

# Introduction: The Long Game

## *Climate Education After DOGE*

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### **Abstract**

In this Introduction, we reflect on the state of climate education six months into the second Trump presidency. While the damage done and stakes ahead are undeniable, we envision possibilities for climate action and climate literacy education going forward. We reflect on what teachers can do to accelerate integration of climate literacy across all subject areas and how a changing understanding of climate literacy as a holistic socioscientific and cultural competence is gaining ground across the world. Ours is a long game, and we are in it through all the bumps in the transition.

### **Keywords**

U.S. presidential election, climate erasure, climate literacy education, climate devastation, energy transition, persistence

Welcome to the first issue of CLE published since January 2025. Within a mere six months, we find ourselves in a radically new legal and ideological landscape, in which the US federal government made a 180 degree turn on anything relating to climate, environment, and education. The contours of this change are familiar, yet shocking, to most of our American readers, but a brief snapshot is helpful to remind everyone of just how profound this backlash against climate science and policies has been—and it's not over yet.

No, it's not over yet. Since the new Administration took office, a series of executive orders removed the US from the Paris Agreement, halted the Inflation Reduction Act's support for energy transition and replaced it with the [Unleashing American Energy](#) executive order, oriented at strangling renewable energy initiatives in favor of advancing fossil fuel production and expansion. This is no longer climate denial but [climate erasure](#). Federal agencies were ordered to scrub any references to climate change from their websites. The [US Department of Agriculture](#), for example, was ordered to remove information that helps farmers respond and adapt to the changing climate—a costly and destructive move that was [successfully challenged by Earthjustice on May 14](#). The National Ocean and Atmospheric Administration's 2024 guide to Climate Literacy was scrubbed from government sites (for a copy of the guide, see [this website](#)). The administration is now planning to dissolve NOAA's [Office of Oceanic and Atmospheric Research](#), which supports dozens of research institutes and programs “from earth systems modeling to ocean health to advanced weather radar” (2025, n.p.). NASA, NWS, US Forest Service, FEMA and dozens of other federal agencies were gutted, defunded, or restructured to serve purposes completely different from their original mission. No example is more poignant than rebranding of the Environmental Protection Agency, which just abandoned the twin tenets of protecting the environment and public health that had guided EPA since its founding in 1970. Lee Zeldin, the new administrator, redefined EPA's mission as centered on “lower[ing] the cost of buying a car, heating a home and running a business” ([Friedman and Tabuchi](#), 2025, np). Thousands of scientists, research personnel, conservation workers, National Park Service personnel, and other staff essential for studying and protecting the Earth system have been [laid off or placed on indefinite leaves](#). Thousands of research and education projects have been terminated. One among them was the Teaching Climate Justice with Young People's Literatures and Media summer institute for K-12 teachers to be offered by the Center for Climate Literacy this summer. Funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities, the institute was to provide twenty-four teachers with an opportunity to develop a literature-based, theory-informed, actionable understanding of climate justice for the ELA classroom. See the forthcoming special issue on why climate justice matters.

This unprecedented and intentional dismantling of American institutions and peoples' collective capacity to adapt to the climate crisis and mitigate its effects is happening against the backdrop of two larger trends. One is the inexorable [acceleration of climate-driven disasters](#), from blistering [summer heatwaves](#) and [droughts](#) to tornadoes, wildfires, and flash floods, including [the recent tragedy in Texas](#). 2025 is already shaping to be [among the warmest years in the 131-year record](#). June—the most recent month for which data is available—was [Earth's third-warmest June](#) in global weather data, right after Junes in 2024 and 2023. Both 2023 and 2024 were, consecutively, [the warmest years on record](#).

