

Climate change and scientific integrity

By Paul Driessen

At its recent meeting in Washington, the US Global Climate Research Program's Synthesis Team had an opportunity to correct the major errors and biases reviewers have identified in its National Assessment of the Potential Consequences of Climate Variability and Change. Will it do so?

[Science and Environmental Policy Project](#) president Dr. S. Fred Singer believes "the integrity of our scientific and political process is at stake here. How well the GCRP responds to the widespread and legitimate criticism of its Report and Overview will determine whether these documents should be read, or simply dismissed out of hand."

The same holds true of the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's draft Third Assessment Report (TAR), Singer observed. He invited 14 climate scientists from seven countries to Washington May 28-30, to complete their analysis of the draft TAR and present their conclusions to over 100 journalists, congressional staffers and others, during a briefing in our nation's Capitol.

Singer is professor emeritus of environmental science at the University of Virginia, a developer of the U.S. weather satellite program, and a widely published expert on climate science. He suggests that "the National Assessment team would be wise to listen very carefully" to facts presented at last week's briefing, and notes that it is "a very small and rapidly dwindling" number of scientists who still believe global warming will wreak disasters on our planet.

Atmospheric scientist John Christy called the National Assessment's Overview Document a "kind of joke . an evangelistic statement about a coming apocalypse, not a scientific statement about the evolution of a complicated system with significant uncertainties." National Center for Atmospheric Research scientist Kevin Trenberth labeled the Overview a "classic example of misuse and abuse of climate models." Both men are lead authors for the IPCC's new draft report.

Experts from the Environmental Protection Agency, Centers for Disease Control and other respected organizations were equally scathing in their criticisms of the GCRP Overview.

Climate alarmists claim the 20th Century was the warmest in the last 1000 years, and say the last 20 years have witnessed an unprecedented increase in the earth's atmospheric temperature. That is simply not so, said Singer's international panel of climate scientists.

"Those claims ignore or seriously downplay several major cooling and warming trends during the last millennium, including the Medieval Climate Optimum (900-1300 AD) and Little Ice Age (1450-1850)," says Wibjorn Karlen, a paleoclimatologist at Sweden's Stockholm University.

Both the rate and amount of warming from 1900 to 1940 were greater than what occurred the second half of the last century, New Zealand climate scientist Vincent Gray points out, and the only support for claims of recent temperature increases comes from models and ground-based stations. Both are suspect.

Satellite and balloon records show little, if any, atmospheric temperature rise over the last 20 years, and most surface temperature stations are now in or near big cities, "where buildings, cars and asphalt skew the temperature data upward," Gray observes. "Moreover, the higher surface temperatures are mostly in cold climates in the dead of winter."

The UK's Richard Courtney is equally critical of climate models, which he says are simulations, like the computer games our children play. They have "no demonstrable forecasting capability and are simply unable to project what the world's climate will be like in 100 years."

German environmental consultant Peter Dietze and European Space Agency solar physicist Paal Brekke say the IPCC report and similar studies put far too much emphasis on human activities and carbon dioxide. "The sun has been very active over the past 100 years," Brekke notes, "but the IPCC seems to ignore this. It also downplays how much indirect solar effects also change global temperatures, by affecting the ozone layer (via solar UV changes) and clouds (via cosmic rays)."

In short, long-term climate prediction is an inexact science. "If you think weather forecasting is bad, try climate forecasting," quipped German meteorologist Gerd-Rainer Weber.

Arizona State University plant biologist Keith Idso says a more important issue is, "Will climate change be a net plus, or a net minus, for our planet?" Extensive evidence, he points out, shows clearly that "higher levels of atmospheric carbon dioxide spur plant growth, reduce plants' need for water, and increase biomass and crop yields. If the Kyoto Protocol is implemented, the rise in atmospheric CO₂ concentration will be reduced - and we will risk losing our ability to maintain global food security in the coming century. In other words, people will starve."

The United States alone spent \$15 billion during the last decade on global climate change studies, consulting engineer David Wojick points out. But the science is still far from settled. "In fact, there are probably more questions, and more disagreements, among scientists than ever before," he says. "That fact, unfortunately, is glossed over in these government reports."

Over the first ten years of the Kyoto Protocol, participating countries will incur compliance costs well in excess of \$5 trillion, says Canadian economist Ross McKittrick. "And even if Kyoto is fully implemented, atmospheric CO2 levels would double in 105 years, instead of in 100 years. Global temperatures will rise about the same amount either way. And sea levels might rise about 49 cm over the next 100 years, instead of 50 cm."

McKittrick notes that many cities in Mexico, China and India have air and water quality many times worse than what the United States considers safe. Spending just a fraction of what the Kyoto Protocol demands would dramatically improve air and water quality in these developing countries, save countless lives, and result in vastly better health and environmental conditions for their citizens. "That's where we should place our emphasis," he says, "not on a futile attempt to influence natural climate processes that we can neither predict nor control."

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