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Lalita Putchim, a marine biologist at the Department of Marine and Coastal Resources, dives to survey an area of bleached corals in a reef on May 8, 2024, in Koh Mak, Trat province, Thailand.

NAPAT WESSHASARTAR/REUTERS

Study confirms 1st climate tipping point

Doyle Rice
USA TODAY

Thanks to the dire condition of the Earth’s coral reefs, the planet has now reached its first tipping point due to human-caused climate change, according to a report released Oct. 13 by scientists in Europe.

The second Global Tipping Points Report said that warm-water coral reefs – on which nearly a billion people and a quarter of all marine life depend – are “passing their tipping point.”

According to the report, widespread coral dieback is taking place and – unless global warming is reversed – extensive reefs as we know them will be lost, although small refuges may survive and must be protected.

A “tipping point” occurs when a small change tips a system into a new state, causing significant and long-term transformation. With the climate, these points of no return are specific moments when the planet has warmed so much that certain effects become irreversible.

The debate about tipping points in the climate system has intensified over the past two decades, according to a study released earlier this year.

“We are rapidly approaching multiple Earth system tipping points that could transform our world, with devastating consequences for people and nature,” professor Tim Lenton, from the Global Systems Institute at the U.K.’s University of Exeter and lead author of the new report, said in a statement.

He said this demands immediate, unprecedented action from leaders and policymakers worldwide.

Other tipping points include melting ice sheets, Amazon rainforest dieback and the collapse of vital ocean currents.

The threat to coral reefs is “very serious,” Lenton said in an e-mail to USA TODAY. “Coral reefs support the livelihoods of half a billion people, and they provide ecosystem services that have been valued at over \$2 trillion per year. This includes supporting abundant fisheries and providing vital coastal protection from storm surges and rising sea levels for communities living behind them and their assets.

Overall, corals are vital to the health of the oceans. Although they cover only 0.2% of the ocean floor, they are home to at least a quarter of all marine species. They provide safety for juvenile fish and are home to small organisms and fish that provide food for larger fish.

A report released in 2022 showed that almost 15% of the planet’s reefs have vanished since 2009.

“We assessed the coral reef tipping point to likely be around 1.2 degrees (Celsius; more than 2 degrees Fahrenheit) global warming and at a maximum of 1.5 degrees global warming,” Lenton said in an email to USA TODAY.

“In the two years since our first global tipping points report, the world has spent most of the time at 1.5 degrees above the preindustrial level,” Lenton added. “This has caused marine heatwaves that have led to severe bleaching impacts on 80% of the world’s coral reefs. It has also become clear that the world

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New tenants slated for Deptford shopping center

Joseph P. Smith
Cherry Hill Courier-Post
USA TODAY NETWORK – NEW JERSEY

DEPTFORD TWP. — An Aldi grocery store is expected to open in November at the Deptford Town Center, joining a newly opened Tractor Supply store as the retail center surges back from almost two years of inactivity.

MSP Development, a commercial developer based in Pennsylvania, bought the roughly 14-acre property in April. Comprehensive renovations started in the summer on the 100,000-square-foot center as plans to open its parking area to accommodate two new pad sites progressed with Deptford Township officials.

Mitchol Pappan, owner of MSP Development, said the center had come to his attention while looking for a site for a Tractor Supply store.

“But, obviously, just putting a Tractor Supply in there would not make the numbers work,” Pappan said. “We were lucky enough to get it under contract.

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Shutdown hits Day 13 with no end in sight

Bart Jansen, Joey Garrison and Zachary Schermele
USA TODAY

WASHINGTON – Lawmakers braced for another Senate vote attempting to end the government shutdown as the impact of funding drying up continued to ripple across the country from the standoff that began Oct. 1.

But both sides have dug in for a longer impasse. Lawmakers still don’t appear any closer to a compromise. Most Senate Democrats have blocked the House GOP funding bill that would reopen the government through Nov. 21. They are aiming to first restore cuts to Medicaid and extend subsidies under the Affordable Care Act. Republicans said they can negotiate health care issues after the government re-opens.

House Speaker Mike Johnson told reporters Oct. 13 the country is “barreling toward one of the longest shutdowns in American history.”

The longest shutdown lasted 35 days during Trump’s first term and was largely related to disputes over a southern border wall.

Johnson said that he spoke with the president “at length” and that the two remain united in their views about the shutdown. “He and I are both so frustrated,” he said.

The government shutdown has left high and dry the flood insurance program that millions of Americans rely on even as an October nor’easter pounded New England.

The National Flood Insurance Program covers 4.7 million policyholders in 23,000 communities for a total of \$1.3 trillion in flood insurance, according to an analysis from the National Association of Realtors. It’s a lifeline in high-risk areas where mortgage lenders require homeowners to have insurance against flood. Very few private homeowners’ policies offer that coverage.

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