



NEWS ROUNDUP

09 MAY 2025 [08:00 am]

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- Scientists dig deep to make rice drought-resistant — literally
- Palace welcomes \$10-M funding for safe water access in Tawi-Tawi
- Warm weather, rains to prevail across PH
- COP30 can be a turning point in climate fight, says president
- Davao City strengthens climate response for farmers, fisherfolk

CCC IN THE NEWS:

- Village Health Workers Front-Liners In Climate Health Response

ABC

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By: Alexa St. John

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SUNSTAR

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By: Rojean Grace G. Patumbon

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Information and Knowledge Management Division

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The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration will no longer track the cost of climate change-fueled weather disasters, including floods, heat waves, wildfires and more. It is the latest example of changes to the agency and the Trump administration limiting federal government resources on climate change.

NOAA falls under the U.S. Department of Commerce and is tasked with daily weather forecasts, severe storm warnings and climate monitoring. It is also parent to the National Weather Service.

The agency said its National Centers for Environmental Information would no longer update its Billion-dollar Weather and Climate Disasters database beyond 2024, and that its information — going as far back as 1980 — would be archived.

For decades, it has tracked hundreds of major events across the country, including destructive hurricanes, hail storms, droughts and freezes that have totaled trillions of dollars in damage.

The database uniquely pulls information from the Federal Emergency Management Agency's assistance data, insurance organizations, state agencies and more to estimate overall losses from individual disasters.

NOAA Communications Director Kim Doster said in a statement that the change was “in alignment with evolving priorities, statutory mandates, and staffing changes.”

Scientists say these weather events are becoming increasingly more frequent, costly and severe with climate change. Experts have attributed the growing intensity of recent debilitating heat, Hurricane Milton, the Southern California wildfires and blasts of cold to climate change.

Assessing the impact of weather events fueled by the planet's warming is key as insurance premiums hike, particularly in communities more prone to flooding, storms and fires. Climate change has wrought havoc on the insurance industry, and homeowners are at risk of skyrocketing rates.

One limitation is that the dataset estimated only the nation's most costly weather events.

The information is generally seen as standardized and unduplicable, given the agency's access to nonpublic data, and other private databases would be more limited in scope and likely not shared as widespread for proprietary reasons. Other datasets, however, also track death estimates from these disasters.

Jeff Masters, a meteorologist for Yale Climate Connections, pointed to substitutes from insurance brokers and the international disaster database as alternative sources of information.

Still, "The NOAA database is the gold standard we use to evaluate the costs of extreme weather," Masters said, "and it's a major loss, since it comes at a time when we need to better understand how much climate change is increasing disaster losses."

These moves also don't "change the fact that these disasters are escalating year over year," Kristina Dahl, vice president of science at nonprofit climate organization Climate Central. "Extreme weather events that cause a lot of damage are one of the primary ways that the public sees that climate change is happening and is affecting people."

"It's critical that we highlight those events when they're happening," she added. "All of these changes will make Americans less safe in the face of climate change."

The move, reported Thursday by CNN, is yet another of President Donald Trump's efforts to remove references to climate change and the impact of greenhouse gas emissions on the weather from the federal government's lexicon and documents.

Trump has instead prioritized allies in the polluting coal, oil and gas industries, which studies say are linked or traced to climate damage.

The change also marks the administration's latest hit overall to the weather, ocean and fisheries agency.

The Trump administration fired hundreds of weather forecasters and other federal NOAA employees on probationary status in February, part of Elon Musk's Department of Government Efficiency efforts to downsize the federal government workforce. It began a second round of more than 1,000 cuts at the agency in March, more than 10% of its workforce at the time.

At the time, insiders said massive firings and changes to the agency would risk lives and negatively impact the U.S. economy. Experts also noted fewer vital weather balloon launches under NOAA would worsen U.S. weather forecasts.

More changes to the agency are expected, which could include some of those proposed in the president's preliminary budget.

The agency's weather service also paused providing language translations of its products last month — though it resumed those translations just weeks later.