This is not a fluke. Without a concerted global effort and a [national climate action plan](#), climate devastation will continue to get more brutal, more fatal, and more widespread. The price—in lives, livelihoods, health, and assets—will be mostly borne by ordinary people, most of whom are already reeling from inflation, price hikes, and declining real purchasing power of household incomes. Thanks to federal agencies such as NOAA's National Centers for Environmental Information (NCEI), we know that the financial cost of climate-related disasters has been rising steeply, [reaching \\$182.7 billion in 2024](#). It will likely continue to rise in the foreseeable future, although the stats may no longer be available. The January 10 report by NCEI was possibly the last one we'll see in a while, since the NCEI's Billion Dollar Disasters reports have now been discontinued. As Jonathan Mingle aptly put it in an article "[An EPA without Science](#)," the current Administration is waging "a war on the future" (n.p.).

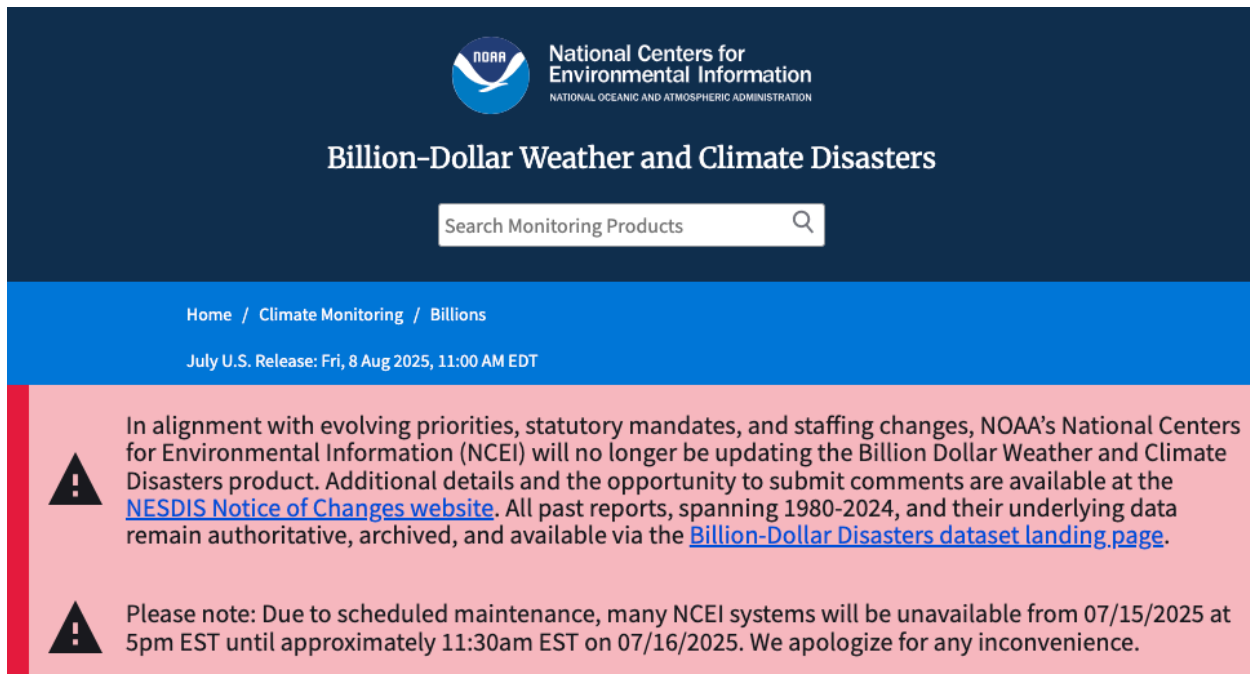


Figure 1: Screenshot of NCEI notification that they will discontinue financial reports

The other larger unstoppable trend is the widespread availability, increased efficiency, and growing affordability of [renewable energy](#). Over the past decade, the cost of solar and wind has gone down by 75 and 60 percent respectively. Batteries and energy storage have gotten better and cheaper, too. In the fall of 2024, Bill McKibben wrote that “we are on the cusp of a true explosion that could change the world. We are starting to put out the fires that humans have always relied on and replace them with the power of the sun” (McKibben, 2024, n.p.). Clean energy and transportation growth continues unabated, not just in [Europe](#), [China](#), [Africa](#) and elsewhere, but also in the US, where [investments increased by over 16 percent from 2023 to 2024](#). In April 2025, Reuters reported that, for the first time ever, [fossil fuels generated less than half of US electricity](#) and Minnesota leads the way [in experimenting on cutting red tape for climate projects](#). Both trends set the current Administration on a collision course with Earth’s biophysical reality and with the shifting economic and technological landscape. At some point in not-so-distant future, we will be both forced and incentivized to redesign human civilization for interspecies kinship, climate justice, and lives aligned with planetary limits.

