


THE ASPEN INSTITUTE
**ENERGY &
ENVIRONMENT**

CELEBRATING *50* YEARS PROGRAM

**2020 END OF YEAR
REPORT**

WELCOME NOTE

A WELCOME FROM GREG GERSHUNY, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENT PROGRAM

With 2020 almost entirely in our rearview mirror, it can certainly be said that it was a year for the history books. On the first day of any given year it is impossible to predict where we might be on the last, but on the morning of January 1st, 2020 we likely could not have even imagined the year's unprecedented trajectory. The global COVID-19 pandemic has created a public health crisis of unimaginable proportions. This immense suffering and human loss has been compounded by economic disruption and skyrocketing unemployment that have left communities in even more dire positions. This year has also seen the latest manifestation of racial injustice in the U.S., as the nation bore witness to the murder of George Floyd in police custody, and waves of socio-political unrest rocked the country. Meanwhile, the climate crisis has continued to intensify as the fall saw the western U.S. struggling to control immense fires and the Gulf Coast repeatedly bracing themselves against tropical storms.

Yet, in spite of immense uncertainty, disruption, challenge, and tragedy brought by these intersecting crises, this year has always offered historic opportunities for growth for the energy and environment sector as well as for our program. Bringing people together is a large component of what our program does, yet for most of this year we have been joined-together by only a few things, one being our shared isolation from one another. Whether in complete lockdown or seeing friends masked, outside and standing six feet apart, we have never been more socially isolated. But through technology, we were able to re-imagine our forums and continue to convene people virtually to continue the ever relevant and critical conversations we have facilitated for 50 years.

Our program embarked on a new journey to redouble our commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion - in the wake of horrific racial injustice. We have committed to taking specific actions to address injustice, in line with the values of our organization – you can read our statement [here](#). We plan to announce more specific actions in the coming months as we work to implement our plan to address these issues within our program, and to influence the wider spheres in which we work. Finally, our program has expanded in numbers and initiatives to better meet the urgent need for climate action, including the launch of our new K12 Climate Action Commission, a new decarbonizing shipping initiative, a new wilderness initiative aimed at broadening its accessibility and equity, and more. I would like to close by offering a few overarching thoughts based off the work we have done this last year and the work we will do moving forward:

- The short-term gains in emissions reductions from the economic slowdown caused by COVID-19 are not a replacement for the hard work of actually transitioning the economy from a high-emissions economy to a low, and eventually net-zero emissions economy.
- Corporate commitments to reducing emissions are growing – in fact 9 of the 10 largest companies in the world have net-zero commitments – but how and how fast each company implements their reductions matter.
- Financial markets are assessing the risk of climate inaction more each year. From Wall Street investors like BlackRock, to insurance and reinsurance companies, to the Chicago Federal Reserve Banks, investors are now paying more attention than ever. Stock prices of clean energy companies are growing while those that produce fossil fuels are shrinking.
- While the U.S. pulled out of Paris in November 2020, it will only be a brief departure. President-elect Biden has committed to rejoining the agreement on his first day in office in 2021. How he does this and how he seeks to bring the international community along will matter a lot over the coming decade. 2021 is not 2015 (when the Paris Agreement was signed) and other nations, like China, are more committed to action than ever before.
- Adapting to a changing planet is no longer only a worry of pacific islands and other low-lying areas. Fires, floods, drought, sea level rise, and increasingly intense storms are now impacting more areas around the world, and decades earlier than scientists had predicted just a few decades ago. This destabilization is leading to water and food disruptions and causing massive human suffering. While emissions must be reduced as fast as possible, we cannot forget that even if we stabilize global temperature at 1.5°C, we will continue to see impacts from the existing emissions for decades to come – and we better get prepared.

In closing, I would like to thank our partners, collaborators, and participants. We are grateful that even during such an unprecedented year we were able to connect with so many on such a wide array of topics. As we look forward to 2021, we hope it becomes safe to meet again in person soon.