GULF NEWS

[Scientists dig deep to make rice drought-resistant — literally](#)

By: Jay Hilotin

In a big breakthrough, Chinese scientists say they've cracked a genetic code in upland rice roots that could help regular rice survive with less water — a game-changer for farming in our warming world.

Their secret weapon? A gene called HMGB1.

Researchers from BGI-Research, Huazhong Agricultural University, and Yunnan University discovered that this gene actually slows down root growth — bad news if you're a rice plant trying to reach deep underground for water.

By removing HMGB1, the team turned regular irrigated rice into a drought-fighting powerhouse, growing longer, thicker roots just like upland rice (the tough cousin that thrives in dry fields).

Drought tolerance in upland rice

Upland rice, they explained, naturally grows in dry areas thanks to its sturdy roots.

The gene HMGB1 acts like a root-growth brake, so switching it off lets roots grow bigger and stronger — making the plant much more drought-tolerant, the South China Morning Post reported on Thursday.

Why does this matter?

Irrigated rice — the most widely grown rice — uses a massive amount of water.

It covers over half the world's rice fields and delivers 75% of global rice production.

In Asia, where billions eat rice as a staple, this is a potential "game-changer".

In China, rice gulps down 70% of the country's agricultural water. That's not sustainable with climate change on the rise.

In the Philippines, it costs ₱1.2 million (\$21,612) to irrigate one hectare of riceland (though it goes down to ₱300,000 with solar) according to the National Irrigation Administration (NIA).

Vietnam's annual irrigation budget accounts for about 10% of the state budget.

In Thailand, a recent plan to boost water security, including irrigation, is estimated to cost 548.4 billion baht (\$16.7 billion).

16 varieties

The research team studied 16 rice varieties, half upland and half irrigated, and analysed their roots and gene activity.

They found 376 genes tied to root development, but HMGB1 stood out as the main player.

The higher its activity, the worse the plant did under drought.

Lead researcher Zhong Liyuan from BGI-Research said their approach could cut years off the usual time needed to breed drought-tolerant rice.

Cross-breeding rice varieties

Instead of crossing plants at random, they can now target specific genes and fast-track the process — though it will still take 8–10 years to develop a stable variety for farmers.

The bottom line?

A hoped-for future where rice fields don't have to be flooded could be on the horizon.

That's great news for food security — especially for the billions (over half of the world's 8.1 billion people) who count on this cereal as their daily go-to staple.

MANILA BULLETIN

[Palace welcomes \\$10-M funding for safe water access in Tawi-Tawi](#)

By: Betheena Unite

Malacañang has welcomed the \$10 million grant from a multilateral agency to help climate-vulnerable towns in Tawi-Tawi secure safe and reliable water access amid growing climate challenges.

The project dubbed “Harnessing the Water-Energy-Food Nexus to Address and Adapt to Climate Change Impacts in Tawi-Tawi,” will specifically benefit the towns of Sibutu and Sitangkai, Communications Undersecretary Claire Castro said.

“Nakakuha ang Pilipinas ng \$10 million mula sa Adaptation Fund para sa isang proyekto sa Tawi-Tawi. Partikular na susuportahan nito ang mga bayan ng Sibutu at Sitangkai para masiguro ang ligtas at matatag na access sa tubig sa harap ng tumitinding mga hamon dala ng climate change (The Philippines secured \$10 million from the Adaptation Fund for a project in Tawi-Tawi. This will particularly support the towns of Sibutu and Sitangkai to ensure a safe and reliable access to water amid challenges brought by climate change),” Castro said in a press briefing at Malacañang.

According to its website, the Mindanao Development Authority reported that the initiative, focused on improving water security in Sibutu and Sitangkai, Tawi-Tawi, is the Philippines’ first project funded by the Adaptation Fund.

It aims to benefit over 71,000 residents in the island province by providing access to safe water and supporting the local seaweed industry.

The Philippines has secured its first grant from the multilateral agency Adaptation Fund to finance projects that will improve access to safe water and support the local seaweed industry in the island province of Tawi-Tawi.