No, this moment is not over yet. To play the long game means to keep this goal—an ecological world—in mind. In March, *The New York Times* launched a new series “[50 States, 50 Fixes](#)” aimed to highlight local efforts across all fifty states, in which everyday people are doing quiet, vital work to confront climate change and biodiversity loss. In April, the global journalism collaboration Covering Climate Now, *The Guardian*, *Agence France-Presse*, and dozens of other newsrooms across the world launched the [89% project](#) to help the public realize that a vast majority of world population supports decisive climate action. This shift is also visible in scholarship, with an increasing number of publications and studies centered on climate literacy and available in open access, such as the recent collection [Children’s Literatures, Cultures, and Pedagogies in the Anthropocene](#), edited by Terri Doughty, Justyna Deszcz-Tryhubczak, and Janet Grafton.

At CLE, we are part of this majority, too, advocating for integrated climate literacy instruction across all pre-K12 subject areas and grades. Starting with this issue, we have updated the journal’s style guide in accordance with [The Guardian’s guidelines](#): using “the climate crisis” or “the climate emergency” instead of “climate change” and “global heating” instead of mildly-sounding “global warming.” We remain committed to defending everyone’s right to a habitable planet and we believe teachers have a crucial role to play in this effort.

No, it is not yet over, and the contributions to this issue transform that sentiment into a rallying cry: they that would abandon our Earth have not finished; neither are we who fight for it. This tone is set clearly in the issue’s first article from Luke Gliddon, “Dispatches from the Future”, in which he reports on his work to incorporate future thinking into his secondary science classroom via engagement with *Black Panther* and other speculative tales. Jennifer Rudd, writing from her perspective as a scientist, shares how stories helped advance carbon literacy education in Wales. Betsy Maloney Leaf, Heather Delisle, and Colleen Redmond offer examples of the professional development they conducted with secondary arts educators, imbuing their learning with a sense of active hope. Cheryl Hunter and Leila Campbell’s piece on the affordances of teaching with and in local ecological systems reminds us that we have ample inspiration just on the other side of our classroom walls.

The critical essays also advance an argument for outlasting this fraught moment. Marek's article identifies a few key flashpoints of this persistence, namely by articulating the differing perspectives, emotions, and assets that individuals bring to climate literacy education. Roman Bartosch, Julia Hoydis, and Jens Martin Gurr recognize the unique assets that individuals bring in their expertise at connecting climate concepts within and across texts. Daniel Feldman, Dong Yeol Park, and Hunseok Oh enact this expertise by drawing connections between two young adult books that thematize climate refugees. Karen Hindhede offers a critical overview of the inspiration for her own ecopedagogical framework, while Jessica Fundalinski is likewise critical in her exploration of the ideological machinations involved in using pronouns to refer to more-than-human beings. Finally, Turkan Firinci Orman reports on findings from a study assessing the relationship between place-consciousness, climate education, and youth eco-literacy.

This issue is rounded out by two reflection pieces that each correspond to another article in this issue. Hunter refers us back to "Special Places in School," noting that cultivating a sense of place and its ecology in education enables greater awareness, knowledge, and care for our Earth. Malone Leaf, Delisle, and Redmond round out this issue, describing in more detail their hopes for the professional development articulated in "Developing Climate Literacy through Artistic Practice": namely, to support teacher and student mental health. Thus, we might conceptualize the work of climate literacy education as both a means to an ecological future and, perhaps, that future itself.

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