Altamont Pass Settlement Fails to Reduce Bird Kills

By H. Sterling Burnett, Ph.D.

A January 2007 settlement agreement intended to reduce the number of bird deaths from wind turbines at Altamont Pass, California is failing, scientists report.

As a result, environmental groups are calling for additional restrictions on wind power generation at the nation’s largest wind farm.

Thousands of Kills Annually

Wildlife groups have long objected to the deadly toll wind turbines take on birds and bats. The wind farm at Altamont, with more than 5,000 turbines sprawling over more than 50 square miles of land, has been the poster child for that problem.

Responding to environmental concerns that spawned a federal lawsuit, operators of the installation agreed in January 2007 to a series of measures designed to reduce the roughly 1,700 to 4,700 bird deaths at Altamont Pass.

Federal Ban On Light Bulbs Will Backfire

By E.J. Donovan

U.S. consumers will have to say goodbye to inexpensive household light bulbs, according to the provisions of the federal energy bill President George W. Bush signed into law December 19.
Michael Crichton’s book, State of Fear (Harper Collins, 2004, $27.95), is a surprising book. Tucked inside a lively and entertaining tale of a philanthropist, a scientist, a lawyer, and two remarkable women who travel around the world trying to foil the plots of evil-doers is a detailed expose of the flawed science and exaggerations at the base of the global warming scare. It is also a devastating critique of mainstream environmentalism today and an eloquent call for change.

Like Crichton’s previous block-busters, The Andromeda Strain and Jurassic Park, this book blends science and fiction in ways that teach as well as entertain readers. Crichton, who earned an M.D. from Harvard University and has written several nonfiction books, backs up his claims with footnotes, an appendix, and an annotated bibliography. Clearly, he wants the science in his book to be taken seriously.

Which raises the question: How much of the science in State of Fear is accurate, and how much is fiction?

The answer: Michael Crichton is right! His synthesis of the science on climate change is extremely accurate and the experts he cites are real. The Heartland Institute has been participating in the debate over climate change for more than a decade, and we have worked with many of the experts listed in the book’s bibliography. You can find more information at The Heartland Institute’s Web site, www.heartland.org, by clicking on the Crichton is Right button.
Leader of Ohio Environmental Group Testifies Against Wind Power Proposal

By E.J. Donovan

Tom Stacy, managing director of the environmental group Save Western Ohio, presented compelling testimony to the Ohio House of Representatives Public Utilities Committee that a proposed renewable power mandate would substantially harm the environment and local communities.

The mandate, Stacy noted, would cause the construction of a growing number of wind turbines, a poor source of energy that harms wildlife and takes up excessive amounts of land.

Poor Replacement Option

Stacy, who testified January 23, cautioned the 25 percent renewable power mandate included in Senate Bill 221 would fail to achieve its environmental and economic goals. Moreover, he said, wind power would be ineffective in providing reliable electricity generation.

“With no matter what mandates or incentives are offered, wind energy will perceive a dispatchable source generation plant,” Stacy told the committee. Dispatchable power is power that can be supplied as needed.

“Today’s unreliable windmills consume 30 to 200 times the square miles of visual presence of the next most intrusive plants,” Stacy continued.

“By developers’ own admissions,” Stacy noted, “wind energy projects are not driven by any philanthropic or environmental motive, rather by profit potential—potential that would not exist without the most generous subsidies available for any energy source on a percentage of demand fulfillment metric.”

Better Jobs Strategies

On January 9, Ohio Gov. Ted Strickland’s (D) chief energy advisor, Mark Shanahan, testified the primary purpose of S.B. 221 was to stimulate the economy. Stacy strongly disagreed that a renewable power mandate is a desirable way to create jobs.

“There are better economic development incentives with a more direct and certain relationship to jobs than the hopes in S.B. 221,” said Stacy.

“I favor renewable energy that is presented fairly with open admission of its limitations and drawbacks, and that is economically feasible, benefits the local communities where it makes its next home, and provides stable, dispatchable power that truly replaces polluting generation. But [windpower farms] aren’t there yet.”

Stacy’s testimony supported the January 9 testimony of Heartland Institute Senior Fellow James M. Taylor, who pointed out flaws in Shanahan’s assertion that renewable power mandates create jobs.

“Renewable power mandates create some jobs in the narrow sector of renewable power generation while eliminating a greater number of jobs in other sectors of the economy, sectors that would have enhanced the standard of living for citizens of Ohio,” Taylor observed.

“[Environmentalist] Tom Stacy ... presented compelling testimony to the Ohio House of Representatives Public Utilities Committee that a proposed renewable power mandate would substantially harm the environment and local communities.”

Pure Environmental Motives

Assuring the committee that his motives are pure, Stacy noted, “Save Western Ohio has received zero dollars and zero cents from the oil, coal, nuclear, geothermal, solar, E-85, residential real-estate groups, or any other organized concern.”

Save Western Ohio, according to its Web site, “is a nonprofit organization supporting concerns of affected citizens, and advocating environmentally and fiscally responsible, well-regulated renewable energy initiatives and conservation measures.”

“Save Western Ohio is sharing the truth about today’s wind energy industry and its use of federal and state tax dollars,” Stacy said in an interview for this article. “In the absence of any conditions for qualifying for the lavish subsidies, sitting guidelines with recklessly short setbacks from residential properties are being sought by wind energy developers.

“Subsidies, energy infrastructure, land use rights, and jurisdictional boundaries are all complicated matters that come together surrounding the wind energy craze,” Stacy added. “It appears to me that those with the money for experienced law teams usually get their way in these cases, unless responsible conditions are placed on access to subsidies from the outset.

“The governor’s energy team assumes local officials to be reasonably equipped to deal with big business interests, their motives, and their tactics, but often this is not the case,” Stacy noted.

E.J. Donovan (edonovan@gte.net) is a freelance writer based in Tampa, Florida.
CO2 Regulation Could Crush Building Construction

By William L. Kovacs

The Energy Independence and Security Act (P.L. 110-140, H.R. 6), signed into law by President George W. Bush in December, contained a Clean Air Act (CAA) savings clause wisely inserted into the renewable fuels title by its drafters.

The savings clause ensures any regulation of carbon dioxide (CO2) required by the renewable fuels standard in the act will not trigger costly, onerous stationary source control requirements for hundreds of thousands of buildings in the United States.

However, the savings clause does not solve the ultimate problem: If the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) ever decides to regulate greenhouse gases, it would trigger the very same stationary source controls.

As a result, construction on any new or existing source with the potential to emit more than 250 tons of CO2 per year—which includes most large buildings—could come to a screeching halt.

The only effective way to prevent such a problem is through a legislative fix exempting CO2 and all other greenhouse gases from Prevention of Significant Deterioration (PSD) permitting authority under section 165 of the Clean Air Act, however, means any regulation of CO2 would trigger costly, onerous stationary source control requirements for hundreds of thousands of buildings across the United States.

Perhaps sensing the PSD pitfalls caused by CO2 regulation, the day the act was signed into law EPA denied the State of California’s request for a waiver to regulate vehicle greenhouse gas emissions. The agency cited as justification the two main Twenty in Ten goals achieved by the Energy Independence and Security Act.

Delays, Inconsistency

Although EPA’s denial letter to California clearly suggests it has concluded the RFS and CAFE standards in the energy act satisfy its obligations under Massachusetts v. EPA, it still has not made an official determination that it will not regulate CO2.

In short, EPA dodged a bullet on PSD, but we are a long way from solving the problem.

— William L. Kovacs

EPA Dodged a Bullet … For Now

Last year, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) began drafting a proposed rule that would simultaneously implement President George W. Bush’s “Twenty in Ten” energy plan, aimed at reducing gasoline usage by 20 percent over the next 10 years, and satisfy the agency’s obligation to determine whether to regulate carbon dioxide (CO2) as a result of the Supreme Court’s 2007 decision in Massachusetts v. EPA.

But Congress acted first, passing the Energy Independence and Security Act, which contains the two main policy goals of the Twenty in Ten plan: (1) expansion of the renewable fuels mandate (RFS) to 36 billion gallons and (2) aggressive new corporate average fuel economy (CAFE) standards for cars and light trucks.

EPA’s Prevention of Significant Deterioration (PSD) permitting authority under section 165 of the Clean Air Act, however, means any regulation of CO2 would trigger costly, onerous stationary source control requirements for hundreds of thousands of buildings across the United States.

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Delays, Inconsistency

The PSD permit process is incredibly costly and time-consuming. It is not uncommon for PSD permits to cost hundreds of thousands or millions of dollars and take years to complete.

PSD permittees are required to use BACT determined on a case-by-case basis by the permitting agency. BACT is determined at the state level and will thus vary from state to state. Some states may decide BACT requires energy efficiency measures, while others could decide it requires replacing a coal-fired power plant with a wind farm. The BACT process currently takes 12 to 18 months.

If greenhouse gases are regulated under CAA, agencies will be crippled by the additional hundreds of thousands (possibly millions) of new PSD permits for which BACT must be determined individually.

President George W. Bush talks about progress on clean air reforms at Detroit Edison’s Monroe Power Plant in Monroe, Michigan.