Sincerely,



IMPACT BY THE NUMBERS

A look at how we adapted and stayed connected during the year that was.

60

VIRTUAL EVENTS

2.1K

PARTICIPANTS

5

IN PERSON EVENTS

686%

INCREASE IN SOCIAL
MEDIA INTERACTIONS





Annual Convenings

Aspen Winter Energy Roundtable

On February 24-26, the Energy & Environment convened the annual Winter Energy Roundtable, bringing together a broad cross-section of leaders from industry, academia, government, the financial sector, and the non-profit community. Participants dove deeply into discussion centered around energy innovation and economy-wide decarbonization. Roundtable sessions focused on issues of technology development and deployment, clean energy policy options, infrastructure investment, the role of energy consumers, wholesale electricity market reform, and the changing role of capital providers and markets. Upon conclusion of the Roundtable, participants left with new insights and a more dynamic cross-sector understanding of how the U.S. can reach net zero emissions by 2050, as well as areas to focus on in subsequent convenings.

Read the Roundtable report [here](#).



Inter-Policy School Summit



The Inter-Policy School Summit is a student-run conference hosted by the University of Chicago Harris School of Public Policy. The Summit brings together graduate students from around the world each year to propose solutions to pressing global issues. The 2020 Summit was held February 28 – March 1, 2020. Graduate students from twenty universities in four countries gathered together to explore innovative strategies to address the issue of City Resiliency and Climate Change with the goal of identifying potential solutions to help urban areas adapt to climate change related challenges. At the Summit, participants were assigned into groups, each examining this issue in the context of a particular city. The cities included were: Lagos, Nigeria; Wollongong, Australia; Jakarta, Indonesia; Venice, Italy; Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam; San Juan, Puerto Rico, USA; Delhi, India; Santiago, Chile; and Buffalo, New York, USA. The Aspen Institute Energy & Environment Program served as advisors to the students and the summit organizers and published the final report which presents the findings from each group.

The report can be found [here](#).



Honor the Harvest



Diana Arsenian
Blue Beyond Consulting

U.S. Farmers
&
Ranchers
Alliance

The Honor the Harvest Forum was convened virtually by the Aspen Institute in partnership with US Farmers & Ranchers Alliance, for the second year this September. This invitation-only virtual meeting brought together value chain leaders, farmers, ranchers, scientists, NGOs, government officials, brand and retail CEOs and others to explore how we might launch and lead a decade of resilient, restorative, economically viable, and climate-smart agriculture. Over the course of two weeks, the group aligned on a shared vision of

this collaborative system that will produce abundant and nutritious food, natural fiber, and clean energy for a sustainable, vibrant, and prosperous America. Outlining key principles and goals, the group worked together to consider how to accelerate progress towards these desired outcomes and set the stage for a decade of innovative and resilient agriculture driven by their collective leadership and their quickly growing coalition.

Aspen-Nicholas Water Forum

The Aspen-Nicholas Water Forum, convened annually by the Aspen Institute Energy and Environment Program and Duke University's Nicholas Institute for Environmental Policy Solutions, serves as a platform for addressing domestic water challenges in the 21st century. In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, this year's forum, co-chaired by Martin Doyle of the Nicholas Institute, and Radhika Fox of the US Water Alliance, took place over a series of virtual sessions and explored what constitutes good water governance through the lenses of water affordability and equity. While this topic was chosen prior to the outbreak of COVID-19, the pandemic has further revealed and exacerbated health and financial disparities across income levels and racial, gender, and geographic lines, making this topic all the more relevant and critically important. Participants came together over the course of the six virtual sessions to explore specific topics – and their various challenges and potential solutions including long-term water affordability and financial resilience, equity and affordability in rural communities and tribal nations, building a federal water assistance program, and local, state, and federal insights on renewing a cross-government approach for water affordability.

Read the report [here](#).





