



Week ending Friday, October 23, 2020

Pre Dust Bowl?

A new study finds dust levels are rising in the American Great Plains due to farming practices and climate trends that scientists say are reminiscent of the lead-up to the 1930s Dust Bowl period. The University of Utah research finds that the amount of dust has risen up to 5percent per year, which coincides with the expansion of cropland and seasonal crop cycles. Writing in *Geophysical Research Letters*, the scientists suggest farming practices could now be exposing more soil to wind erosion, albeit much less than when 1920s Midwestern farmers were tilling the topsoil with mechanical plows. This led to the Dust Bowl after severe drought struck.

Earthquakes

A temblor near the Alaska Peninsula triggered small tsunami waves.

- Southwest Iceland's strongest quake in 17 years was the latest in a series of tremors in recent months.

- Earth movements were also felt in the northwestern Philippines and along the California-Mexico border.

Fracking Fallout

A new Harvard study finds that there are significantly elevated levels of airborne radioactive particles up to 31 miles downwind of U.S. fracking sites. Using 16 years of data from 157 federal radiation monitoring stations, researchers found that sites with 100 fracking wells within 12 miles upwind had an average of about 7percent more radiation in the air. The highest contamination was near the Marcellus and Utica shale fields in Ohio and Pennsylvania, where radioactivity was 40percent higher than normal. While conventional oil and gas drilling doesn't result in much impact on underground rocks that contain uranium isotopes, hydraulic fracturing blasts through shale and other layers containing them. Scientists say the resulting radioactive particles are carried downwind.

Seal Tragedy

More than 5,000 seal mothers have aborted their pups at a key breeding colony along the coast of Namibia since early September, worrying marine scientists. Biopsies and tests have yet to determine why the miscarriages occurred on such a massive scale. Experts from Ocean Conservation Namibia say similar events happen every few years, but never before on such a large scale. They add that the mothers often sit beside their aborted pups, or carry them around for a few days in grief. It's believed that starvation, disease or pollution could be behind the disaster.

Rift Valley ☐ Floods

Lakes in the heart of Kenya have risen to levels not seen in at least a half-century after months of extreme rainfall scientists say is linked to climate change. The rising waters have swamped villages and pastures, forcing tens of thousands of people to move to higher ground. "It's been phenomenal," Guy Erskine told AFP as hippos wallowed in his submerged hotel on Lake Naivasha. Meteorologists say seasonal rains predicted for the weeks ahead threaten further

inundation.

Drone Recovery

A leading international conservation group has come up with a novel plan to regenerate the vast tracts of Australian bushland blackened by recent firestorms. The World Wildlife Fund (WWF) says it is urgent to restore the habitats of koalas and other wildlife lost in the conflagrations. It suggests that specialized drones could plant up to 40,000 gum trees per day in inaccessible areas to create green corridors that wildlife can feed on, live in and migrate through. Gum trees are the koalas' main food source. WWF Australia wants to raise \$210 million to fund the initiative and double koala numbers along the country's eastern coast.

Tropical Cyclones

Bermuda was pounded by large waves as nearby Hurricane Epsilon churned the Atlantic.

- The northern Philippines was drenched by strengthening Typhoon Saudel before it took aim on central Vietnam late in the week.

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