Additional Requirements

As if this were not enough, once a source is classified as a “major” source for one pollutant, it is considered a major source for all other regulated pollutants under CAA. As a result, the hundreds of thousands (possibly millions) of covered sources may have to install BACT not only for CO2 but also for nitrous oxide, particulate matter, lead, mercury, sulfur dioxide, and other pollutants prior to any new construction.

The regulatory burden is so enormous, and the number of required PSD permits so staggering, that construction in cities across the country will literally stop the minute CO2 is “regulated” under the act.

Should EPA ever decide to regulate CO2—either by regulating vehicles and fuels in response to the Supreme Court’s 2007 Massachusetts v. EPA decision or for any other reason—PSD will immediately be triggered for all stationary sources that meet the 100/250 tons per year “major” source threshold.

Although EPA could address the problem through various regulatory options (such as a permit by rule or a de minimis exception), none is nearly as clean or effective as a pure legislative fix.

The only certain way to solve the PSD quandary is through legislation exempting CO2 and all other greenhouse gases from PSD permitting authority under CAA section 165.

William L. Kovacs (pr@uschamber.com) is vice president of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Environment, Technology, and Regulatory Affairs Division.
Researchers Closer to Solving Disappearing Bee Mystery

Pesticides are not to blame, scientists find

By John Dale Dunn

Colony Collapse Disorder (CCD) was the main topic of interest at the American Beekeeping Federation’s first-ever National Beekeeping Conference, January 8-12 in Sacramento, California. Beekeepers exchanged stories of CCD decimating their hives, and scientists assured beekeepers that finding the cause of CCD is a top priority.

Best of all, before the conference was held a team of scientists led by researchers at Penn State University reported the search for the cause of CCD may be over. They have linked Israeli Acute Paralysis Virus (IAPV) to the vast majority of destroyed hives.

Devastating Colony Losses

CCD wiped out approximately 30 percent of the nation’s managed bee colonies last year and has wiped out more than half since first appearing in 2004. Bees play an integral role in the world food supply, providing pollination for 90 fruit and vegetable crops that in the United States alone generate $14 billion in annual revenue for U.S. farmers. The almond crop in California, for example, requires and cannot survive without bee pollination.

Nearly All Had Virus

Scientists from Penn State University, Columbia University, the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Agricultural Research Service, and the University of Arizona now think they have found the most likely cause of the colony collapse disorder in IAPV.

Although there are many other theories about the cause of the disorder, including fungi, bacteria, pesticides, and stress from moving colonies around for pollination work, IAPV appears to be the most likely cause.

IAPV is carried by the varroa mite, which may have come with bee colonies imported from Australia. Scientists from the Penn State team used genetic fingerprinting to identify IAPV in 96 percent of samplings from hive components destroyed by CCD.

Some colonies unaffected by CCD also tested positive for IAPV, but scientists believe that may be related to resistance or immunity, which occurs to a certain degree in most viral outbreaks.

Now Seeking Proof

The researchers noted in a Penn State news release, “the prevalence of IAPV genetic material in bees suffering from CCD, the timing of the outbreaks, and the geographical circumstances indicate that IAPV is a significant marker for CCD.”

The next step is to verify the apparent role of IAPV is not a coincidence.

“While IAPV may be a marker for CCD, proving that any organism is the cause of IAPV (CCD) is somewhat more difficult. The researchers will now try to infect bee colonies with CDD [IAPV],” explained a Penn State press release.

“[A] team of scientists ... reported the search for the cause of CCD may be over. They have linked Israeli Acute Paralysis Virus to the vast majority of destroyed hives.”

Environmental Myth Exposed

“Environmental activists have recently claimed that the mysterious decline in honeybee populations was due to pesticides,” said Dennis Avery, director of the Center for Global Food Issues and senior fellow of the Hudson Institute. “Of course, blaming pesticides has been the standard political tactic of the environmental movement since Rachel Carson wrongly blamed DDT for thinning the egg shells of eagles 40 years ago.

“Again, the activists blamed before they knew the answer,” Avery continued. “That’s their tactic: Find a problem, blame it on something they want to get rid of, and put that perception into the public mind before anyone has time to do real science on the real problems.”

“The truth is that there are far more viruses, cycles, droughts, and climate shifts in the real world than we ever imagined 50 years ago when we started looking for ‘environmental problems’ to blame on humans,” Avery noted.

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Putting Public Health Risks in Proper Perspective

By Elizabeth Whelan

When it comes to distinguishing real health risks from trivial or simply bogus risks, American consumers have a great deal to learn.

In the media, the real and the hypothetical risks get blurred—or worse, the non-risks get so hyped that they sound like major causes of preventable disease and death.

Take the current national obsession about the alleged risks of chemicals known as phthalates, used in manufacturing flexible plastics—used in making products ranging from children’s toys to medical devices.

Some very vocal advocates, particularly in California, have convinced policymakers that phthalates are a major health threat to kids who play with rubber duckies and put them in their mouths. California just passed a law to ban the use of phthalates in the manufacture of toys, and Sen. Dianne Feinstein (D-CA) has introduced a similar bill that would ban these chemicals nationwide.

The truth is that phthalates have no known adverse health effects. Yet for parents hearing about these “toxins” and “carcinogens” in children’s products, phthalates are perceived as a major risk. There is rarely attention given, though, to this type of question: Where do phthalates stand when compared to other health risks?

“When it comes to distinguishing real health risks from trivial or simply bogus risks, American consumers have a great deal to learn.”

One reason health risks are not frequently compared to each other on a spectrum from hypothetical to real is that health advocacy organizations tend to be single-issue groups. Such groups do not even attempt to see the broader picture of what health risks Americans face, which ones are important, and which ones not.

Given this gap in knowledge and perspective, the group I head, the American Council on Science and Health (ACSH), has created a new Riskometer where you can interactively compare and contrast health risks. The site uses peer-reviewed, Centers for Disease Control-based data—which means the site is unique on the often rumor-based Internet.

Now you can find reliable comparisons, for example, of how many people die annually from cigarette smoking versus how many die from exposure to PCBs, arsenic in water, or the dry cleaning chemical PERC.

If a picture is worth a thousand words, the new ACSH Riskometer is a virtual gold mine of information on relative health risks for a risk-obsessed population.

Dr. Elizabeth Whelan (acsh@acsh.org) is president of the American Council on Science and Health, which created Riskometer.org. This essay first appeared on the Huffington Post, and is reprinted with permission.
Commission Wants to Double Federal Gas Taxes

By James M. Taylor

The federal government should more than double gasoline taxes in the next five years to subsidize light-rail systems and pay for highway improvements, a panel chaired by the U.S. Secretary of Transportation has decided.

Under such a plan, spending would rise by $225 billion to $340 billion per year, an amount larger than the 2007 national deficit.

In a January 15 announcement, the National Surface Transportation Policy and Revenue Study Commission also recommended the federal government should increase road tolls, set economic penalties for peak-hour driving, and hike taxes on freight transportation.

Free Lunch for Light Rail

“There is no free lunch,” Jack Schenendorf, vice chairman of the commission, told reporters at a January 15 news conference. “No way to accomplish what we are talking about without spending money, and therefore you have to raise money. There is no way to avoid that.”

The details of the new tax proposal contradicted Schenendorf’s “no free lunch” assertion. The commission envisions automobile drivers paying substantially higher gasoline taxes to subsidize light-rail transportation systems that relatively few people use.

“There is no shortage of funds for highways,” said Randal O’Toole, an urban growth and transportation expert at the Cato Institute. “The problem is that too great a share of federal highway user fees—40 percent—is already being diverted to transit and other non-highway activities. Even the money that is dedicated to highways is often earmarked for bridges to nowhere and other projects aimed more at satisfying the egos of members of Congress than at improving transportation.

“Over the past 15 years alone, America has spent well over $100 billion on rail transit construction projects,” O’Toole added. “What do we have for it? Transit has grown by 50 percent while urban driving has grown by 50 percent. Every single dollar spent on rail transit construction is a dollar wasted, which is why raising gas taxes is the wrong solution to our mobility crisis.”

Gas Taxes Being Wasted

Robert Poole, director of transportation studies at the Reason Foundation, agrees current tax revenues are being wasted.

“A large increase in the gas tax without fundamental reform in how and where the transportation money is spent would be a step in the wrong direction,” said Poole. “This country definitely needs to spend more on transportation infrastructure, but we should not be giving a spendthrift Congress billions more to fritter away on bridges to nowhere.

“We need to target investments toward relieving congestion in our major urban areas and expanding capacity for goods-movement on major interstate routes,” Poole continued.

“The federal government should more than double gasoline taxes in the next five years to subsidize light-rail systems and pay for highway improvements, a panel chaired by the U.S. Secretary of Transportation has decided.”

Huge Tax Hike

Not only is the proposal costly, it may not even be feasible, said transportation expert C. Kenneth Orski, editor and publisher of Innovation Briefs.

“The commission’s estimates are predicated on the assumption that the federal government should continue funding 40 percent of the total national cost of surface transportation infrastructure,” Orski observed. “That would leave the other 60 percent of the cost to be funded by the states and localities.

