

Study: Possible dip in world carbon dioxide emissions

World spewing on average 150M pounds of carbon dioxide each minute

By **SETH BORENSTEIN**
AP Science Writer

PARIS — Global carbon dioxide emissions may be dropping ever so slightly this year, spurred by a dramatic plunge in Chinese pollution, according to a surprising new study by a scientific team that regularly tracks heat-trapping pollution.

The unexpected dip could either be a temporary blip or true hope that the world is about to turn the corner on carbon pollution as climate talks continue in Paris, said the authors of a study published Monday in the journal *Nature Climate Change*. One skeptical scientist offered a \$10,000 bet that world emissions will keep rising. Still, some leaders cheered the study.

“That shouldn’t tell us we don’t need to do anything, but that shows there is action,” Janos Pasztor, the United Nations Assistant Secretary General for climate change, told The Associated Press at the Paris climate talks. “Things are going in the right direction. All we need is a strong agreement.”

Using preliminary data through

October 2015, the international team of emission trackers project that worldwide emissions this year will end 220 million U.S. tons of carbon dioxide less than the 39.6 billion tons they calculated for 2014. That’s a 0.6 percent decrease, but there’s a margin of error — so the difference from last year to this could be as big a drop of 1.6 percent or actually a 0.5 percent increase, the study said.

The projected global emissions for 2015 calculate to the world spewing on average 150 million pounds of carbon dioxide each minute.

Study authors said this would be the first time global carbon dioxide emissions have dropped, even if only slightly, while the world economy grows. Global emissions fell during the last big recession.

The team’s emissions figures for 2014 — not projections but hard data — show a 0.6 percent increase from 2013, about 200 million metric tons. That’s much lower than previous annual rates. From 2000 to 2009, world heat-trapping gas emissions grew about 3.3 percent a year and in recent years

it was in the 1 to 2.5 percent range, said study co-author Corinne Le Quere of the University of East Anglia. But it could also be a blip with emissions going right back up, she said.

“We have a mountain (of emissions) in front of us,” Le Quere said. “Maybe the mountain is a bit less and steep than we thought. But it’s still a mountain.”

U.S. Environmental Protection Administrator Gina McCarthy said: “I will take the blip any day; it’s much better than saying it’s increasing. But I think it may just represent a strategy that will be more long term.”

Greenpeace’s international climate politics chief, Martin Kaiser, said this is not enough of a reason to celebrate or be complacent, as emissions have to come down fast in order to save the planet.

Stanford University’s Ken Caldeira expressed even deeper caution: He offered to bet the authors \$10,000 that emissions haven’t peaked yet, a bet the authors weren’t quite willing to take.

LeQuere said she also thinks world emissions, including China’s, will go back up and 2014 will not end up being the peak year. She said emissions could go up or down a bit from now on.

The whole apparent drop is driven by China, said study co-author Glen Peters of the Center for International Climate and Environmental Research in Oslo. Their study shows a nearly 4 percent drop in emissions for the first eight months of the year when compared to the same time last year. China’s plans don’t have the country hitting carbon dioxide peak emissions until 2030, which is 15 years from now.

One factor may be issues concerning emissions reporting accuracy with China — and the monitoring and verification of emissions is a major hurdle in climate talks. Peters is confident that his figures based on industrial activity are good. But when asked if he trusts Chinese official emissions reporting figures, Peters paused for a long time and said, “you certainly have your doubts.”

On the positive side, China has dramatically increased its renewable energy and is capping its coal burning, much of it driven by the

effort to clean up traditional air pollution that is choking cities like Beijing, said study co-author Dabo Guan of the University of East Anglia. Those efforts are aimed at coal because “coal is the criminal for that and they are reducing lots of coal consumption in the urban areas where most of the industry is based,” he said.

U.S. emissions in 2015 dropped by about 1.5 percent. Le Quere only had 2015 estimates for China and the U.S. But in 2014, Europe’s emissions went down 6 percent or by 200 million metric tons — which was the same amount by which India’s emissions rose, Peters said.

Princeton’s Michael Oppenheimer, who wasn’t part of the paper, said we need to wait a few years to see if this is a trend. But if it is, “we may be in the early stages of revolutionary change” mostly thanks to renewable energy.

He said it shows emissions can stop growing even as the economy continues to grow.

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PENDLETON: Doesn’t have funding earmarked to install new sidewalks

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an employee for one of several consulting firms hired by the city to assist in the update, said the city didn’t have much money left in the budget for pedestrian projects.

“We’ve done these TSP updates in a lot of different cities in this part of the state and this is sort of the same picture painted over and over again,” he said. “Pendleton’s not any different from Baker City or any other cities of similar size up here.”

Kittelson projects only modest gains for the city’s transportation budget over the next 20 years.

Officials say updating the plan to include projects for pedestrians, cyclists and transit passengers will improve the city’s chances of securing state or federal grants.

“There’s a lot of federal grant dollars out there specifically for (multi-use trails) in recognition that multi-use trails are no longer just for biking and jogging,” he said. “In many ways, they’re used for commuting and getting people from one place to the other in an environment that feels much safer than a bike lane on a busy arterial or a narrow sidewalk on a high volume roadway.”

In addition to applying for grants, Hughart said the city could also seek funding from public-private partnerships or the local tax base.