Aspen-Columbia Energy Week

From October 5-8, Aspen Energy Week went virtual for an expansive two-track forum co-chaired by Rich Powell, Executive Director of ClearPath, and former FERC commissioner Cheryl LaFleur. The annual Aspen Energy Week gathers a diverse group of entrepreneurs, policy makers, industry executives and thought leaders to discuss critical factors at the forefront of the energy transition. This year's theme, "Building a Clean Energy Society: Deploying & Scaling a Zero-Carbon Future," took a sharper lens to the legislative, technological, and financial levers to implementing a net zero-carbon future. Participants heard from leaders across the country and explored critical issues and opportunity areas in sessions ranging from carbon dioxide removal to the role of capital markets.

Aspen-Columbia Global Energy Forum

The Global Energy Forum, co-chaired by Vicki Hollub, CEO of Occidental Petroleum, and Founding Director of Columbia University SIPA's Center on Global Energy Policy, Jason Bordoff, brought together leaders around the world for a high-level dialogue on global energy markets and geopolitics. This year's forum focused on critical issues defining the energy transition in several prominent regions around the world, as well as on the implications of the impending 2020 U.S. elections. Like other EEP forums, this convening is enhanced by an informal atmosphere and a not-for-attribution rule that encourages new thinking, dissenting opinions, and frank discussion.

This year's Energy Week and Global Energy Forum were convened by the Aspen Institute Energy and Environment Program and Columbia University SIPA's Center on Global Energy Policy.

India-US Track II Dialogue on Climate Change and Energy

Managed by the Aspen Institute and Ananta Aspen Centre in India, the India-U.S. Track II Dialogue on Energy and Climate Change brings together a diverse array of thought leaders from India and the United States, including former senior government officials, industry leaders, subnational officials and heads of civil society organizations, to inform and encourage India-U.S. partnership at a strategic level on climate and energy issues. The Dialogue, co-chaired by Jamshyd Godrej, Chairman and Managing Director of Godrej & Boyce Manufacturing Company Limited and Chairman Emeritus of Aspen Institute India, John D. Podesta, Founder and Director of the Center for American Progress, and William Reilly, Former Administrator of the US Environmental Protection Agency, is dedicated to

positively impacting how the two countries interact bilaterally while also demonstrating genuine leadership multi-laterally on climate change. The 9th India-U.S. Track II Dialogue on Energy and Climate Change, held February 3-5, 2020 in New Delhi, India, focused on key climate and clean energy-related issues critical to the bilateral relationship, including: policy developments in each country; perspectives on the forthcoming COP26 meeting; and potential policy related cooperation on short-lived climate pollutants, electric mobility, and sustainable finance. The Dialogue has continued to convene virtually throughout the pandemic and in doing so has continue to offer a critical space for bi-lateral cooperation and progress.

Read the joint statement [here](#).





Public Events



Activism in the Age of COVID-19 SOCIALLY DISTANCING BUT STAYING SOCIALLY ENGAGED

On April 16, the Energy and Environment Program hosted its first virtual event, featuring an inspiring discussion on how the climate movement continues to build momentum even as it has moved off the streets to online. During this exchange, **Bill McKibben**, Founder of 350.org, **Benjamin Backer**, President and Founder of American Conservation Coalition, and **Alexandria Villaseñor**, Founder and Executive Director of Earth Uprising, reflected on how the climate movement has evolved amid the current health crisis. The panelists shared lessons that we can draw from from the pandemic and how these lessons should shape our response to the climate crisis in the coming weeks and years.

Watch the recording [here](#) or you may read our blog, [*The Climate Movement is Open for Business*](#), which draws out some of the key lessons from the panel.

Earth Day 2020

THE WAY FORWARD ON CLIMATE & HEALTH



In partnership with Energy Futures Initiative, the Energy & Environment program celebrated the 50th Anniversary of Earth Day by spotlighting the climate and health nexus as it relates to the well-being of both people and the environment. The virtual panel event brought together Former Secretary of Energy Ernie Moniz, the University of Chicago's Michael Greenstone,

Jacqueline Patterson of the NAACP, and Amy Luers from Future Earth for a conversation moderated by Axios Energy & Climate Change Reporter, Amy Harder. The expert group discussed current and future health threats with a changing climate, equity and environmental justice implications, and impacts on climate policy.