“Many observers question whether state and local governments could collectively come up with their share of the funds—requiring an average [additional state gasoline tax] increase of 37.5 to 60 cents a gallon or its equivalent over the next five years,” Orski said. “Indeed, evidence points in the opposite direction.”

Orski explained, “Most states lack the political will to raise taxes for transportation—whether fuel, property, or sales taxes. Texas, Minnesota, Washington State, and Iowa are only the latest jurisdictions to have decided against tax increases to fund highway programs.”

The commission’s recommendations are not binding, but Congress is expected to reference them as the starting point for debate on a new transportation bill to take effect when the current one expires in 2009.

James M. Taylor (taylor@heartland.org) is a senior fellow of The Heartland Institute and managing editor of Environment & Climate News.

Lomborg ‘Could Save the Planet’

By James M. Taylor

A panel of science, economic, and environmental correspondents has named Danish author and professor Björn Lomborg one of “50 people who could save the planet.” The panel was convened by the London Guardian and announced its results on January 5 after conferring with leading scientists and environmental leaders.

Lomborg has been a thorn in the side of environmental activist groups who see a great expansion of government power as the most desirable way to safeguard the environment.

Björn Lomborg, 42, has become an essential check and balance to runaway environmental excitement. In 2004, the Dane made his name as a green contrarian with his bestselling book The Skeptical Environmentalist and outraged scientists and green groups around the world by arguing that many claims about global warming, overpopulation, energy resources, deforestation, species loss, and water shortages are not supported by analysis.

 “[Björn] Lomborg has been a thorn in the side of environmental activist groups who see a great expansion of government power as the most desirable way to safeguard the environment.”

“He was accused of scientific dishonesty, but cleared his name. He doesn’t dispute the science of climate change, but questions the priority it is given. He may look increasingly out of step, but Lomborg is one of the few academics prepared to challenge the consensus with credible data,” the Guardian noted.

Exposing Misleading Science

The Guardian honor follows a similar honor Time bestowed on Lomborg in 2004. The magazine named Lomborg one of the 100 most influential people in the world.

According to Time, Lomborg “just might be the Martin Luther of the environmental movement. A statistician from the University of Aarhus in Denmark, Björn Lomborg examined the state of the world, using reputable sources and long series of data in his book The Skeptical Environmentalist, and found a surprising thing: by most measures the planet is getting healthier—less pollution, more forests, more food per head.”

Lomborg “exposed the often misleading and selective use of scientific evidence by environmental pressure groups, urged us to be optimistic rather than despairing about environmental problems, and set out what should be the true priorities of environmental action,” Time added.

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Warmth, Hurricanes Are Really Nothing New

Katrina’s enviro effects are perfectly natural and won’t cause additional problems

By Patrick J. Michaels

Hurricane Katrina—a very big storm by any measure—has now been called the “largest ecological disaster in U.S. history,” according to the Christian Science Monitor, because it “killed or damaged about 320 million trees.”

Moreover, Katrina was a double ecological whammy, according to the article, as the downed trees will eventually rot or burn, releasing another increment (probably too small to detect) of dreaded carbon dioxide, the main global warming gas.

The Monitor’s report was based upon an analysis of satellite imagery conducted by scientists at the University of New Hampshire.

“Hurricanes have been a fact of life for the forests of southeastern North America ever since there were forests, and that’s a pretty long time.”

Weather Damage Nothing New

Wait a minute. Hurricanes have been a fact of life for the forests of southeastern North America ever since there were forests, and that’s a pretty long time.

The natural vegetation of the coastal southeast consists largely of a mixture of pine and oak species. That’s not what it is today, because today’s vegetation isn’t natural. Instead, it’s virtually all a commercial mix of softwoods designed to grow fast and tall so the trees can quickly be sawed into houses. Today’s forest probably maintains a higher vertical profile than the one that was here before, and it’s also largely protected from fire, but not from hurricanes.

Back before us, believe it or not, weath-
er was pretty much the same as it is now.

Consider the very severe drought that plagued the Deep South this past fall. Remember those forest fires in Georgia late last summer? The only reason they didn’t burn down most of the state’s forests was that they were unnaturally extinguished.

It’s fair to say that the integrated intensity of the southeastern drought may be a one-in-fifty-year occurrence. That would mean, in a “natural” world (i.e., one without human sprawl) a southeastern forest would go about 50 years before combust-
ing.

Or, perhaps, taken down by a hurri-
cane. Pines and oaks have been around about 100 million years. Hurricanes have been around longer.

Cold Modern Era

Here’s the cool part: the present era. Ninety-five percent of the last 100 million years were warmer than now. It’s only about 5 million years or so ago that we began to slip into the current ice-age climate (from which carbon dioxide may mercifully extricate us, some say).

Now, just for fun, let’s assume Katrina was a product of global warming. Forget that no scientist will stand up and point the causative finger. But if it was, Katrina was therefore typical of many hurricanes of the last 100 million years.

In other words, the natural southern forest evolved in a world studded with hurricanes.

Part of the modern climate mythology is the assumption that every significant climate burp, such as the big El Niño of 1998 or the big hurricane season of 2005, is porten-
tous of ecological disaster. Hardly.”

Hurricanes Nurture Ecosystems

It’s almost too bad that we don’t have the “natural” forest of southeastern North America anymore. If we did, I’ll bet some ecological researcher would have discovered such a forest actually requires hurricanes, just as the flowering plants of the desert southwest require El Niño rains for germination and subsequent reproduction.

There once was a concept of “poten-
tial natural vegetation” of the United States, which was thought to be what would eventually appear in the absence of human management. The modern view of forest dynamics is somewhat different, but, nonetheless, the “natural” distribution of the oak-pine forest pretty much corresponds to the inland reach of the strongest hurricanes.

Natural Process

OK, that was my original Ph.D. topic prop-
osal, back in a 1971 paper at the University of Chicago. It was laughed at, because at the time ecologists didn’t think weather and climate were very important modula-
tors of ecosystem behavior. Four years later, the surface temperature of the planet began to rise. About a third of a century later, a hurricane was blamed for the largest ecological disaster in our history.

Now it’s the other way around. Weath-
er and climate are now assumed to be driving the world into ecological chaos. It seems reasonable that, say, 30 years from now, something else will be seen as to blame.

“Part of the modern climate mythology is the assumption that every significant climate burp, such as the big El Niño of 1998 or the big hurricane season of 2005, is porten-
tous of ecological disaster. Hardly.”

Finally, whenever a hurricane (or a fire) takes down a forest, it’s not replaced by anything but another forest. That vegetation will absorb some of the carbon dioxide that Katrina’s trees left behind. It will eventually look a lot like the one that got blown down, only to await the sawmill—or the next big hurricane.

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Economic Formulas in IPCC Report Criticized for Overstating Emissions

By Ian Castles

The United Nations’ Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) is the organization established to evaluate the effects of human activity on climate change—and hence provides the scientific rationales for UN actions on the issue.

Unfortunately, the assumptions it uses overstate potential manmade global warming by a large measure.

In 2001 IPCC based its predictions of substantially warming temperatures during the next century largely on forecasts of explosive growth in Third World economies—and hence emissions—during the twenty-first century. The panel actually predicted Third World nations would grow so fast they would surpass the economies of wealthy Western nations.

Economists pointed out the unrealistic assumptions, but in the six years since these IPCC gaffes, little appears to have changed.

The IPCC Special Report on Emissions Scenarios (SRES) is available online on the Panel’s Working Group III Web site at http://www.grida.no/climate/ipcc/emission/. The 600-page report includes 200 pages of statistical tables (five pages for each of the 40 scenarios) that incorporate the economic and demographic assumptions.

Formulas Criticized

In a presentation prepared for the Garnaut Climate Change Review in Melbourne in November 2007, Dr. Helal Ahammad of the Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics (ABARE) said a new strategy was being implemented for future emissions scenarios development but, “Nonetheless, the existing emissions scenarios will continue to be used.”

Apparently IPCC is determined to persist with the use of SRES scenarios, despite intense and near-unanimous criticism by economic statisticians, index number theorists, and leading economists over the past six years.

In a public presentation to the U.S. National Research Council Committee on National Statistics on May 10, 2007, Yale University Prof. Bill Nordhaus, who has been involved in the construction of emissions scenarios for more than 30 years, criticized the SRES projections.

“Another area of great concern to modelers is construction of emissions scenarios,” Nordhaus noted. “The IPCC has not served the international community well in this area. It sponsored a Special Report on Emissions Scenarios (SRES), which generated a number of economic and social projections that were put together over the 1996-2000 period. These ‘story lines’ have little analytical or econometric foundation, yet they continue to be used in the analysis underlying the Fourth Assessment Reports, particularly in the science report, that are being released this year.”

Inaccuracies Noted

Similarly, in a paper published in the March 2006 issue of Climatic Change, edited by Stephen Schneider, a leading figure in the IPCC, the Australian economist Alison Stegman wrote there is a need for “a large scale review [of IPCC emissions scenarios] on the grounds of statistical inaccuracies, methodological assumptions, and empirical inconsistencies.”

Moreover, Stegman noted, “The IPCC has not demonstrated that the SRES emissions projections have a sound economic foundation.”

Stegman concluded, “Because these emissions projections are used as inputs in models of temperature and climate impacts, these in turn do not have a sound economic basis.”

