

From: Coster, Billy
Sent: Tuesday, April 2, 2024 3:04 PM
To: Gendron, Maggie; Moore, Julie; Brackin, Stephanie
Subject: RE: Climate: How to make polluters pay

They make it sound oh so simple!

Billy Coster | Director of Policy and Planning
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From: Gendron, Maggie <Maggie.Gendron@vermont.gov>
Sent: Tuesday, April 2, 2024 2:53 PM
To: Moore, Julie <Julie.Moore@vermont.gov>; Brackin, Stephanie <Stephanie.Brackin@vermont.gov>; Coster, Billy <Billy.Coster@vermont.gov>
Subject: RE: Climate: How to make polluters pay

Sigh.

From: Moore, Julie <Julie.Moore@vermont.gov>
Sent: Tuesday, April 2, 2024 2:43 PM
To: Gendron, Maggie <Maggie.Gendron@vermont.gov>; Brackin, Stephanie <Stephanie.Brackin@vermont.gov>; Coster, Billy <Billy.Coster@vermont.gov>
Subject: FW: Climate: How to make polluters pay

Oh boy!



Julia S. Moore, P.E. | Secretary (she/her)
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The Agency of Natural Resources supports telework and there are times when I may be working from another location. I am generally available to connect by phone and email during business hours. I am also available to meet in-person upon request.

Help raise money for Vermonters impacted by flood damage and show your Vermont pride with *Vermont Strong* and *Tough Too* license plates and socks. [Click here to purchase your Vermont Strong gear](#) or visit DMV.Vermont.gov/VermontStrong23.

Impacted Vermonters can find resources and referrals by visiting Vermont.Gov/Flood.

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **The New York Times** <nytdirect@nytimes.com>
Date: Tue, Apr 2, 2024 at 2:26 PM
Subject: Climate: How to make polluters pay

The New York Times

Climate Forward

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The state of Vermont is one of several states in the Northeast that suffered from devastating floods last summer. Hilary Swift for The New York Times

How to make polluters pay



By [Manuela Andreoni](#)

Senior Newsletter Writer, Climate

Around the world, governments, nonprofits and even some [everyday people](#) are coming up with strategies to force fossil fuel companies to pay for their contributions to climate change.

The European Union is pushing countries to come up with a [global approach](#), dozens of countries and states have passed taxes on carbon emissions, and a growing number of citizens are filing lawsuits

against the oil and gas industry.

But what if governments could simply charge companies for the costs of climate change? These efforts are often described as “climate superfunds,” a reference to the 1980 U.S. law that forced companies to pay for toxic waste cleanup.

At least four states are considering versions of these bills, and tiny Vermont may soon be the first state to pass one. The idea behind the Vermont bill is simple: the state would calculate the damage caused by climate change and charge companies according to the share of emissions they produced.

Vermont’s Senate passed a measure on Tuesday and it will now head toward a vote in the House, where it has support from at least two thirds of members. You may remember that it was one of several states in the Northeast that suffered [from devastating floods last summer](#), killing at least 10 people and causing [\\$2.2 billion in damages](#).

“Taxpayers alone can’t bear these costs,” said Anthony Iarrapino, a lobbyist who garnered support for the bill for the Conservation Law Foundation. “It’s only fair to look to these immensely profitable corporations whose products and activities are the root causes of the crisis we are in and say, ‘You should pay your fair share and help clean up the mess.’”

What the bill does

We don’t know exactly which companies would be charged under Vermont’s bill, but it would cover companies that produced more than one gigaton of carbon emissions between 1995 and 2024 and have some sort of commercial relationship with the state.

State officials haven’t yet calculated how much money they would raise with the bill, but it’s fair to assume it would be in the hundreds of millions of dollars. A group of U.S. senators calculated a federal climate superfund would raise [\\$500 billion](#), and New York officials said a statewide measure [would collect \\$30 billion](#).

“The underlying goal of this bill is not about reducing carbon emissions,” Senator Nader Hashim said on the Vermont Senate floor last week. “This is about reducing the costs for Vermont taxpayers.”