Watch the recording [here](#).

The Future of Cities

THE RISE OF THE 15-MINUTE NEIGHBORHOOD

The Energy & Environment Program, in partnership with Blueprint, hosted its first townhall on the future of cities on November 20. This conversation, moderated by Atlantic writer Derek Thompson, focused on the rise of the 15-minute neighborhood and featured renowned thought leaders and implementers of the 15-minute city

concept: Janette Sadik-Khan, Carlos Moreno, Richard Florida, and Padden Murphy. Subsequent townhalls, to take place in 2021, will feature leaders in both building and powering the cities of the future.

Watch the recording [here](#).



INNOVATORS SERIES

A VIRTUAL EXCHANGE OF IDEAS

Over the course of the summer, the Aspen Institute Energy & Environment Program hosted the virtual series: “Innovators In_____: A Virtual Exchange of Ideas”. The summer series featured a unique focus on people who are leading the way in their industries with innovative and exciting ideas. Through timely and engaging discussions with industry thought leaders and rising stars, this series offered a fresh angle on the nexus of climate change as it relates key issues, including energy, technology, finance, food systems, health, resilience and water.



Justin Worland
TIME



Rep. Garrett Graves



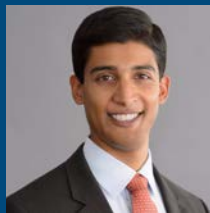
Rep. Kathy Castor



Gina McCarthy
NRDC



Melissa Roberts
American Flood Coalition



Varun Sivaram
Columbia University, SIPA



Alejandro Jimenez
SIWI



David Elenowitz
Zero Carbon Partners LLC



Nancy McGaw
The Aspen Institute



Derrick Hoffman
Hoffman Farms LLC



Nat Kreamer
Clean Power Finance



Peggy Clark
The Aspen Institute



Ben Deda
FoodMaven



Susan Gray
S&P Global

Public Lands, We the People



Constituting nearly one-third of the land mass of the U.S., public lands offer a critical solution to the climate and extinction crises and are fundamental to the clean air and water we depend upon for human health. Throughout the month of July, the Aspen Institute Energy & Environment Program in partnership with The Wilderness Society hosted the virtual series Public Lands, We the People: The Critical Role Public Lands Play in Solving the Climate and Biodiversity Crises to collect big ideas from thought leaders, change makers and the public for the future of our public lands. The series explored innovative ways in which public lands can be managed to more equitably benefit people and nature, including engaging tribes, people of color and lower-income communities that have been excluded from public lands decision-making. The health and well-being of future generations and our planet depend on our ability to re-imagine and expand the promise of public lands. “Public Lands, We the People: Creating a Healthy and Just Future for All,” is the culmination of the month-long virtual series. The report offers key guiding principles and critical policy recommendations for public lands’ big role in climate solutions as a natural tool to rapidly reduce greenhouse gas emissions, halt biodiversity loss, improve community health and well-being, create new sustainable economic opportunities and enhance the resilience of natural systems.

Read the report [here](#).



New Convenings

Future Leaders Climate Summit



Future Leaders Climate Summit
August 9-13, 2020
Virtually Everywhere

Featuring



Jennifer Atkinson
Senior Lecturer
University of Washington



Kaitlin Yarnall
Senior VP and Chief
Storytelling Officer
National Geographic



Steph Speirs
Co-Founder and CEO
Solstice



WELCOME ADDRESS
Dan Porterfield
CEO and President
The Aspen Institute



Leah Thomas
Intersectional Environmentalist,
Eco-Communicator



Jainey Bavishi
Director, NYC Mayor
Office of Resilienc



KEYNOTE SPEAKER
Catherine Coleman Flowers
Senior Fellow, Environmental Justice
& Civic Engagement
Center for Ethics