Criticisms Verified

In its unanimous report on The Economics of Climate Change, published in July 2005, the all-Party Select Committee on Economic Affairs of the British House of Lords reviewed the criticisms of SRES by Ian Castles and David Henderson, Richard Tol, Jacob Ryten, Warwick McKibbin, Angus Maddison, William Nordhaus, and Martin Agerup.

The select committee concluded, “Serious questions have been raised about the IPCC emissions scenarios, and ... a reappraisal of the scenarios exercise is urgently needed.”

In his just-published book Science and Public Policy, Aynsley Kellow, professor and head of the School of Government at the University of Tasmania, noted the IPCC models are bad science.

“In IPCC modelling exercises, the ‘predictions’ of the media and environmental groups, and ‘projections’ of the IPCC, all rested on no firmer foundation than a set of scenarios, and could be no better ‘science’ than those conjectures,” Kellow wrote.

“That these scenarios include erroneous assumptions that involved a basic statistical error,” Kellow continued, “and that the IPCC continued to cling tenaciously to this mistake, revealed the extent to which a good cause could limit the conduct of science.”

“Unfortunately, the assumptions [the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change] uses overstate potential manmade global warming by a large measure.”

Impervious to Criticism

IPCC has shown itself to be impervious to criticism of the scenarios, and there seems to be little prospect that anything can be achieved by analysis or reasoned argument.

There are, however, grounds for hope that Australia’s new government may be prepared to withdraw the nation’s uncritical support of IPCC. Among these grounds for hope are the government’s strongly stated intention to make greater use of the expertise of the Federal Treasury and the appointment of Dr. Martin Parkinson, an able and respected Treasury official, as secretary of the new Department of Climate Change.

Dr. Ian Castles (ian.castles@anu.edu.au) is a visiting fellow at the Asia Pacific School of Economics and Government at the Australian National University.
“[T]emperature change is the cause, not the result, of changing atmospheric carbon dioxide levels.”

Have rising carbon dioxide levels historically preceded temperature increases, or have temperature increases historically preceded rising carbon dioxide levels? In other words, which factor is the cause and which is the effect? Scientists have studied multiple ice core samples from Antarctica dating back hundreds of thousands of years. The samples provide information about temperatures and atmospheric carbon dioxide levels at the time the ice was produced. This is the process by which scientists learned that temperature and carbon dioxide levels have been so intimately linked throughout the Earth’s recent past.

Figure 1 is typical of many of the graphs presented by those who believe carbon dioxide levels drive climate change. As Ronald Rychlak, MDLA Professor of Law and associate dean for academic affairs at the University of Mississippi School of Law, explains in a forthcoming Heartland Institute policy analysis, “Carbon dioxide levels and temperatures are both presented. The lines are on the same graph, but they are not superimposed on the same axis; the carbon dioxide line is kept above the temperature line.” By separating the temperature and carbon dioxide lines, it is not immediately apparent which trend precedes the other. Accordingly, the graph can be presented to support either side of the question regarding the cause and effect between temperature and carbon dioxide levels.

Figure 2 is an improvement, by superimposing the two lines on top of each other. The improved figure shows what scientists have discovered in their analysis of Antarctic ice cores: Temperature changes precede changes in atmospheric carbon dioxide. Scientists have found carbon dioxide levels typically rise roughly 200 to 1,000 years after temperatures rise. That is, temperature change is the cause, not the result, of changing atmospheric carbon dioxide levels.

Putting this in the context of the end of the last ice age epoch, scientists at the University of Southern California reported in a September 27 news release, “The best estimate from other studies of when CO2 began to rise is no earlier than 18,000 years ago. Yet this study shows that the deep sea, which reflects oceanic temperature trends, started warming about 19,000 years ago.” “What this means is that a lot of energy went into the ocean long before the rise in atmospheric CO2,” observed Lowell Stott, USC professor of earth sciences, in the news release.

James M. Taylor (taylor@heartland.org) is a Heartland Institute Senior Fellow and managing editor of Environment & Climate News.
Over Time, Nuclear Power Skeptic Becomes Advocate

**Power to Save the World**
By Gwyneth Cravens
Knopf, 2007
464 pages, $27.95, ISBN 978-0307266569

Review by Jack Dini and Jay Lehr, Ph.D.

Initially a skeptic about radiation and nuclear power, Gwyneth Cravens spent nearly a decade immersing herself in these subjects for her new book, *Power to Save the World*. After visiting mines, experimental reactor laboratories, power plants, and remote waste sites, she changed her views about nuclear energy.

You name it, she investigated it. She has thoroughly researched Three Mile Island (TMI), Chernobyl, the Nevada test site, the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP), and Yucca Mountain. After all this effort she refutes the claims against nuclear power with more facts than we have seen in any other book on this subject. Some useful examples follow.

**Radiation Exposure**

The annual public radiation exposure permitted by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) for nuclear facilities is 15 millirem. The average person in the United States is exposed to 200 millirem of radiation per year. If you spent all your time in Grand Central Station, you would get an annual radiation dose of nearly 600 millirem.

At Three Mile Island, the total calculated dose Pennsylvanians received after the accident was far less than the measured dose New Mexicans receive from nature every day. Interestingly, in New Mexico the cancer rate is much lower than the national average although natural background radiation is much higher than the national average. The same is true for Denver.

Residents of Finland receive an annual dose of radiation three times higher than a person would receive living in the zone surrounding Chernobyl now excluded from habitation.

As of 2006, nuclear-powered submarines and ships had safely traveled a total of 134 million miles and registered 5,700 naval reactor years of safe operation with a total of 254 reactors.

**Hormesis**

What may explain these facts is the biological theory of hormesis: Organisms are more resilient by low-level exposure to a substance that is toxic in larger doses. Cravens covers this topic, but in attempting to present both sides of the issue she does not cover the wide literature base of studies on animals and humans that confirm the beneficial effects of low-level radiation.

Edward Calabrese of the University of Massachusetts-Amherst has published extensively in this field and is a good source for additional information.

In spite of this science, governments continue to use the linear no-threshold model, which says any radiation dose, no matter how small, is harmful. Misuse of this model has produced spending in excess of $1 trillion in the United States alone for negligible health benefits just for government environmental cleanup programs, while truly significant measures that would protect the public health remain unfunded.

"After visiting mines, experimental reactor laboratories, power plants, and remote waste sites, [author Gwyneth Cravens] changed her views about nuclear energy."

**Bombs, Accidents**

The idea that radiation from atomic bombs has caused a substantial increase in genetic mutation has no scientific support. There is no evidence of increased increase in overall cancer incidence, mortality, or nonmalignant disorders related to radiation exposure following the Chernobyl nuclear power plant failure.

The worst large-scale consequence from Chernobyl has been thyroid cancer in Ukrainian and Belarusian children. Readily available potassium iodide tablets would have protected the children by preventing the uptake of radioactive iodine 131, but Moscow unnecessarily delayed allowing distribution of the tablets. Even so, 95 percent of the affected children recovered completely.

Chernobyl was a failure not of nuclear power but of the Soviet political system. The predicted increase in cancer from Chernobyl would probably be too small to notice but for the extra scrutiny the Chernobyl area receives.

**Cleaner than Coal**

The annual solid residues of coal combustion come to 890 pounds per American. Cravens calculates that if an American got all his or her electricity from coal over a lifespan of 77 years, that person’s mountain of solid waste would weigh 68.5 tons. A coal-fired plant releases more radiation than a nuclear plant.

The corresponding amount of waste from a lifetime of nuclear power, by contrast, would weigh two pounds and fit into a soda can. And of that amount, only a trace is long-lived.

The many experts Cravens consulted were adamant in pointing out terrorists could neither penetrate the security at an American nuclear plant nor make an atomic bomb from its fuel.

Regarding future nuclear power plants, some estimates indicate a plant of standardized, streamlined design, with many more built-in, passive safety features, and therefore fewer pumps, valves, and other components, could be built in five years, as is already being accomplished in France. The price per plant comes to about $3 billion, which makes nuclear power much less expensive than solar or wind power.

**Spent Fuel Storage**

Storing spent nuclear fuel poses no problem. The Yucca Mountain site in Nevada was supposed to open in 1998, but delays have continued to plague the project. And Cravens mentions an alternative we had not heard: the Sub-Sea Bed Operation.

Cravens points out that in the ocean there is a vast red-clay formation that has maintained great stability and uniformity over millions of years—far longer than the half-lives of almost all the radionuclides in nuclear waste. The clay has low permeability and the consistency of peanut butter.

A pointed steel canister containing high-level nuclear waste dropped to the ocean floor would sink through this muck to a depth of 30 meters. The continuous rain of sediments from above would bury it deeper. Many thousands of square miles of seabed like this exist under many miles of water hundreds of miles from shore.

Such sites, though costing several orders of magnitude less than Yucca Mountain, have long been overlooked as potential storage sites for spent nuclear fuel.

**Wind, Solar Alternatives**

Although Cravens believes alternate energy sources such as wind and solar are important, she offers an honest assessment of their huge limitations.

