



Dispatches From The Wild, Weird World Of Humanity And Its Biosphere

April 21, 2021

Washington

Washington's state legislature has [passed the landmark Clean Cars 2030 amendment](#), mandating that model year 2030 and later cars can be purchased, sold, and registered in Washington State only if they are all-electric. In Washington State (and the US overall) cars now emit more carbon as a sector than any other part of society, as emissions from the electricity sector are decreasing due to the rise of renewables-so movements to decarbonize cars are much-needed and welcome! Clean Cars 2030, isn't quite a sure thing yet, as it still needs Governor Jay Inslee's signature and [will only kick in](#) once the state adopts a tax on vehicle miles traveled to pay for new transport infrastructure. However, it's very likely to clear these hurdles and become law given Inslee's historic environmentalism and the fact that the legislature's already behind it. Washington will become the third US state to ban the sale of new gas-powered vehicles, after California and Massachusetts. Furthermore, their deadline is the soonest, at 2030 (the same year GM plans to stop selling gas-powered passenger cars) instead of CA and MA's 2035. This another great step towards decarbonization and the replacement of the inefficient and polluting internal combustion engine with electric vehicles!



France

France's legislature is also pursuing new decarbonization tactics,

with the Assemblée Nationale, the lower house of the French Parliament, passing a bill that [bans all domestic airline flights](#) on routes that can be travelled by direct train in under two and a half hours. This [shuts down short-haul flights where it's easy to go by train instead](#), like those from Paris to Bordeaux, Lyon, or Nantes. (Trains emit [much, much less carbon for distance travelled](#) than planes, and the difference is even greater for short-haul flights as planes burn the most fuel on takeoff and landing). The bill was a modified version of a recommendation from President Emmanuel Macron's landmark [Citizens' Convention for Climate](#), and now just needs to pass the French Senate and get President Macron's signature to become law. This is the kind of sensible substitution that should be a widespread part of world decarbonization efforts!



Alaska



New research on the long-lasting effects of wildfires in Alaskan forest has found a [surprising example of a stabilizing feedback](#). As the world warms, wildfires are growing more and more frequent in Alaska. However, much of that burned forest is dominated by the highly flammable and slow-growing black spruce, and rapidly-growing, less-flammable aspen and birch species are springing up after wildfires to occupy the new forest cover. The researchers examined Alaskan forests at various stages of growth after wildfires, in particular [75 black spruce stands](#) that burned in 2004 and their subsequent regrowth with new tree species. It appears that these replacement deciduous forests [more than make up for the carbon lost](#) when the black spruce burned, accumulating carbon through photosynthesis four times faster, and after a 100 year period storing 160% more carbon in their woody tissues. (See [the video above](#) for more). “For me, it was surprising,” said Dr. Michelle Mack, leader of the new study. “I didn’t think all that carbon could be offset. We keep talking about this runaway train of positive feedbacks accelerating climate change, but this looks like a brake.” [Note: when describing feedbacks in climate science, "positive" means "a system amplifying itself to go faster," not "a good thing to have happen." A negative feedback is actually a stabilizing, generally good-to-have feedback.] Fascinating news-and a good sign of one ecosystem literally rising stronger from the ashes.

The Weekly Anthropocene

Email Address:
samuel.matey@maine.edu

Contact Us Today

