

Wildfire Risk  
Only Growing  
For Northeast

Climate Change Raises  
Chance of Dry Spells

By HILARY HOWARD

Rocky and Ren Hazelman run a chicken farm in West Milford, N.J., about 10 miles south from the Jennings Creek wildfire along the state’s border with New York.

Their 2,000 chickens require about 150 gallons of water daily, and the couple usually has no trouble collecting the needed rainwater for the job. But that is no longer possible: An extraordinarily dry fall has brought some of the worst drought conditions in the region in decades.

The weather extremes caused by global warming, which are making it harder for the Hazelmans to tend to their flock, are the same ones draining reservoirs and sparking wildfires across the Northeast, like the 5,300-acre Jennings blaze, which is now mostly contained, down the road from their farm.

The Northeast will almost certainly never experience the scale of wildfires seen in more rural Western states. But experts say that the region should prepare for more periodic droughts, which will increase the risk of fires, because of the weather-distorting effects of greenhouse gases.

Sudden and extreme shifts from wet to dry seasons, which will become increasingly common as the world heats up, experts said, feed a cycle of vegetation growth that then dries out rapidly, providing ample fuel for fires.

“We started the year with the wettest conditions in 40-plus years, which made for a lot of lush vegetation,” said Bill Kirk, the chief executive of Weathertrends-360, a company that provides long-term weather forecasts. But since June, he said, the region has been the driest it has been in more than four decades. Mr. Kirk predicted that dry conditions in the Northeast would continue into 2025.

New Jersey and southern New York, including New York City, are under a drought warning, the last step before mandatory water restrictions are put into place, while Connecticut is under a drought advisory, which does not require conservation efforts among residents.

The last time New York City officials were this concerned about drought conditions was more than

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‘Wicked’ Fans  
Beg Seatmates:  
Shush, Please!

By REMY TUMIN  
and SARA RUBERG

Angela Weir went into a screening of “Wicked” on Monday night ready to be transported to the Land of Oz. But when Glinda (Ariana Grande) began to sing “Popular,” one of the musical’s early numbers, she was not the only one singing.

“It started slow. Then people heard each other — it was like they encouraged each other,” Weir said on Tuesday. “It was a beautiful scene, and then you’re taken out of it.”

As anticipation builds for the film’s release on Friday, some fans who have attended early screenings have ignored theater norms to sing right along with their favorite characters, much to the chagrin and annoyance of other “Wicked” enthusiasts. Many have taken to social media to issue a strict edict: Shush.

As a debate grew on TikTok and Reddit, a possible solution

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TONY CENICOLA/THE NEW YORK TIMES

The Ashokan Reservoir in New York shows the effects of the region’s 90 days with barely any rain.

Battling Russia, Scarcity and Their Own Fatigue

By MARC SANTORA

EASTERN UKRAINE — A small band of Ukrainian soldiers was trapped. They were holding the line on the battlefield, but Russian forces had managed to creep in behind their trench and encircle them.

“Even if the position holds, supplies — ammunition, provisions — eventually run out,” Capt. Viacheslav, the 30-year-old commander of an elite drone unit, said last week as he monitored events from an outpost a few miles away in eastern Ukraine. “Any vehicle attempting to reach these positions will be ambushed.”

“We are always getting stuck in these kinds of tough situations,” he said.

As the war in Ukraine enters its fourth winter and the first snow-

Ukraine Lacks Soldiers  
and Artillery to Repel  
Intense Assaults

fall blankets cratered fields strewn with bodies, the situations are only growing tougher for Ukrainian forces.

Gen. Oleksandr Syrsky, Ukraine’s top military commander, recently said his forces were fighting to hold back “one of the most powerful Russian offensives from launching a full-scale invasion.”

Ukraine got a boost on Sunday when the United States, after months of pressure from Kyiv, said it had granted permission for Ukraine to use American-pro-

vided weapons to fire deeper into Russia. On Tuesday, they used American-made ballistic missiles, called ATACMS (for Army Tactical Missile System), in an attack on a munitions depot in Russia.

But the election of Donald J. Trump to the American presidency this month injected an extra dose of uncertainty over the fate of the Ukrainian war effort.

While questions over whether the United States would continue to provide robust military support to Ukraine have resulted in a frenzy of diplomatic activity around the world, nowhere will those decisions be felt more acutely than on the front lines, where beleaguered Ukrainian troops are engaged in a fierce and bloody defense of their land.

Outnumbered by more than six

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TYLER HICKS/THE NEW YORK TIMES

A Ukrainian soldier concealed a field gun after firing at Russian forces in eastern Ukraine last week.

Debating Role  
Of Trans Rights  
In Harris’s Loss

Trump Attack Ad Has  
Democrats Bickering

By ADAM NAGOURNEY  
and NICHOLAS NEHAMAS

In the weeks before Election Day, aides to Kamala Harris could see in campaign polling that Donald J. Trump’s attacks on Ms. Harris’s support for transgender rights were driving away swing voters.

Struggling to put together a rebuttal, they produced a series of ads arguing that Mr. Trump was trying to distract from more important issues. Some of the spots noted that the policy Mr. Trump was seizing on, taxpayer-funded gender-transition surgery for inmates, was in place when he was president.

But none of the messages significantly swayed voters when the ads were tested with focus groups, according to four former Harris campaign aides who spoke on the condition of anonymity.

After a sharp, internal debate, the campaign shelved the ads. Instead, it settled on an anodyne television spot that showed the vice president condemning “negative ads” without mentioning Mr. Trump’s transgender attacks.