For example, a 2006 National Academy of Sciences study found the Indian Point Nuclear Plant near New York City produces about 10 percent of the electricity for New York State. To replace that power with a wind farm would require 300,000 acres—nearly 500 square miles Operation."
Washington Legislators Propose Nuclear Power Task Force

By E.J. Donovan

Washington state Sen. Jerome Delvin (R-Richland) and state Rep. Glenn Anderson (R-Fall City) have proposed legislation that would create a task force of experts to study the potential of nuclear power.

“We’re going to need baseload generation. Why shouldn’t nuclear power be a part of that?”

Baseload generation is power that is always available, as opposed to peaking plant power that is needed to handle surges in demand.

“The reality is we’re going to need more baseload power here in the Northwest, and at some point as a region we’re going to have to decide where we want that power to come from,” Brad Peck, spokesperson for power company Energy Northwest, told Yakima television station KNDN. “Is it hydro? There aren’t really any more hydro sites to build.”

Bipartisan Support

Delvin has lined up nine other senators—three Republicans and six Democrats—to cosponsor the legislation in the Senate. Anderson has lined up four other representatives—two Republicans and two Democrats—to cosponsor the legislation in the House.

Two of the cosponsors were described as “environmental champions” by the Olympian on January 23.

Sen. Craig Pridemore (D-Vancouver) was named “legislator of the year” in 2006 by Washington Conservation Voters, and the organization gave Rep. Brendan Williams (D-Olympia) a 100 percent voting record through 2006, according to the Olympian.

Gaining Support

Nuclear power is gaining support in other Western states as well.

Idaho Gov. Butch Davis (R) has been stumping around his state in support of nuclear power. In California, Assemblyman Chuck DeVore (R-Irvine) spent much of the past year gathering signatures to place a nuclear power ballot initiative before voters this coming June.

“There is no other option available now or in the near future that can provide the ‘trifecta’ for electricity: abundance, low cost, and without carbon emissions. No wonder support is growing.”

TOM TANTON
VICE PRESIDENT
INSTITUTE FOR ENERGY RESEARCH

“Support is growing for nuclear power from all interests and all political persuasions,” said Tom Tanton, vice president of the Institute for Energy Research.

“While specific reasons are as varied as the groups from which the support comes,” Tanton said, “the ability to provide low prices for reliable baseload and low carbon emissions is at the core. There is no other option available now or in the near future that can provide the ‘trifecta’ for electricity: abundance, low cost, and without carbon emissions. No wonder support is growing.”

“Nuclear power is still a difficult issue for some, but there is growing recognition that it needs to be part of the solution,” added Todd Myers, director of the Center for the Environment at the Washington Policy Center.

“The most significant step,” Myers noted, “is that previously the environmental community would openly attack it anymore.”

E.J. Donovan (edonovan@gte.net) is a freelance writer in Tampa, Florida.

CONTINUED from left

miles—of windmills operating under the most favorable conditions.

At the McGuire Nuclear Station in North Carolina, where strong winds are rare, 50 square miles of photovoltaic cells would be required to replace the nuclear facility with solar power.

Newly Discvoered Reality

Cravens’ book demonstrates how, time and again, political fear-mongering and misperceptions about risk have trumped science in the dialogue about the feasibility of nuclear energy.

Among the closing words from this onetime skeptic are these: “How amazing it was to find that something so completely familiar turned out in reality to be so very different from what I had assumed all my life.”

Our only complaint with the book is that many of these facts are embedded in a long, long narrative story. Cravens is primarily a novelist, and the book reads like it, but her precision in detailing all the science is nothing short of amazing.

This book will give you all you need for comprehensive future references regarding radiation and nuclear power.

Jack Dini (jdini@earthlink.net) is an environmental columnist and author of Challenging Environmental Mythology. Jay Lehr, Ph.D. (lehr@heartland.org) is science director for The Heartland Institute.

“You name it, [Gwyneth Cravens] investigated it. ... After all this effort she refutes the claims against nuclear power with more facts than we have seen in any other book on this subject.”

In Other Words

“Nuclear power is by far the safest means we have at present to produce large quantities of power for generating electricity. Fortunately, many environmentalists who opposed nuclear power have had a change of heart and are now promoting it as a green energy source.”

House Editorial
Oakland Tribune
January 21, 2008
Arctic Climate Expert Urges More Honest Climate Change Discussion

We encounter scientific terms, such as climate change, global warming, the greenhouse effect, and carbon dioxide a few times every day in newspapers, radio broadcasts, TV news, as well as in conversations among people. It must be the first time in the history of science that a specific scientific field has gotten so much attention from the public.

As a scientist, I am pleased about the public's interest in science. Unfortunately, however, I am afraid that this great interest by the public in climatology is largely the result of a proliferating number of confusing stories in the media that are based on misinterpreted information about the greenhouse effect of carbon dioxide.

If the IPCC wants to represent this particular scientific field to the world, they are responsible for rectifying the great confusion and misinterpretation of scientific facts in the mind of the public. Some of the items that need clarification and action are:

1. Define climate change, global warming, manmade greenhouse effect, and ask the public to stop the synonymous use of these terms. (Those who use these terms synonymously do not know what they are talking about.)

“I am afraid that this great interest by the public in climatology is largely the result of a proliferating number of confusing stories in the media that are based on misinterpreted information about the greenhouse effect of carbon dioxide.”

2. Ask the mass media to stop using scenes of large blocks of ice falling off the terminus of a glacier and of the spring break-up in the Arctic as supposedly due to the manmade greenhouse effect. (Glaciers are ‘rivers of ice,’ so that calving is natural, and spring break-up is a normal, annual event; both have been going on from the [beginnings of] geological time.)

3. Ask the mass media to stop using collapsing houses built on permafrost (frozen ground) as a result of the manmade greenhouse effect. (Their collapse is due to improper construction that allows the house heat to melt the permafrost underneath the structure.)

4. Tell that sea ice in the Arctic Ocean is not a single plate of ice. (The area covered by sea ice changes considerably because of winds and ocean currents, not just by melting.)

5. Call attention to the fact that anomalous, extreme, and unusual weather phenomena are not directly related to the manmade greenhouse effect. (The manmade greenhouse effect is represented by a slow increase of temperature at the rate of 0.6°C/100 years.)

6. Acknowledge that the use of the so-called “hockey stick” figure in the 2001 Summary Report for Policy Makers was not appropriate. (It [falsely] shows a sudden increase of temperature around 1900 after a slow decrease for 900 years, giving the impression of ‘abrupt climate change.’)

7. Acknowledge that the present warming trend is not unusual or abnormal in the light of past temperature changes. (There were many warmer periods than the present one, which lasted hundreds of years during the present interglacial period that began 10,000 years ago.)

8. Distinguish between the manmade greenhouse effect and a great variety of manmade environmental destructions, which are often mentioned by greenhouse advocates in the same breath. (The latter includes results from the over-harvesting of forests and fish, pollution, extinction of some species.)

9. Stop media reports telling that the sea level has already increased several meters during the last 50 years. (According to the 2007 IPCC Report, the rising rate is 1.8mm/year, so that the sea level increased 9 cm during the last 50 years.)

10. Scientists who study satellite data should not use the term “unprecedented changes.” (They do not have satellite data before the 1970s and cannot tell if any of the changes are “unprecedented,” even those that occurred in the 1930s or 1940s, not having comparable data.)

11. Encourage the mass media not to report only on sensational scientific findings that may represent the opinion of only one scientist or a few. (Reporters who are not familiar with arctic phenomena tend to report normal features as anomalous.)

12. Remind scientists to be careful about hinting at possible disaster scenarios resulting from the greenhouse effect of CO2 without solid scientific bases.

“I am concerned about the inevitable backlash against science and scientists, when the public learns the correct information about climate change.”

I believe these are reasonable requests, over which no debate is needed. The public is alarmed and thus concerned about climate change largely because they are confused by the above and other misinformation and misunderstanding, not because they are particularly interested in climatology. People bring up these and many other misunderstood issues when I discuss the present warming trend with the public.

I am concerned about the inevitable backlash against science and scientists, when the public learns the correct information about climate change. Even if the IPCC is not directly responsible for the present confusion, they should take the necessary responsible action to help rectify the situation.

Syun-Ichi Akasofu
Founding Director
International Arctic Research Center

Dr. Syun Akasofu (right), founding director of the International Arctic Research Center at the University of Alaska-Fairbanks, has sent an open letter to the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) documenting flaws in the IPCC process and suggesting improvements.

Akasofu has published more than 550 professional journal articles, authored or co-authored 10 books, and has been the invited author of many encyclopedia articles. He has collaborated with numerous colleagues nationally and internationally and has guided nine students to their Ph.D.s. The text of his letter, sent to IPCC on December 18, follows.
Carbon Dioxide Emissions Fall in U.S., Rise in Europe

U.S. businesses outperform EU command-and-control restrictions

By Drew Thornley

Carbon dioxide (CO2) emissions in the United States fell by 1.8 percent in 2006, compared to a 0.3 percent increase in emissions in the European Union (EU), according to newly released data from the U.S. Energy Information Administration.

The new data confirm the continuing success of market-oriented, voluntary greenhouse gas emissions programs in the U.S. versus European cap-and-trade mandates.