Riddhima Yadav
Analyst, Sustainable
Finance Group
Goldman Sachs



Chris Gassman
Chief Commercialization
Officer, Management
and Legal Associates LLC



RODUCTORY SPEAKER
Greg Gershuny
Executive Director
y & Environment Program
The Aspen Institute



Daniela Fernandez
Founder & CEO
Sustainable Ocean Alliance

CLOSING ADDRESS
Nikki DeVignes
Director, Future Leader
Climate Summit
The Aspen Institute

#FLCS2020
#FutureLeaders
@AIENVIRONMENT

This past summer, EEP launched its Future Leaders Climate Initiative with its inaugural Future Leaders Climate Summit. The Summit, which was originally scheduled to take place in March at the University of Chicago, was held virtually August 9-13. The Summit aims to empower leaders (ages 18-30) that will be shaping and driving our response to the climate crisis by giving participants the tools to effectively push for change in their communities and the communication skills to connect climate change with the lives of everyday Americans. Albeit a condensed version of what was planned for the full in-person convening, the virtual summit featured a curation of expert-led conversations, impact-designing workshops and network-building opportunities all designed to inspire this impressive cohort of leaders. Catherine Flowers, Director of Environmental Justice and Civic Engagement of the Center for Earth Ethics, gave the keynote address reminding the young leaders that it is their “time to seize the moment, make the changes, to write the polices necessary to take us to the next level.

K12 Climate Action



The K12 Climate Action initiative launched this fall with a mission to unlock the power of the education sector to be a force for climate action, solutions, and environmental justice. The initiative includes a commission of education, environment, and civil rights leaders that is co-chaired by former Secretary of Education John B. King Jr. and former Governor of New Jersey Christine Todd Whitman, as well as a coalition of over 30 organizations. Within its first few months, K12 Climate Action has released a state policy landscape report analyzing key areas where states have policies that can support schools in taking climate action; hosted two public listening sessions; and worked with the co-chairs to send a sign-on letter to the Biden-Harris transition team.

You can find the report [here](#).



Decarbonizing Maritime Shipping

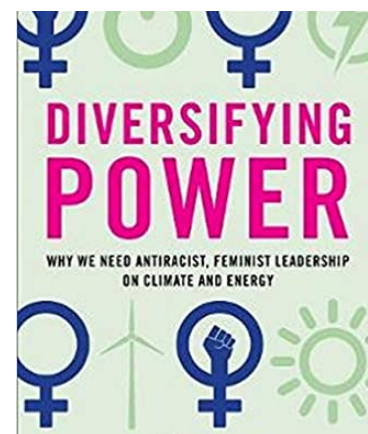
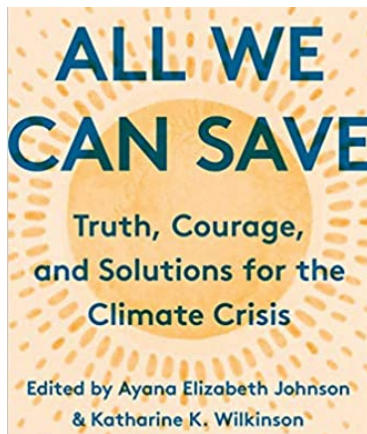
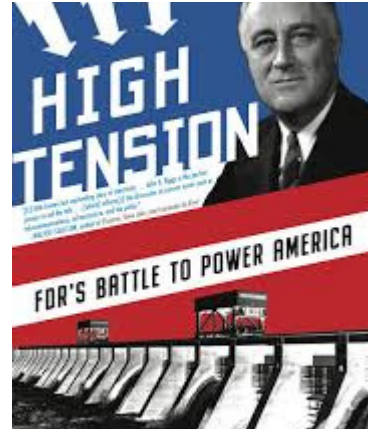
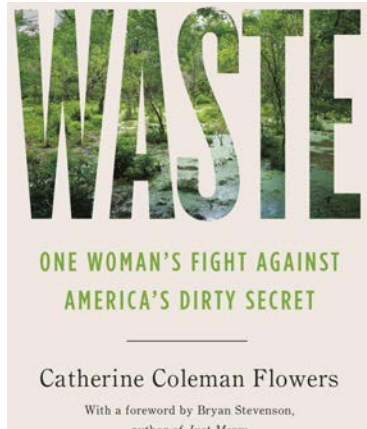