The original [Superfund law](#) was signed in 1980, two years after a toxic landfill in Love Canal, a neighborhood of Niagara Falls, N.Y., was recognized [as a public threat](#).

The Vermont bill was inspired by [a proposal](#) by a group of U.S. senators, including Sen. Bernie Sanders, in 2021. The national bill did not advance, but it spawned several state-level climate superfund measures. The New York Senate passed a similar [bill last year](#), but because Gov. Kathy Hochul didn’t include it in the budget, it will need to be passed again. Massachusetts and Maryland have also introduced climate superfund bills, and California and Minnesota are expected to do so soon, [according to E&E News](#).

It's unclear whether Vermont Gov. Phil Scott, a Republican, will sign the measure, though it has had [some bipartisan support](#). Four Republican senators voted to pass the bill on to the House, including one lawmaker who had previously voted against it because he simply didn't want Vermont to be the first to face off against multibillion dollar corporations in court, a prospect many deem likely.

The oil and gas industry oppose the bill. According to [Heatmap](#), the American Petroleum Institute, a lobbying group, submitted testimony to the Vermont senate warning about the challenge of accurately attributing climate change to specific damages in the state and that emissions by each company can't be determined accurately enough.

The science that makes it possible

There's an intrinsic challenge in assessing who should pay for fossil fuel pollution: How do you prove who's responsible?

Climate change is both global and gradual. Burning fossil fuels in the United States now will impact communities in, say, Africa for years to come. And it's highly complex — and not always definitive — to link a specific event to climate change.

But attribution science, as the field is known, has made big strides in the last few years.

Scientists have created computer models that contrast our planet to a hypothetical one in which humans [didn't burn fossil fuels](#). That allows them to know, in a matter of weeks, which disasters can be linked climate change. For example, attribution science told us that the drought in the Amazon rainforest last year was [fueled by climate change](#), but the [wildfires in Chile weren't](#).

If the climate superfund bill becomes law in Vermont, the state plans to work with scientists to figure out just how much of the damage was caused by climate change. Then, they will calculate what each oil and gas company contributed to it.

For that, they will very likely use a database called "Carbon Majors." Richard Heede, the climate researcher who created it, told me he has collected thousands of corporate reports from 122 companies across the world detailing how much fossil fuels they have produced in the last decades. Using that, he can calculate a company's share of global heat-trapping gas emissions.

Another key puzzle piece: The work by researchers and journalists to [uncover documents](#) suggesting that fossil fuel companies have known for decades that their activities were harmful to the climate.

Taken together, some Vermont lawmakers believe they have all of the necessary ingredients to make fossil fuel polluters responsible for the damage they've caused.

"We can measure just how much worse storms are now because of climate change," state senator Anne Watson told her colleagues in Vermont. "It's time for us to hold fossil fuel companies accountable for the damage they have caused."

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A MESSAGE FROM SIEMENS

Siemens tech powers a green transformation in N.Y.

Siemens microgrid technology is helping New York City's the Javits Center transform into one of the most sustainable buildings in the U.S. We're showing that a clean energy future is possible.

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SIEMENS



Mammoth Climeworks in Hellisheidi, Iceland. Francesca Jones for The New York Times

Can we engineer our way out of the climate crisis?

On a windswept Icelandic plateau, an international team of engineers and executives is powering up an innovative machine designed to alter the very composition of Earth's atmosphere.

If all goes as planned, the enormous vacuum will soon be sucking up vast quantities of air, stripping out carbon dioxide and then locking away those greenhouse gases deep underground in ancient stone — greenhouse gases that would otherwise continue heating up the globe.

Just a few years ago, technologies like these, which attempt to re-engineer the natural environment, were on the scientific fringe. They were too expensive, too impractical, too sci-fi. But with the dangers from climate change worsening, and the world failing to meet its goals of slashing greenhouse gas emissions, they are quickly moving to the mainstream among both scientists and investors, despite

questions about their effectiveness and safety.

Researchers are studying ways to block some of the sun's radiation. They are testing whether adding iron to the ocean could carry carbon dioxide to the sea floor. They are hatching plans to build giant parasols in space. And with massive facilities like the one in Iceland, they are seeking to reduce the concentration of carbon dioxide in the air.