The stark difference occurred even though the two economies grew at a near-identical pace in 2006, roughly 3 percent for the year.

Consistently Strong U.S. Results

"It isn’t just 2006 which saw a disparity," observed Chris Horner, senior fellow at the Competitive Enterprise Institute (CEI). "Under any relevant modern baseline, say 1997 when the Kyoto promise was made or thereafter, U.S. emissions have risen far more slowly than those of its noisiest antagonists whose model we are supposed to follow."

"For the past seven years for which we have data (2000-2006), the annual rate of increase for U.S. CO2 emissions is about a third of 1 percent, compared to more than 1 percent by the EU," Horner added.

"In what surely ought to confound the Europhiles in Congress, over the same period even the smaller EU-15 economy increased its CO2 emissions by more than 20 percent greater than the United States," Horner continued. "Why we are supposed to swoon over the prospect of paying billions to replicate their failure is beyond me."

EU Failures

While the European Union and environmental activist groups have frequently criticized the Bush administration for refusing to support the Kyoto Protocol, the 2006 data show the EU is failing to live up to its Kyoto promises. According to the European Environmental Agency, 13 countries of the EU-15 have increased emissions over the past 16 years.

Even in the United Kingdom, often cited as a greenhouse gas success story, recent data reveal emissions increased almost 20 percent over the past 20 years, after counting emissions from shipping, aviation, and the carbon content of imports.

"Even though global warming is nearly a religious commitment in Europe, greenhouse gas emissions are rising faster in the European Union than in the United States," noted Myron Ebell, CEI’s director of energy and global warming policy.

"I think this shows that it’s not easy or cheap to reduce emissions, contrary to what many proponents of cap-and-trade legislation here claim," Ebell said. " Mandatory controls are not working in the EU, so I think the rush in Congress to adopt their failing policies is foolish."

‘All Pain, No Gain’

CEI Senior Fellow Marlo Lewis agreed. "As has been widely reported, EU governments allocated more emission credits than there were emissions to their large emitters so as to give domestic firms a competitive advantage vis-à-vis their counterparts in other EU countries," said Lewis. "I think the old-fashioned term for this is ‘cheating.’"

Lewis continued, "One key fact that should be stressed is that gasoline prices in several EU countries exceed $7.00 a gallon due to high motor fuel taxes. Yet from 1990 to 2004, EU transport sector CO2 emissions increased by almost 26 percent. All pain for no gain."

Drew Thornley (dthornley@texaspolicy.com) is a policy analyst at the Texas Public Policy Foundation.

Outrage

Continued from page 1

...don plans to control thermostat settings in private homes.

Controlling Private Homes

The Energy Commission had attempted to slip the thermostat provision into Title 24, a 236-page set of rules covering energy efficiency mandates on building construction.

Under the proposal, every new home and every renovated heating and air conditioning system would be required by law to include an FM receiver that would allow the Energy Commission to reset the thermostat to whatever temperature the agency desired during times of peak usage.

The Energy Commission specified the receiver be non-removable and tamper-proof.

Outrage Near Universal

When word of the proposal leaked out in early January, public outcry was immediate and nearly universal. The Energy Commission “received so many calls and emails about this that they are making this proposal strictly voluntary,” reported KBAK-TV in Bakersfield on January 14.

Even so, the outcry continued, reaching beyond California’s borders.

“If ... government-controlled thermostats are acceptable, why not the rationing of gas?” asked a January 15 Denver Post house editorial. “Why not ‘manage’ the times Americans vacation abroad? Why not dictate how many miles a person can live from his or her job? Why not decree that we all use public transportation? Why not mandate that businesses use teleconferencing instead of attending those conventions in the Bahamas or Las Vegas? Why are you living in such a large house? Do you really need all that space?”

No Threat to Wealthy

“The threat of turning off peoples’ air conditioning is another in the ‘just say no’ approach to energy policy in California—no to new sources, no to reasonable prices, no to consumer choice, and no to reliable service,” said Tom Tanton, a fellow at the San Francisco-based Pacific Research Institute.

“Instead of giving utilities the power to control demand, why not give them the power to increase supply and delivery?” Tanton asked.

“California citizens have forced regulators at the California Energy Commission to abandon plans to control thermostat settings in private homes.”

“The discomforts of compliance will fall unevenly across the state,” columnist Joseph Somsel, a California resident, noted in the Internet magazine American Thinker. "Come the next heat wave, the elites might be comfortably lolling in La Jolla’s ocean breezes or basking in Berkeley by the Bay, while the Central Valley’s poor peons are baking in Bakersfield and frying in Fresno. California’s coastal climate, where the elites live, seldom requires air conditioning.”

‘I’ll Be Back’

Californians’ success in fighting back against the regulation, while encouraging, may not end the matter, said Tanton.

“In a state governed by the Terminator, I’m concerned that plans to control thermostats will ‘be back’ and that this is only a temporary reprieve,” Tanton said.

“Just like the villainous cyborg in the Terminator movies, even though the thermostat control proposal has been broken into hundreds of little quicksilver pieces, it is sure to coalesce in the future unless consumers demand that energy policy directions change,” said Tanton. “That change has to include realistic electricity supply options such as coal, nuclear, and natural gas.”

James M. Taylor (taylor@heartland.org) is a senior fellow of The Heartland Institute and managing editor of Environment & Climate News.
A new report from Greenpeace International, *Cool Farming*, includes organic farming recommendations that would impose severe hunger on half the world's humans or force the clearing of the world's remaining forests to plant more low-yield crops.

The report was released on January 8, around the same time Arcadia Biosciences of Davis, California announced a set of new genetically engineered seed varieties that will radically reduce greenhouse gas emissions and water pollution from world crop production.

**Reduces Nitrogen Use**

Growers of Arcadia's new rice will need only half as much nitrogen fertilizer, and virtually all the nitrogen applied will be taken up by the plants.

Arcadia is working with a Chinese province (Ningxia) to offer United Nations-approved carbon offsets for encouraging Chinese farmers to plant Arcadia's new nitrogen-efficient biotech rice seeds.

The world uses 80 million tons of industrial nitrogen per year, and the crops typically take up only half of it. The rest may leach into streams or go into the air as nitrous oxide, a greenhouse gas 300 times as potent as carbon dioxide (CO2). In rice alone, the new seed variety could ultimately prevent emission of 100 million tons per year of nitrous oxide. It also will eliminate any problem with nitrogen polluting waterways and slash by half the natural gas needed in fertilizer production.

**Greenpeace Opposes**

Ultimately, most of the world's crops may be made similarly nitrogen-efficient. Arcadia already has begun transformations for nitrogen-efficient wheat, sugar beets, and canola. Corn varieties already have doubled in nitrogen efficiency and weed and pest control in recent years, thanks to hybrid seeds, and Arcadia's new technology promises further gains in nitrogen efficiency for corn.

These genetically modified seeds will make high-yield farming far more environmentally friendly than organic farming. Greenpeace, of course, has long and loudly opposed biotechnology in agriculture, claiming it is not safe for the environment.

**Low Yields from Organic**

The biggest problem with Greenpeace's organic “cool farming” remains its low yields per acre. Turning exclusively to organic farming would yield half as much food, produced less sustainably, after plowing down most of the world's current wildlands.

Organic farmers refuse to use nitrogen fertilizer. Instead, they use cattle manure or green-manure crops such as clover to replace the soil nitrogen taken up by crops. Both approaches require large amounts of additional land.

Replacing the current annual use of 80 million tons of nitrogen fertilizer with cattle manure would require another five to seven billion cattle—and another 25 to 35 billion acres of forage to feed them. Green-manure crops can sometimes be effective, but most farmers find they take field space, soil nutrients, sunshine, and moisture away from the food and feed crops.

Greenpeace's organic demands are even less feasible in light of the organization's opposition to cattle confinement and beef cattle growth regulators, as these practices use two-thirds less crop-land per pound of beef produced and the cattle emit 40 percent less greenhouse gas than cattle “organically raised” on pasture.

**UN Rejects Organic Farming**

The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) has weighed in heavily against organic farming. “FAO has no reason to believe that organic agriculture can substitute for conventional farming systems in ensuring the world's food security,” FAO said in a December news release.

FAO Director-general Jacques Diouf said, “You cannot feed 6 billion people today and 9 billion people in 2050 without the judicious use of chemical fertilizers.”

Dennis T. Avery (cgfi@hughes.net) is a senior fellow for the Hudson Institute in Washington, DC and director of the Center for Global Food Issues (http://www.cgfi.org). He was formerly a senior analyst for the U.S. Department of State. Readers may write him at P.O. Box 202, Churchville, VA 24421.
Australia Will Promote Drought-Resistant Crops

By John Dale Dunn

Agricultural minister Tony Burke has announced Australia will promote the development of drought-resistant genetically modified (GM) wheat.

Burke said Prime Minister Kevin Rudd supports the idea of improving the drought tolerance of crops as an alternative to continuing the current system of insurance and financial disaster relief for Australian farmers. Such relief has cost the Australian government more than $3 billion since 2001.

"Agricultural minister Tony Burke has announced Australia will promote the development of drought-resistant genetically modified wheat."

