2026: https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/how-solar-became-the-cheapest-form-of-energy-in-the-world/

12. Harvard School of Public Health — Center for Climate, Health, and the Global Environment: Harvard's C-CHANGE research center connects environmental conditions directly to documented public health outcomes. Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health: https://hsph.harvard.edu/research/climate-health-c-change/research/

13. EPA Resource: Learn About Energy and Its Impact on the Environment: The EPA's educational resources on clean energy remain publicly available, covering how electricity generation affects air, water, and land, with a household carbon footprint calculator and Power Profiler tool. US EPA, updated August 11, 2026: https://www.epa.gov/energy/learn-about-energy-and-its-impact-environment

14. New Technology Removes PFAS From Water Using Magnetic Nanoparticles: Researchers at Friedrich-Alexander University in Germany developed functionalized magnetic nanoparticles that efficiently remove a wide range of PFAS from water; the iron oxide particles are scalable and non-toxic. FAU Research News, August 2026: https://www.fau.eu/2026/07/news/research/material-science/from-single-pfas-molecules-to-microplastics/

15. High School Student Invents Plant-Based Plastic That Removes Microplastics as It Biodegrades: Elif Billur Doğruer developed a plant-based plastic made from agricultural waste that actively removes microplastics from the environment as it breaks down, biodegrading completely with no toxic residue. Smithsonian Magazine (search the headline to locate)

THE URGENT — What Demands Immediate Attention

1. EPA Rescinds Greenhouse Gas Endangerment Finding: On February 12, 2026, EPA Administrator Lee Zeldin announced the repeal of the 2009 finding that greenhouse gas emissions endanger public health. Without that finding, the EPA's legal authority to regulate carbon emissions from vehicles and power plants is severely compromised. Legal challenges are underway from the Environmental Defense Fund and the Union of Concerned Scientists. https://www.hklaw.com/en/insights/publications/2026/02/epa-repeals-vehicle-all-greenhouse-gas-standards-for-vehicles

2. All Federal Vehicle Greenhouse Gas Standards Repealed: All federal greenhouse gas emission standards for light, medium, and heavy duty vehicles have been eliminated, affecting standards designed to significantly reduce transportation emissions through 2035. https://cen.acs.org/environment/epa-deregulation-zeldin-climate-endangerment-vehicle-emission-rules/1

04/web/2026/01

3. Mercury Protections Under Direct Attack: The EPA is working to repeal air pollution rules for fossil fuel power plants including weakening protections against mercury and other toxic emissions. Mercury is a documented neurotoxin with serious consequences for children and developing fetuses. https://www.lung.org/blog/powerplant-emissions-rollback

4. PFAS Drinking Water Rules in Court: The DC Circuit is weighing arguments on whether to uphold two landmark 2024 rules setting drinking water limits for PFAS forever chemicals. The outcome will determine how aggressively the EPA can enforce PFAS cleanups nationwide. https://insideepa.com/topics/outlook-2026

5. Waters of the United States Redefinition Underway: The EPA and Army Corps of Engineers are proposing to redefine what qualifies as protected US waters — potentially removing protections from millions of acres of wetlands and streams that feed into major waterways. https://cei.org/blog/whats-coming-in-2026-for-energy-and-environmental-policy/

6. PFAS and Microplastics Together Pose Greater Health Risks Than Either Alone: New peer-reviewed research published in July 2026 analyzed 47 controlled studies and found that PFAS produced the strongest toxic effects across biological systems. Current regulations assess these substances in isolation. PubMed, July 10, 2026: https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/42429663/

BEYOND URGENT — THIS MONTH'S ENVIRONMENTAL DISASTERS

1. Institute, West Virginia Chemical Disaster: A chemical disaster struck Institute, West Virginia in 2026 — the same community that experienced the Union Carbide chemical release decades ago. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Category:Environmental_disasters_in_2026

2. Potomac River Sewage Spill: A 72-inch sewer pipe built in 1962 collapsed near Washington DC, releasing between 240 and 300 million gallons of untreated sewage into the Potomac River — one of the largest sewage spills in US history. Researchers found high levels of E. coli and antibiotic-resistant MRSA. The pipe that failed was 64 years old. Potomac Conservancy: https://potomac.org/blog/2026/1/30/potomac-interceptor-sewage-spill-updates

Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health (Potomac spill health impacts): https://publichealth.jhu.edu/2026/potential-health-impacts-of-the-potomac-river-sewage-spill

Virginia Water Resources Research Center (Potomac spill update): https://www.vwrrc.vt.edu/2026/03/31/update-sewage-spill-in-the-potomac-river-find-out-the-latest-information/

3. 2026 Chiang Mai Smog Crisis: Chiang Mai, Thailand experienced catastrophic smog levels in 2026, recording some of the worst air quality on Earth. Agricultural burning, industrial emissions, and inadequate air quality regulation combined to create a public health emergency. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Category:Environmental_disasters_in_2026

4. Perm, Russia Oil Infrastructure Fire: A major fire and severe air pollution struck an oil refinery in Perm in 2026. A chemical emergency was declared and residents were warned to stay indoors. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2026_Perm_environmental_disaster

5. Tuapse Black Sea Oil Disaster: Fires lasting days struck an oil refinery on the Black Sea in 2026, causing an oil spill and black rain contaminating surrounding areas. Toxic emissions including benzene and xylene were detected; at least three people died. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2026_Tuapse_environmental_disaster

6. America Is Burning: 7.8 Million Acres Lost in 2026 and the Season Is Not Over: As of late August 2026, firefighters have responded to more than 51,000 wildfires burning over 7.8 million acres across the United States — 166% of the 10-year average. Florida alone saw over 500,000 acres burn during an exceptional drought period. National Interagency Fire Center: https://www.nifc.gov/fire-information/nfn

7. Drained and Flooded: How Wetland Destruction Costs Americans $10 Billion: A peer-reviewed study published in Nature Water in June 2026 found that wetland loss across the United States has increased residential flood insurance claims by more than $10 billion since 1985. The Supreme Court's 2023 Sackett vs. EPA ruling stripped federal protections from millions of acres of wetlands. Environmental Defense Fund, June 2026 (search the headline to locate)

Become aware!
Wake up. Speak up. Be heard.