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) will work with other stakeholders to ensure that the adverse impacts of and risks posed by climate change in the water management sector in Tawi-Tawi are adequately addressed.

The United Nations Industrial Development Organization and the Mindanao Development Authority will implement the project.

PHILIPPINE NEWS AGENCY

Warm weather, rains to prevail across PH

By: Ma. Cristina Arayata

No low pressure area is being monitored, and the easterlies affecting the country will bring high chances of rains and thunderstorms over the eastern section of Central Luzon, a forecaster said on Friday.

"For the rest of the country, the easterlies will cause warm weather, especially at noon, and sudden rains and thunderstorms in the afternoon and evening," Grace Castañeda of the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA) said.

PAGASA predicted the easterlies to bring scattered rains and thunderstorms over Aurora.

"Take precautions against possible flooding and landslides," Castañeda warned.

Light to moderate winds and slight to moderate seas continue to prevail across the archipelago.

Meanwhile, up to 35°C temperature is forecast in Tuguegarao; up to 34°C in Metro Manila, Kalayaan Islands, Zamboanga and Davao.

Castañeda said the heat index, or the temperature felt by the human body when relative humidity is factored in with actual air temperature, could peak at 40°C to 42°C in Metro Manila.

"A danger level heat index of 42°C to 43°C in some areas in Ilocos Region, Cagayan Valley, Central Luzon, Calabarzon, Mimaropa, Bicol Region, a huge part of the Visayas, and some areas in Caraga and Zamboanga Peninsula," she said.

Under "danger" level conditions, which range from 42°C to 51°C, the public is warned of increased risks of heat cramps, heat exhaustion, and heat stroke with prolonged exposure.

SPACE DAILY

[COP30 can be a turning point in climate fight, says president](#)

Brazil's UN COP30 president on Thursday said he wanted this year's conference to mark a new era of global progress on climate change and was hopeful that countries would deliver more ambitious carbon-cutting plans.

The COP30 climate conference in the Amazonian city of Belem marks a decade since the signing of the Paris Agreement but follows the second US withdrawal from the landmark pact and global efforts to address climate change and other shared threats.

Andre Correa do Lago, a veteran climate diplomat tapped to lead the November COP30 conference, acknowledged that the world faces "immense" challenges, with geopolitical tensions and data showing global temperatures at historic highs.

In his second letter to the nearly 200 nations set to take part in COP30, Correa do Lago called on the international community to "mobilize in the face of climate urgency".

And he insisted that the meeting can serve "as an inflection point in our historic transition that closed the gaps and charted the course toward a new era of sustainable and inclusive prosperity".

- World climate commitments -

Several major economies are still working to finalise their climate plans, known as nationally determined contributions (NDCs), which were originally due earlier this year but are now expected to be submitted to the UN before the COP30 conference.

These commitments must be revised every five years, but few countries have submitted their 2035 plans on time, with major greenhouse gas emitters such as China and the European Union among the latecomers.

"Everybody seems very committed to advance in developing their NDCs and I believe that by September we're going to have a very significant number of countries presenting it," Correa do Lago told reporters.

Speaking on the sidelines of a ministerial meeting in Copenhagen to prepare for the November 10 to 21 COP30 talks, Correa do Lago said the atmosphere was "positive".

Ana Toni, CEO of the COP, said that the quality of countries' climate commitments had changed "tremendously", with more parts of economies included.

With the US withdrawal from climate cooperation under President Donald Trump, attention has turned to other major carbon polluters.

Last month, President Xi Jinping said China would not slow its climate efforts and pledged to announce its 2035 commitments before COP30.

He said that they would for the first time cover the entire economy and all greenhouse gases, not just carbon dioxide.

The European Commission has proposed cutting emissions by 90 percent by 2040 compared to 1990 levels but some member states argue the figure is too high, delaying its approval.

In the letter, Correa do Lago said there was a risk of confronting "new crises with outdated strategies", overlooking shifts in science, technology and societies.