Crops Suffering

Australia is in the middle of a seven-year drought that has left the nation with extremely low water availability in many areas. In early 2007 there were promising rains, but rainfall was relatively scarce later in the year.

The first-ever Australian field trials of genetically modified wheat will take place in Victoria this year. The trials will include 30 genetically modified wheat hybrids, each containing genes for drought tolerance derived from maize, thale cress, moss, or yeast.

To date, there is no known drought-tolerant wheat or other field crop with significant nutritional or food value.

Record of Success

"The jury is in as far as genetically modified crops go; they’ve been around for more than 10 years and there have been no adverse events," National Farmers Federation of Australia spokesman Brett Heffernan told the French Press Agency.

Greenpeace: A Long History of Poor Judgment

Greenpeace Internationals’ Cool Farming report is just the latest in a long line of claims by the organization that have proven unwise and incorrect.

Condemning DDT

In the 1970s, Greenpeace took the lead in condemning DDT—after the chemical had been used successfully to rid North America and Europe of malaria, which had been endemic throughout both continents.

Greenpeace claimed DDT caused cancer in humans, which has since been proven untrue. It said DDT caused thinning in the eggshells of raptors, which isn’t true either. American bald eagles have resurfaced because the Congressional Bald Eagle Protection Act of 1940 halted the shooting and poisoning of the birds.

Greenpeace’s opposition to DDT has contributed to at least 30 million deaths, most of them African children.

"Greenpeace Internationals’ Cool Farming report is just the latest in a long line of claims by the organization that have proven unwise and incorrect."

Salmon, Warming Panics

In the 1970s, Greenpeace claimed salmon were going extinct in the Columbia River because of logging, pollution, and irrigated farming. It turned out the real culprit is a long, natural cycle now dubbed the Pacific Decadal Oscillation. It shifts the food sources in the Pacific to favor either the Columbia salmon or the fish in the Gulf of Alaska, but never both at the same time.

Similarly, since the 1980s Greenpeace has predicted the world would lose a million or so species because of global warming, yet the warming has caused no wild species extinctions.

Instead, scientists have found a 130,000-year-old polar bear skull in the Arctic, meaning polar bears not only survived global warmings that occurred 9,000 and 5,000 years ago and were warmer than today, but also the even hotter Eemian Warming that preceded the last Ice Age.

Warmings bring increases in seal numbers, and biologists say the key source of winter fat for polar bears is newly born seal pups still in their dens.

"Greenpeace claimed DDT caused cancer in humans, which has since been proven untrue. It said DDT caused thinning in the eggshells of raptors, which isn’t true either. American bald eagles have resurfaced because the Congressional Bald Eagle Protection Act of 1940 halted the shooting and poisoning of the birds."

Gregory Conko, a senior fellow at the Competitive Enterprise Institute, noted Australia’s national government showed leadership in overcoming a patchwork of local roadblocks.

"In Australia, the provinces have generally been antagonistic to GM crops. Some provinces have imposed moratoriums on GM food crops, although GM cotton has been allowed in two provinces," Conko said.

Conko agrees gene technology can benefit farmers and consumers.

"Everywhere in the world that they have been planted, bioengineered crops have benefited farmers, consumers, and the environment," said Conko. "The only reason for hunger and malnutrition in the world at this point is politics and corrupt governments. The agricultural developments of the past 30 years have created a tremendous benefit."

John Dale Dunn M.D., J.D. (jddmdjd@web-access.net) is a member of the civilian emergency medicine faculty at Carl R. Darnall Army Medical Center, Fort Hood, Texas and a policy advisor to The Heartland Institute and the American Council on Science and Health.
Altamont
Continued from page 1

each year.
Among the birds killed there each year are protected raptors, including golden eagles, red-tailed hawks, American kestrels, and burrowing owls.
The January 2007 legal settlement, forged among wildlife groups, wind companies, and regulators, required the wind farm operators, through a series of measures, to reduce raptor deaths by 50 percent over three years.
Scientists in December 2007 reported the thousands of wind turbines at Altamont Pass are killing raptors and other birds at approximately the same pace as before the settlement.

Wildlife Groups Object
Elizabeth Murdock, executive director of the Golden Gate Audubon Society, one of four Audubon chapters party to the settlement agreement, says the present array of wind turbines at Altamont Pass is taking an unacceptable toll on migratory and protected bird species.
“We are not trying to shut down the wind industry, but we think that there is a positive way to move forward and produce wind power while reducing bird deaths,” Murdock said.

“A January 2007 settlement agreement intended to reduce the number of bird deaths from wind turbines at Altamont Pass, California is failing ...”

The toll has been devastating at Altamont Pass. In the lawsuit, environmentalists cited a 2004 California Energy Commission report estimating between 1,766 and 4,721 birds were killed by Altamont wind turbines each year, equaling 47,682 to 127,467 birds over the 27-year life of the wind farm.

Many of the affected bird species are protected by state and federal laws. Some of the birds killed are protected by federal laws so stringent they do not allow the taking or killing of even a single member of the species.

Wind farm critics say the failure to enforce federal wildlife protection laws in the Altamont wind farm case is a result of environmentalists’ pressure for wind power.

Birds Lured to Death
The bird death issue is complicated by the fact that commercially viable wind farms must be situated in areas where the wind blows as frequently and steadily as possible. These locations tend also to be major flyways for raptors and migratory birds.

Even worse, the farms can actually lure birds to their grisly deaths. Rats, mice, and other rodents utilize turbine bases as nesting grounds, which in turn attracts birds of prey. When the birds of prey circle above their intended meal, they are sliced to death in midair by the spinning turbine blades.

The Audubon Society, a party to the lawsuit settled last year, noted among the birds deaths are between 456 and 1,129 raptors killed each year, including 75 to 116 golden eagles killed annually.

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Broken bulbs require special cleanup precautions, according to the agency, including the use of rubber gloves, sticky tape, and wet, disposable paper towels. Upon completion of the cleanup, the bulb must be disposed in a completely sealed plastic bag and sent to a special disposal facility capable of handling toxic waste.

“Because these light bulbs contain small amounts of mercury, they could cause a problem if disposed of in a normal bin,” environmental scientist Dr. David Spurgeon told the London Daily Mail. “It is possible that the mercury could be released into the air or from landfills when they are released into the wider environment. That is a concern, because mercury is a well-known toxic substance,” Spurgeon added.

The Daily Mail also reported, “tens of thousands of people with skin complaints will find it hard to tolerate being near the bulbs as they cause conditions such as eczema to flare up.”

Dangerous Disposal Conditions
Currently there is no program established in the United States or Great Britain to help dispose of fluorescent bulbs. Cities with curbside recycling cannot take fluorescent bulbs. This leaves it up to each individual to bring the bulbs to certified hazardous waste sites or collection facilities.

Understandably, most people put them in their regular garbage, where the bulbs can break (if they haven’t already) and discharge mercury into the ground, at the dumpsite or even the residence. John Skinner, executive director of the Solid Waste Association of North America, told National Public Radio, “The problem with the bulbs is that they’ll break before they get to the landfill. They’ll break in containers, or they’ll break in a dumpster or they’ll break in the trucks. Workers may be exposed to very high levels of mercury when that happens.”

Illusory Efficiency Gains
In addition to the fluorescent light bulbs’ added health and environmental hazards, consumers must significantly change their usage patterns to achieve the promised energy efficiency.

Turning the bulbs on and off shortens their life. An article in the December 31 Weekly Standard noted, “According to Department of Energy guidelines, you need to leave it on for at least 15 minutes” every time you use such a bulb.

That means if you are up watching television at night and want to go into the kitchen to get a glass of water, you will have to leave the light on for a full 15 minutes afterwards or risk significantly shortening the life of a bulb that already costs six to seven times as much as an incandescent one.

Real-world experience suggests people are unlikely to achieve the desired reduction in energy use that motivated the federal mandate.

Sam Kazman, general counsel for the Competitive Enterprise Institute, noted: “The small town of Traer, Iowa launched the Great Light Bulb Exchange, distributing 18,000 high-efficiency bulbs to the small town’s residents. Despite the fact that over half of the town’s households participated, electricity consumption actually rose by 8 percent.”

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Bedbug
Continued from page 1

The city received 7,000 bedbug infestation complaints in 2007, more than 10 times the number recorded as recently as 2004. City Council Member Gale Brewer (D-Upper West Side) is taking the unprecedented step of sponsoring a bill to create a bedbug task force.

“New York City is feeling the biting effects of anti-chemical laws as a bedbug epidemic has infested every part of the city.”

All Income Groups Victimized
“We have three education forums planned where people can hear presentations from different city agencies about how to avoid getting bedbugs and how to deal with them once you get them,” Brewer said.
Brewer expressed special concern about unsuspecting city residents acquiring reconditioned mattresses. Her bill would ban the sale of reconditioned mattresses in the city. She is facing opposition from many quarters, including Mayor Michael Bloomberg (I).

“Banning the sale of reconditioned mattresses is a minimally effective Band-Aid approach to battling bedbugs, and it would harm lower-income families,” said Sterling Burnett, a senior fellow at the National Center for Policy Analysis.

“Such a ban would not even be considered if government had not banned the sale of so many safe and effective pesticides.”