EEP is developing a new project on decarbonizing maritime shipping, tackling a “hard to abate” sector for which feasible decarbonization pathways are rapidly emerging. A core component of this work is a project called Cargo Owners for Zero Emission Vessels (coZEV) where we are engaging major multinational companies who are heavy users of maritime freight to come together around a series of collaborative approaches to accelerate the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions and catalyze a transition to new zero-emission fuels and technologies. Project goals include launch of the first entirely zero-carbon deep water container routes by 2030. The EEP team working on

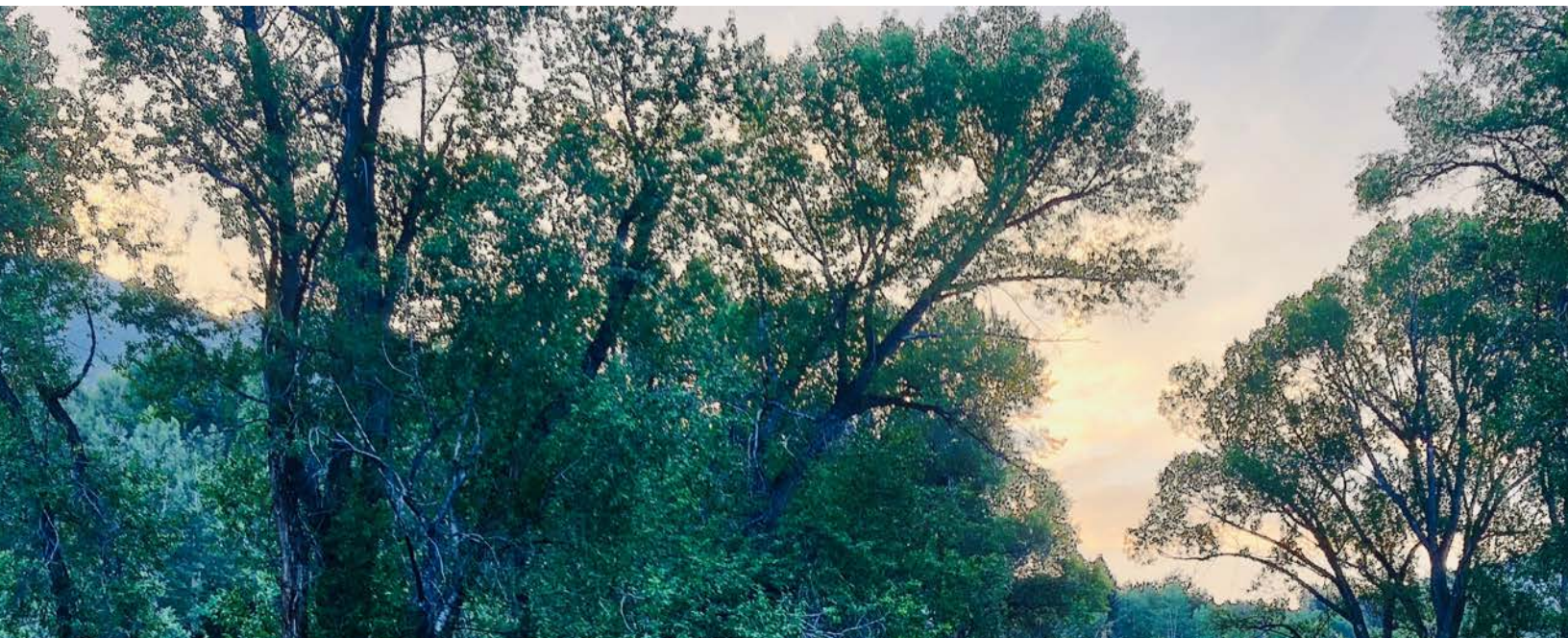
this project has been in conversations with companies through the fall and convened a first virtual roundtable meeting with interested companies on December 9-10 during which collaborative approaches were refined. This work is supported by the ClimateWorks Foundation, and project partners include University College London’s Energy Institute, Clean Air Task Force, Environmental Defense Fund, and Ocean Conservancy. Another key project component launched in the fall is development of U.S. policy approaches to advance shipping decarbonization in the context of new domestic climate change initiatives anticipated to set sail in 2021.