As the scale and urgency of the climate crisis has crystallized, "people have woken up and are looking to see if there's any miraculous deus ex machina that can help," said Al Gore, the former vice president. — *David Gelles*

[Read the full story here](#), part of a series on the potentially risky ways humans are starting to manipulate nature to fight climate change. More coverage is coming soon.

OTHER CLIMATE NEWS



[Mark Abramson for The New York Times](#)

New Pollution Rules Aim to Lift Sales of Electric Trucks

[The latest in a string of ambitious climate regulations aims to clean up the heaviest polluters on the road. But truckers are worried.](#)

[By Coral Davenport and Jack Ewing](#)



[Andri Tambunan for The New York Times](#)

‘Garbage Lasagna’: Dumps Are a Big Driver of Warming, Study Says

Decades of buried trash is releasing methane, a powerful greenhouse gas, at higher rates than previously estimated, the researchers said.

By Hiroko Tabuchi



[Ivor Prickett for The New York Times](#)

Angry Farmers Are Reshaping Europe

Farm protests are changing not only Europe’s food system but also its politics, as the far right senses an opportunity.

By Roger Cohen and Ivor Prickett



India's Silicon Valley Faces a Water Crisis That Software Cannot Solve

Bengaluru gets plenty of rain. But the city did not properly adapt as its soaring population strained traditional water sources.

By Damien Cave and Atul Loke



In Move to Protect Whales, Polynesian Indigenous Groups Give Them 'Personhood'

Indigenous leaders of New Zealand, Tahiti and the Cook Islands signed a treaty that recognizes whales as legal persons. Conservationists hope it will lead to legal protections.

By Remy Tumin

Samuel Lam, via Associated Press

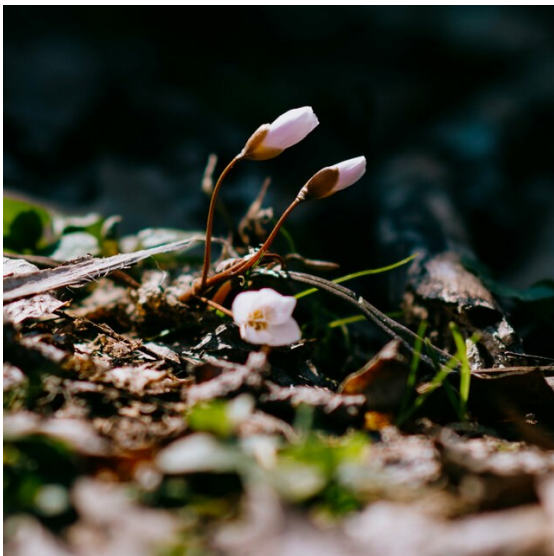


[Miguel Schincariol/Agence France-Presse — Getty Images](#)

Heat Waves Are Moving Slower and Staying Longer, Study Finds

[Climate change is making heat waves linger for longer stretches of time, exacerbating the effects of extreme temperatures.](#)

[By Delger Erdenesanaa](#)



[Kristian Thacker for The New York Times](#)

What a Search for the Signs of Spring Reveals

[A writer wonders whether the wild things around her are out of sync with the season.](#)

[By Daryln Brewer Hoffstot and Kristian Thacker](#)



[VPZ Verpackungszentrum GmbH](#)

So Much Produce Comes in Plastic. Is There a Better Way?

As governments impose limits on plastic food packaging, climate-friendlier alternatives are in the works. Here are some that might be coming to a grocery store near you.

By Kim Severson

More climate news

- 31 countries have surpassed a pivotal E.V. tipping point, when 5 percent of [new car sales are electric](#), Bloomberg reports.
- Solar panels are now so cheap they're being used as garden fences in Germany and the Netherlands, [the Financial Times reports](#).
- Reuters explained how fossil fuels have thrived despite the Biden administration's [efforts to curb climate change](#).
- Civil Eats investigated how Bayer, the agrochemical giant, is pushing for laws to stop pesticide [lawsuits across the United States](#).

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