“But it’s not just mattresses,” Brewer said. “People of all income groups have been victimized, and it has happened to even the most meticulous of home keepers. People even pick them up from such seemingly innocent sources as used books.”

DDT Ban Allowed Resurgence
The bloodsucking pests were all but eradicated shortly after World War II, but bans on DDT and other effective pesticides have enabled bedbug numbers to increase dramatically nationwide. Bedbugs are now “becoming the pest of the twenty-first century,” pest control experts warn, according to the Associated Press.

The epidemic is out of control across New York City. People are bringing home bedbugs they unknowingly picked up in taxis, movie theaters, five-star hotels, and even while giving birth in maternity wards.

“It’s becoming an epidemic,” Jeffery Eisenberg, owner of Pest Away Exterminating on the Upper West Side, told The New York Times for a November 27 report. “People are being tortured, and so am I. I spend half my day talking to hysterical people about bedbugs.”

Repeated, Expensive Treatments
“We have a lot of experienced pesticide folks, and I would go with what they are proposing,” Brewer recommended. “However, it usually requires multiple pesticide treatments, as well as the repeated treatment of clothes and furniture. It is a very expensive issue to deal with and can cost people thousands of dollars. People often can’t afford this.”

Because conventional pesticides are frequently not powerful enough to kill bedbugs, victims describe living nightmares trying to get rid of them. It costs roughly $2,000 to have a professional pest control company treat a typical home, but even then the bedbugs are likely to remain.

The bugs hide by day in places such as picture frames, stereo speakers, bed boards, and wall interiors. At night, they emerge from their hiding places and gorge upon the flesh of sleeping humans, dogs, and cats.

Frustration Reaches Internet
Jackson Heights resident Caitlin Heller set up a Web site documenting her recurring bedbug infestation. Heller has had her apartment treated by professional exterminators repeatedly, bagged and hermetically sealed her clothes and bedding, and caulked all the cracks along her plasterboard walls.

Even so, the bugs return, leaving tell-tale blood stains and insect feces on her bed sheets.

“I can’t believe I have to go through all this [trouble] AGAIN,” wrote an exasperated Heller in a recent blog entry. “We bought large heavy-duty trash bags to put our clothes and linens into. ... We’ll be pulling the furniture out away from the walls before we go to sleep tonight and vacuuming all the floors, removing the vacuum bag into another sealed bag and going directly into the trash compactor.”

Laws Let Bugs Loose
Angela Logomasini, director of risk and environmental policy at the Competitive Enterprise Institute, reports insect infestations have become more difficult to treat as pesticides are targeted by environmental activist groups and subsequently banned by federal and state governments.

“For fighting bedbugs, it would be immensely helpful to have DDT as a potential option,” Logomasini said. “The national bedbug epidemic is very bad and getting worse.

“It’s not just DDT,” Logomasini added. “They have been getting rid of effective chemicals for decades, which leaves fewer and fewer options to fight bedbugs and other insect pests. The more options you take away, the more difficult it is to keep insect infestations under control or from happening in the first place.”

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Is the Pursuit of Energy Independence an Illusion?

For more than 30 years, America has heard repeated calls for energy independence. The George C. Marshall Institute has released a report which explains why the rhetoric and illusion of energy independence is inconsistent with economic, technical and political realities.

The Illusion of U.S. Energy Independence: An Assessment of the Current State of Energy Use examines current energy independence proposals that focus on drastically reducing oil use. Since oil is primarily for transportation, these proposals would limit mobility and ration energy use. Even with efficiency gains from current technology improvements, these efforts would have a disproportionate impact on groups that can least afford the increased costs, such as the poor and the elderly.

“A more secure energy future must be built on objective realities,” the report concludes. “Illusions breed frustration and waste resources.”


The George C. Marshall Institute, a non-profit research group founded in 1984, is dedicated to fostering and preserving the products of the Institute’s Energy Independence Project are available online at http://www.marshall.org/category.php?id=9.
Emissions Trading, Carbon Taxes—or Fuhgetaboutit?

By Jim Johnston

Tony Soprano, the celebrated television philosopher, has the right answer: “Fuhgetaboutit.”

Other, less-distinguished policy analysts are divided between emissions trading and a carbon tax to deal with the possibility of global warming.

Emissions Trading Manipulation
Emissions trading is flawed in several respects. First, it is subject to fraud and political manipulation.

The emissions trading scheme in the European Union is a notable example. The RECLAIM system in the South Coast Air Basin in California and the nationwide acid rain trading of sulfur dioxide are other examples.

Policy wonks realize emissions trading has other problems as well. Each source has to be benchmarked and tracked, and the reduced emission claims have to be verified. The number of projects under an open-ended carbon trading scheme would be many more times those under previous trading systems.

This would greatly increase the system’s administrative costs. Accounting for the huge number of sequestration projects would be an enormous complication and vulnerable to a great deal of fraud.

 “[P]olicy analysts are divided between emissions trading and a carbon tax to deal with the possibility of global warming.”

Volatile Prices
Another perceived problem is that the prices of allowances and credits in previous systems are very volatile and do not reflect stable differences in abatement costs. Instead of asking why this is so, emissions trading proponents want to cap the carbon allowance prices. This follows the renowned analytic tradition in Washington: When the data are inconsistent with the prevailing theory, then the data must be changed, not the theory.

One might reasonably ask what is going on here. Trading is supposed to occur between emission sources with different costs of abatement. The low-cost source is supposed to reduce emissions and then sell the excess to the high-cost source. That does not imply a lot of volatility in allowance prices, because abatement technology does not change that much.

Price Hedging
By contrast, the allowance price volatility does track an alternative theory. During a weather-related energy shock in one area, the emission source has a choice of using extra allowances to cover the operation at higher capacity, or shutting down and buying energy from sources where the crisis is less serious.

This latter strategy—call it “geographic arbitrage”—is attractive because the rules of the trading scheme can be changed at any time. In past schemes, the allowances or credits were denied property status. This means changes could be made by the government and the victim of such a taking could not get reimbursed under the Fifth Amendment of the Constitution.

Thus, the allowance price is closely related to the price of the fuel (natural gas) used at the margin to produce more energy (electricity). Energy contracts are property, unlike the allowances and credits. This means hedging will be done mainly with energy contracts rather than emission allowances.

Does the emission allowance price track the price of natural gas? Yes, it does. Moreover, this interpretation implies the touted savings from emissions trading are grossly inflated.

Free Allowances
Another problem with emissions trading the policy wonks want to fix is that the lower allocation of allowances that represents the reduction in allowed emissions is “free.” Under the latest version of carbon emissions trading, the initial endowment of credits would be taxed.

The effect is to raise the costs of all the emissions, not just the reductions. This makes the analytical results of emissions trading mathematically identical to the proposed carbon tax. It also revives the quaint Soviet tradition of charging the family of an executed man for the bullets.

Illusory Carbon Tax Rebates
Notwithstanding the claims of its proponents, the carbon tax is no boon to society, either. The basis of such a levy would be the carbon content of principal energy sources, such as crude oil and natural gas at the wellhead. The tax would supposedly be passed forward to the final consumer and not to employees or stockholders. The tax would supposedly be neutral, in the sense that the proceeds would be returned to the economy generally in a way that would not further disrupt relative prices.

While that might sound attractive, taxpayers would be properly suspicious of whether such a rebate would actually take place. Once the government has the tax revenue, who really believes favored constituencies will not receive the proceeds so the politicians will better their chances of getting reelected?

“We should take Tony Soprano’s advice about emissions trading and the carbon tax: Fuhgetaboutit.”

Uneven Playing Field
A closer look at the carbon tax proposal makes me suspicious. While energy producers would be taxed, countless numbers of projects to lock up carbon, mainly in the agriculture sector, would receive tax credits. There is potential for a massive diversion of funds from energy consumers to farmers.

I suspect the politicians are hoping the sequestration tax credits will come just in time to replace the failed ethanol subsidy.

Now, there is nothing inherently wrong with tax credits. They could serve to offset government expenditures on levees and other activities to mitigate the effects of global warming, should it actually occur.

But tax credits should be universally available. To propose that some have their taxes increased and others have their taxes reduced suggests an attempt at the same old tired political redistribution. I doubt taxpayers will be fooled.

Command-and-Control Concerns
One might ask what is left if both emissions trading and the carbon tax are fatally flawed? The answer might be the much-maligned com-
Global Satellite Temperatures

How Much Global Warming?

Each month, Environment & Climate News updates the global averaged satellite measurements of the Earth’s temperature. These numbers are important because they are real—not projections, forecasts, or guesses. Global satellite measurements are made from a series of orbiting platforms that sense the average temperature in various atmospheric layers. Here, we present the lowest level, which climate models say should be warming. The satellite measurements are considered accurate to within 0.01°C. The data used to create these graphs can be found on the Internet at http://vortex.nsstc.uah.edu/public/msu/t2lt/tltglhmam_5.2

December 2007

Global Average

The global average temperature for December was 0.11°C above normal.

Northern Hemisphere

The Northern Hemisphere’s temperature was 0.15°C above normal.

Southern Hemisphere

The Southern Hemisphere’s temperature was 0.08°C above normal.

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