Read the blog post [here](#).

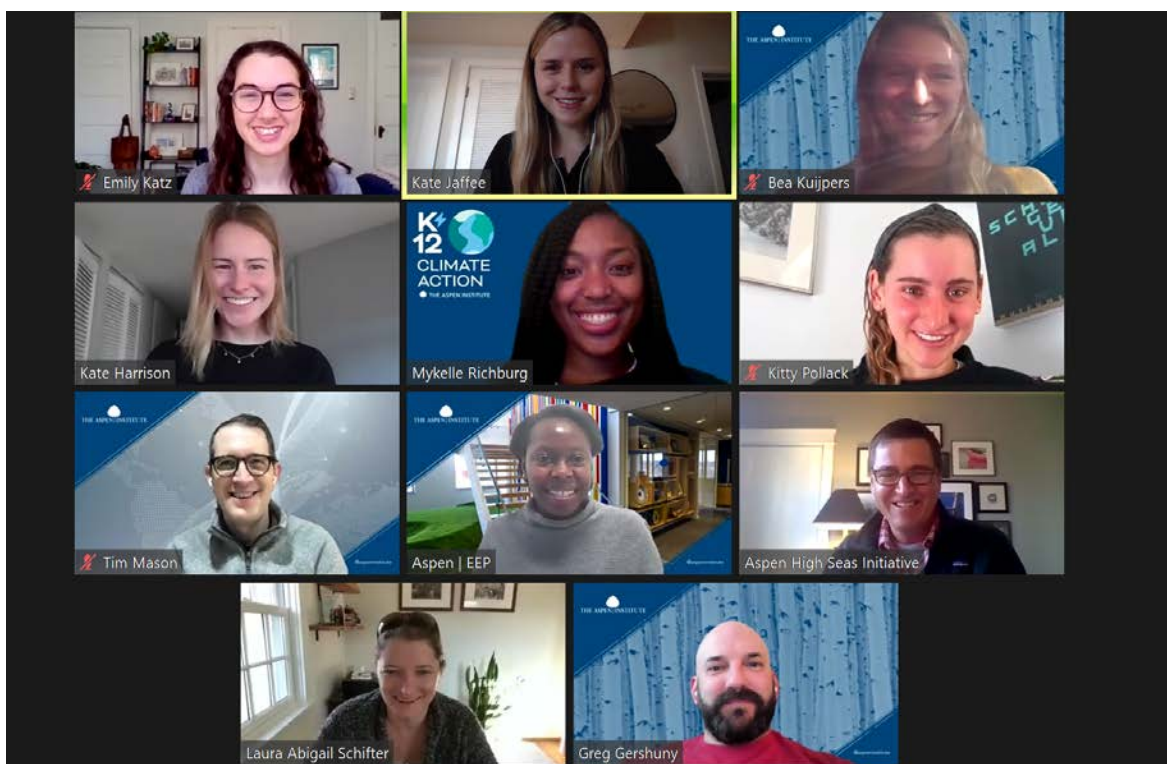
2021 Recommended Readings



(tap images to learn more)



**From the Energy & Environment Program Team, thank you for all of your support!
Please stay tuned for next year's programming.**



www.aspeninstitute.org/eep