Recent efforts to raise transportation funding, even when it’s just for Pendleton’s flagging road system, has been a mixed bag.

While Pendleton voters rejected a ballot measure that would have instituted

a 5-cent gas tax, the city council is set to consider a \$5 street utility fee Dec. 15.

As it stands, Pendleton Public Works Manager Bob Patterson said the city doesn’t have funding earmarked to install new sidewalks in parts of the current street system that don’t have any.

Another potential target for future transportation funding is the Let’Er Bus program, which offers curb-to-curb public transit.

Let’Er Bus usage has skyrocketed in recent years, going from 1,500 riders in 2000 to 36,600 in 2015.

“As far as usage and availability, at some point, we’ll be maxed out of what we can afford,” said Pendleton Finance Director Linda Carter, who heads the Let’Er Bus program. “We’re pushing it right now, what we can afford, without more money.”

Much of Let’Er Bus’ funding comes from state and federal grants, but Stephanie Wright of transportation consultant Nelson/Nygaard warned that the continued growth in Hermiston could eventually increase competition for those funds because both cities are in Umatilla County.

The city held two design workshops Monday evening to gather suggestions from the public about which areas should be targeted by the transportation plan. The advisory committee’s next step will be to marry the ambitions from the design workshop to the city’s budget’s constraints.

Contact Antonio Sierra at asierra@eastoregonian.com or 541-966-0836.

ROBBERY: Police don’t know yet how much money was taken

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him to do so he hit her arm before taking the money.

“He ran away through the truck parking lot,” Singh said.

Larsen said police didn’t know yet exactly how much money was taken.

Stanfield Police Chief Bryon Zumwalt and Lieutenant Monty Toombs have been on paid administrative leave since Nov. 19 pending a Department of Justice investigation, leaving Stanfield with one active police officer in addition to support from Hermiston Police Department and Umatilla County Sheriff’s Office. Both agencies responded to the 9-1-1 call at the market, but Stanfield’s department is taking the lead on the investigation.

Larsen said the robbery was not a case where

having a full staff in the police department would have made a difference.

“Even if we were fully staffed, by the time someone got there he would have been gone,” Larsen said.

Center Market is located at 530 S Main Street in Stanfield.

Contact Jade McDowell at jmcdowell@eastoregonian.com or 541-564-4536.



Staff photo by Kathy Aney

Helix second-grader Andrew Kubishta lays a wreath on the grave of a veteran during the Wreaths for Remembrance ceremony on Sunday at Olney Cemetery.

WREATHS: Sold 220 to individuals and businesses

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To be forgotten is the worst.”

“The message today is that we remember you,” Kubishta said.

The students placed wreaths on graves belonging to veterans, starting in the American Legion Section and then dispersing in all directions, inspecting graves for

evidence of military service. Some moved quickly, while others took long moments at each stone. Lynne Ashby, 15, paused each time she placed a wreath bearing a red bow.

“I take a second to look at the name and remember their service for us,” Ashby said. “It’s important to honor what they did and acknowledge that they made a sacrifice.”

The Griswold High

School Euro Club started the Wreaths for Remembrance project six years ago. They laid 64 wreaths that year and slowly built the program. This year, they sold wreaths to 220 individuals and businesses for \$20 apiece. Some year, they hope to sell enough to adorn all 1,000-or-so veterans’ graves at Olney. The Helix tribute is modeled after Wreaths

Across America, an event that started with the laying of 5,000 at Arlington National Cemetery in 1992.

Kubishta said 25 wreaths remain unsold. To order one for personal use or to be placed on a grave, call Helix School at 541-457-2175.

Contact Kathy Aney at kaney@eastoregonian.com or call 541-966-0810.

LOTTERY: State ‘vice’ revenues are on an upward swing

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The importance of gambling to the state budget is an uncomfortable subject for some lawmakers, as was evident when the House and Senate revenue committees discussed the latest forecast. Two Republican lawmakers disagreed with an assertion by state economists that although more low-income people might gamble, wealthy people spend the most on gaming.

“If you look at these places, I don’t see any of us in there pulling handles,” said state Sen. Brian Boquist, R-Dallas. “I don’t see the rich in these establishments ... What I see in my district is the poor playing it.”

According to the latest forecast, there were large increases in video lottery gambling even in areas of the state where people continue to struggle after the last recession.

“Even in some of Oregon’s hardest hit counties, those that have yet to fully partake in the



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State economists credit new video gaming machines for a bump in lottery revenues.

economic recovery, growth in video lottery sales is roughly 10 percent over the past year, following the roll-out of the new terminals,” state economists wrote.

Rep. Phil Barnhart,

D-Eugene, said Oregon’s lottery system came about through an initiative petition by a company that produced gaming products. Barnhart said the fact that some people spend a significant amount of

their income on the lottery is “probably not a good proposition,” but “the fact is the state depends on the revenue these games produce, and that gives us a very ambivalent view of these games.”

None of the lawmakers suggested Oregon should scale back its lottery or stop the video lottery machine upgrade, which is budgeted to cost the state \$215 million over four years.

Overall, state “vice” revenues — including cigarette and liquor taxes — are on an upward swing, state economists said.

“Boy, vice is still alive and well in Oregon,” McMullen said. “While it’s encouraging for a bean counter maybe, it’s kind of scary because of the Sodom and Gomorrah kind of thing.”

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