He added that he wanted COP30 to help widen climate action beyond the negotiations and "shift the trajectory of humanity's relationship with the planet".

SUNSTAR

[Davao City strengthens climate response for farmers, fisherfolk](#)

By: Rojean Grace G. Patumbon

THE City Agriculturist's Office (CAgrO) is actively assessing the Davao City government's response to climate-related challenges, with a focus on supporting local farmers and fisherfolk.

Antonio R. Obsioma, CAgrO officer-in-charge, said he has consulted with the city's disaster response group regarding the impacts of climate change and has already rolled out mitigation measures. Among these is the installation of solar-powered irrigation systems (SPIS) across Davao's three districts.

In January 2025, the city installed a P1.4 million SPIS in Pañalum, Paquibato District. Powered by solar panels, the system pumps water to irrigate 10 hectares of farmland and is expected to benefit around 30 farmers.

Another SPIS is currently being built in Barangay Malabog, also in Paquibato District, and is set to become operational within the year.

"Sige man ta panghatag ug mga seedlings sa atoang mga farmers tapos atoang gipakusgan karun ang PCIC atoang Philippine Crop Insurance Corporation (We've been regularly distributing seedlings to our farmers, and now we're also strengthening our partnership with the Philippine Crop Insurance Corporation)," Obsioma said in a radio interview on Davao City Disaster Radio (DCDR) on Wednesday, May 7, 2025.

He noted that improving PCIC application processes is a priority, ensuring that farmers receive timely insurance coverage in case of crop damage or losses.

CAgrO recently launched Project Lawa, an initiative that involves creating large rainwater catchment basins. These will serve as alternative water sources during El Niño and may also be used for fish farming, offering farmers additional livelihood options.

Obsioma said that CAgrO continues to monitor and coordinate closely with the Davao City Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Office (CDRRMO) and other agencies to strengthen the city's climate resilience.

The office is also marking Farmers and Fisherfolk Month this May with a series of district-wide events and training sessions aimed at supporting and empowering local agricultural communities.

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The Climate Change Commission (CCC) has underscored the crucial role of barangay health workers (BHWs) in addressing the growing health threats posed by climate change.

In a news release on Wednesday, CCC Vice Chairperson and Executive Director Secretary Robert E.A. Borje said that during the recent pilot training session of the Accelerated Climate Action and Transformation for Local Communities (ACT LOCAL) program in Caloocan City, it was noted that climate change is not just an environmental issue but also a serious public health concern.

“Ang patuloy na pagtaas ng temperatura at pabago-bagong panahon ay nagdudulot ng paglaganap ng iba’t ibang sakit (The continuous rise in temperature and changing weather conditions are causing the spread of various diseases),” Borje said.

He said barangay health workers are the first responders to those affected by climate change.

“Kayo ang frontline ng mga komunidad at katuwang sa pagsagip ng buhay mula sa anumang epekto ng climate change sa kalusugan ng tao (You are the frontline of communities and partners in saving lives from any impact of climate change on human health),” he added.

Borje pointed to the increasing risks from extreme weather events, higher temperatures, and the changing patterns of diseases that threaten vulnerable communities.

The CCC said the ACT LOCAL program aims to equip local communities with knowledge and tools to adapt to and mitigate the impacts of climate change.

The CCC said there are currently around 253,000 trained BHWs across the country, who provide first aid, child healthcare, and immunization services.

Meanwhile, Borje expressed gratitude to the BHWs for their dedication to public service and community well-being, while emphasizing that strengthening prevention and resilience is key to protecting health systems and saving lives amid a changing climate.

The ACT LOCAL initiative forms part of a broader whole-of-government approach under the administration of President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr., which aims to enhance health and climate resilience through community empowerment and science-based solutions.

The CCC, meanwhile, reaffirmed its commitment to support local government units (LGUs) and grassroots sectors, ensuring that climate action initiatives remain inclusive, sustainable, and responsive to the evolving needs of Filipino communities.

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