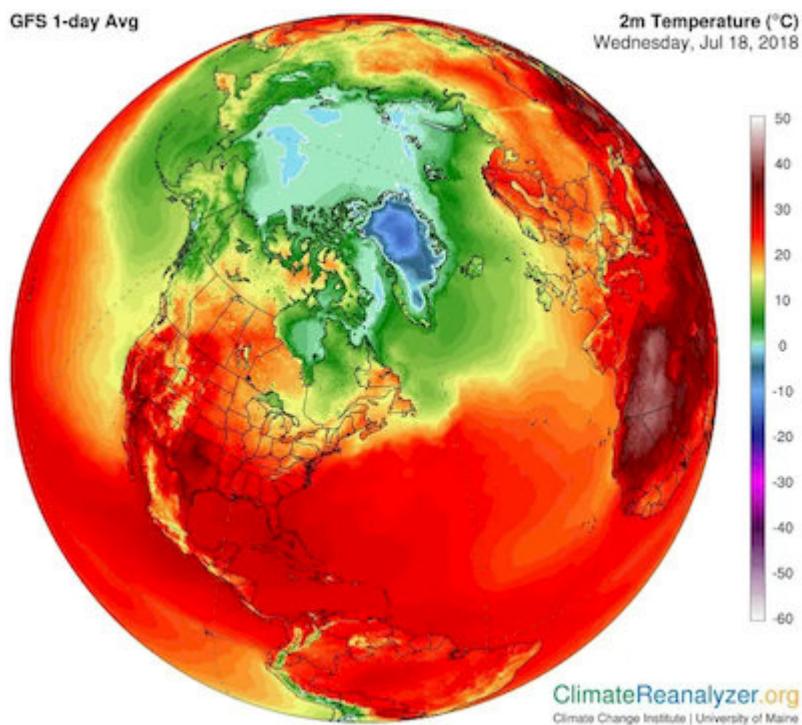


Heat waves tied to Big Energy capitalism

written by Scott Scheffer

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The population of the world is enduring crises from climate change that, until recently, climatologists thought may only happen decades from now.

Still, major energy companies and their banking partners are quietly investing heavily in oil wells and coal mining projects that would produce a massive surge in greenhouse gas emissions. The capitalist government is supposed to rein in the greed of corporations when it threatens the stability of the system.

But the earth is cooking, people are dying, livelihoods being destroyed, and even larger environmental crises are looming, and the three branches of the U.S. government are enabling at best — and facilitating at worst — the continued deadly emissions of methane and CO₂ that threaten the habitability of the Earth.

Contradictions of capitalist science

It was a long time before climatologists acknowledged the correlation between extreme weather events and greenhouse gasses. One of the great contradictions of the capitalist economy is that science has moved forward at an astonishing rate compared to previous social systems, but at the same time scientific knowledge is kept on a short leash.

The unbelievable heatwave that hit the Pacific Northwest a year ago was so outside the realm of normality that it broke the scientific information blockade. Forces seeking to protect fossil fuel investors have pushed climate denial, but the June 2021 heatwave brought about the public debut of “Attribution Science,” a branch of climate change research that has been developing for years.

Attribution scientists can now use statistics and, with a good degree of confidence, determine how much more likely extreme weather events are in the era of rising global temperatures. Dr. Sjoukje Philip of World Weather Attribution Initiative asserted that the Pacific Northwest heatwave “would have been virtually impossible without human-induced climate change.” She and others estimated that event to be a one-in-a-thousand-year occurrence.

The science is still developing and some types of severe weather - like tornados - are less understood. But the study of heatwaves has yielded the most success. The study is more than academic. Understanding the relationship between heatwaves and other extreme weather and being able to forecast will help with adaptation to changing climate and can save lives.

A 2018 article on climate-xchange.org that focused on the increase in deadly heat waves over the last several decades said:

"Heat waves are more than just uncomfortable, they are dangerous, deadly, and the most obvious [manifestation of a warming climate](#). They are repeated events of increased prevalence around the world, which are only forecasted to get worse as we keep pumping heat trapping gasses into the atmosphere."

To understand the significance of this quote, one need only think back to the 1995 heat wave in Chicago that killed 739 mostly senior citizens over five days.

Year-over-year all-time temperature records are dropping like flies. BBC reported that in 2019 between May 1 and August 30 almost 400 records were toppled in 29 countries. The year 2022 has seen more high-temperature records broken.

On July 30, 2020, the temperature in Baghdad, Iraq, was 125°F. Triple digit temperatures in two separate areas of India persisted for weeks, moderated slightly and then resumed until the monsoon season finally brought some relief.

Beginning in June and continuing as of this writing, heat records have been topped in France, Switzerland, Austria, Poland, Germany, Spain and Portugal. The second of nearly back-to-back heat waves in the U.S. is affecting some 50 million people with temperatures in some parts of the South reaching 115°F or higher. Also in June, the hottest temperatures ever for the region were recorded in 25 different areas of eastern China and throughout Japan.

Every dangerous event caused by the use of fossil fuels yields others. The crises are cascading. Scientists are now studying how the world's ocean and air currents, distorted by the effects of greenhouse gasses, are distributing heat waves to particular areas of the Northern Hemisphere causing them to be concurrent, as they have been in the U.S. and India in 2022.

No 'green new deal'

The Biden crew put on a good "green" show in the election campaign and in the early days after winning the White House. The new administration pushed a \$2 trillion climate-change proposal.

The proposal was less substantial than the "green new deal" that was circulated by the more progressive Democratic congressional group nicknamed "the Squad," but still stood no chance of passage in the face of an energy corporation-backed onslaught in Congress.

Now, however, Biden's White House doesn't look so "green." They've issued more gas and oil drilling permits than the Trump administration, pushed Saudi Arabia to pump more oil and held the largest offshore drilling rights federal auction in years.

This is all being done to counter Russia's oil and gas sales to Europe which the U.S. is trying to supplant. Their effort to do so has been ratcheted up with the sanctions against Russia and the pressure on European countries over the war in Ukraine. The surrender by Biden to the big energy section of the ruling class points to the dominance of energy companies and their investors under U.S. capitalism.

But none of that means that big energy can't be stopped. After winning the drilling rights in Biden's auction in the Gulf of Mexico, ExxonMobil and others were salivating over the potential profits. But in January, a federal judge invalidated the auction saying that the Biden administration failed to properly account for the

climate change impact.

Earthjustice and four other environmental groups had challenged the sale and won. Activism to stop the energy giants is the key. So many lives are affected that the struggle will inevitably be taken up by the working classes and oppressed people who suffer the most throughout the world. A portion of the U.S. ruling class recognizes that potential for a heightened struggle that could morph into a class battle that would finally bring capitalism itself to an end.