Since Ms. Harris’s defeat, her campaign’s decision has landed in the center of a contentious debate over how large a role transgender issues played in her party’s losses around the country. Several prominent Democrats said Ms. Harris’s relative silence was a damaging concession to Mr. Trump — and evidence that the campaign was so out of step with Americans’ views that it did not appreciate the potency of the ads.

“Malpractice was committed by that campaign,” said Ed Rendell, a Democratic former governor of Pennsylvania and former chairman of the Democratic National Committee. Mr. Rendell said he was so alarmed by the Trump attacks that he called top Harris campaign advisers, pleading for them to respond directly.

“They saw the ad, they knew it was being bought in heavy quantities,” he said. “Where were they? What were they thinking?”

That view has faced vocal push-

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G.O.P.’S PUSH Speaker Johnson backed barring a trans colleague from women’s rooms. PAGE A15

INQUIRY SHOWED  
GAETZ PAYMENTS  
WENT TO WOMEN

MONEY FLOW CHARTED

Document Obtained by  
Panel Bolsters Claims  
of Sex for Hire

By MICHAEL S. SCHMIDT

Federal investigators established a trail of payments from Matt Gaetz, President-elect Donald J. Trump’s choice to be attorney general, to women, including some who testified that Mr. Gaetz hired them for sex, according to a document obtained by The New York Times and a lawyer representing some of the women.

The document, assembled by investigators during a three-year sex-trafficking inquiry into Mr. Gaetz, is a chart that shows a web of thousands of dollars in Venmo payments between Mr. Gaetz and a group of his friends, associates and women who had drug-fueled sex parties between 2017 and 2020, according to testimony that participants are said to have given to federal and congressional investigators.

At the parties, women, and a girl who was 17 at the time, were paid for sex, according to accounts of the participants’ testimony from people briefed on what they said.

The document bolsters recent claims by a lawyer for two of the women who say they had sex with Mr. Gaetz for money. It shows thousands of dollars in payments Mr. Gaetz made to both of the lawyer’s clients.

Mr. Gaetz, 42, represented Florida in Congress from 2017 until last week. He has vehemently denied their accounts, and the federal investigation was closed by the Justice Department without any charges against him. Vice President-elect JD Vance accompanied Mr. Gaetz to Capitol Hill on Wednesday in an effort to build support for his nomination from Republican senators, some of whom have expressed doubt that he is trustworthy.

The document was obtained by the House Ethics Committee,

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ETHICS PANEL House Republicans voted to block the release of a report on Matt Gaetz. PAGE A16

Grieving Israeli Parents Weigh  
Freezing Dead Soldiers’ Sperm

By EMMA GOLDBERG

Avi Harush heard a knock on his door in early April and saw Israeli military officers outside. Instantly he knew that his son, Reef, a 20-year-old soldier who had been sent to Gaza, was dead. The officers gave him the news, and then asked an unexpected question: Did the family want doctors to extract and freeze his son’s sperm? Mr. Harush was gutted with grief, but comforted by the notion of preserving a living memory of his child. He quickly agreed.

“It was something to hold on to, knowing that we would be able to have Reef’s child,” Mr. Harush said.

It has been more than a year since the start of the Israel-Hamas war. The deaths can be counted — 43,000 Palestinians, 1,200 Israelis on Oct. 7 last year and some 400 soldiers since — but each individual loss creates an immeasurable hole, leaving families bereft and communities shattered. Children become orphans, women become widows and parents are left childless.

In Israel, however, the govern-

ment and military have instituted a new protocol since the war began that offers a kind of hope for bereaved families. The Israeli military, when notifying the family of a soldier’s death, now immediately offers the option to have doctors retrieve and preserve the sperm of the deceased, a technology that was not used frequently before the war.

It’s a measure inconceivable to

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OFIR BERMAN FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

Avi Harush and his son, Reef, who died in Gaza this spring.

THURSDAY STYLES D1-8

Regrets Worth Mentioning  
In a new collection of works, the artist and writer Maira Kalman offers a meditation on the nature of remorse. PAGE D7

Where Streetwear Rules  
ComplexCon is a spectacle focused on sneakers, fashion and rap music. Below, Tam Miles and Alisa Drea. PAGE D2



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Donald J. Trump’s vow to confront the nation on tariffs leaves global leaders in a delicate diplomatic dance. PAGE A6

Smog Suffocates Pakistani City  
A record onslaught of hazardous air has blanketed Lahore, reshaping a vibrant metropolis of 14 million people. PAGE A4

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Visions of A.I. Art  
OpenAI’s first artist in residence embraces artificial intelligence as an innovative collaborator helping him “push the edges” in his projects. PAGE B1

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Potential Medicaid Changes  
Republicans in Congress are eyeing cuts to the program, which could threaten health coverage for tens of millions of poor Americans. PAGE A18

Trump Picks Education Chief  
Linda McMahon, a former professional wrestling executive and longtime Trump backer, would lead an agency he wants to dismantle. PAGE A17

Drinkable Water for Asheville  
Service at the tap is restored 53 days after Hurricane Helene struck the North Carolina city, but some residents worry it might not be safe. PAGE A18

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Closer, but Not Quite There  
The Cavaliers took their undefeated start to Boston and were reminded that the Celtics are still the champs. PAGE B8

Nadal Takes a Final Bow  
The tennis star earned 22 Grand Slam titles, prevailing even as he faced injuries throughout his career. PAGE B6



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Daniel Craig, After Bond  
His role in “Queer” may surprise some fans, but it’s a return to the sexually daring films he used to make. PAGE C1

‘Rust’ Finally Makes Debut  
Alec Baldwin’s film, which had production halted after a fatal shooting on the set, premiered in Poland. PAGE C1

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Julia Angwin PAGE A20

