Arkansas Legislature Rejects Renewable Power Mandate

By Alyssa Carducci

The Arkansas legislature rejected a proposed renewable power mandate when House Bill 1390, the Arkansas Distributed Generation Act, failed to make it out of a joint committee on energy.

With former U.S. Central Intelligence Agency Director James Woolsey and former Colorado governor Mark Ritter scheduled to testify in favor of the bill, renewable power advocates expressed optimism about its chances. After testimony from supporters and opponents, however, the bill’s progress was stopped when none of the committee members seconded a motion to vote on the bill.

State Rep. Warwick Sabin (D-Little Rock), p. 6

Arkansas Legislature Rejects Renewable Power Mandate

BPA Replacement Faces Same Attacks

By Kenneth Artz

As anti-chemical activists attempt to ban the safe but controversial chemical bisphenol A from plastic products, a new study finds the most viable replacement chemical presents greater human health concerns than the exhaustively tested bisphenol A.

Activists claim bisphenol A (BPA), a chemical providing strength and flexibility to plastic products, poses threats to human health. They point to studies showing rats develop health complications when continuously fed mega-doses of BPA.

Scientists report, however, that humans do not ingest nearly enough BPA to pose a threat to their health. Clinical tests and observational studies form group to address pollution — 15
Are left-wing, “green” policies actually harming the environment?

“I’ve been waiting for the definitive tome on the systematic errors of [the green movement], and I have finally found it in Todd Myers’ new book Eco-Fads.”

- Jay Lehr

Forbes

“With what you will learn from this book, you will be better able to shake off the hypnotic spell of green mythology and return to sound environmental thinking.”

- Jay Lehr

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Anti-GMO Leader Asks Forgiveness for Unscientific Crusade

By Jeff Edgens

Mark Lynas, a longtime vocal leader of the anti-biotechnology movement, acknowledged at a farming conference he has unjustly demonized biotechnology and was wrong to oppose genetic crop improvements.

Lynas helped create the anti-biotechnology movement in the 1990s and spent more than a decade sowning public fear about genetically modified crops.

Admits ‘Demonizing’ Technology

At a January Oxfam Farming Conference, Lynas said he was wrong to “demonize” biotechnology that “can be used to benefit the environment.”

“I want to start with some apologies,” said Lynas. “For the record, here and upfront, I apologize for having spent several years ripping up GM [genetically modified] crops.

“As an environmentalist, and someone who believes that everyone in this world has a right to a healthy and nutritious diet of their choosing, I could not have chosen a more counter-productive path. I now regret it completely,” Lynas said.

Biotechnology Successes

Biotechnology and genetic crop improvements have expanded the quality and quantity of food to impoverished nations, agricultural economist Dennis Avery notes.

Avery, who served as an agriculture analyst for the U.S. Department of State and wrote a landmark agricultural evaluation for the President’s National Advisory Commission on Food and Fiber, said real-world benefits from biotechnology enable farmers to feed more people than at any time in human history.

“Lynas has done his fair share to arrest the development of newer technologies that save lives and wildlife habitat,” Avery said, “but he’ll lose credibility with the anti-GMO crowd now that he is repenting his anti-biotechnology activism.

Avery notes farmers have used bioengineering and cross-hybridization for hundreds of years. Modern technology allows that work to be done in a controlled situation under laboratory conditions. The results are not only more precise but more effective.

For example, the development of Bt corn through controlled genetic modification enables corn to produce its own natural insecticide to fight off insects without harming humans and the environment. The use of Bt corn means farmers spray fewer insecticides.

“Anti-biotechnology activists have caused mass starvation in Third World nations by denying people access to genetically improved crops,” Craig Rucker, executive director of the Committee for a Constructive Tomorrow, told Environment & Climate News.

“Environmental activists block people in Third World nations from having access to food, causing malnutrition and starvation, while at the same time claiming they are doing so in the best interests of the starving people. This asserted logic makes no sense and only serves to worsen the plight of people facing food shortages in Third World nations,” Rucker said.

“It is time for a more common-sense approach to environmentalism and human welfare.”

Land Conservation Benefits

The Nobel Prize-winning scientist Norman Borlaug, known as the father of the “Green Revolution,” encouraged the use of biotechnology and scientific development to bring more crops and nutrition to more people around the world.

“I think Lynas came to the realization a bit late,” said Avery. “I have long estimated that Borlaug’s Green Revolution saved perhaps the land area of South America from being plowed down for more low-yield crops.”

Avery cited a recent study by Jesse Ausubel of Rockefeller University who estimated high yields made possible from biotechnology have saved twice the land area of South America.

“We are gratified by Lynas’s recognition that saving wildlands is the greatest boon that humans can offer the environment,” Avery added.

“Unfortunately,” said Avery, “the denunciation of GMOs that save human populations and wildlife has wasted time and valuable resources and will inflict years more of waste and inaction on these real remedies.”

‘Became a Better Environmentalist’

Lynas said science put him on a more truthful path.

“So I guess you’ll be wondering what happened between 1995 and now that made me not only change my mind but come here and admit it?” said Lynas.

“Well, the answer is fairly simple: I discovered science, and in the process I hope I became a better environmentalist.”

MARK LYNAS

OXFAM FARMING CONFERENCE

JANUARY 2013
A group of Idaho lawmakers is considering legislation demanding the federal government turn over millions of acres of land to the state government in Boise.

Idaho legislators say they are increasingly frustrated over being denied access to federal lands within their state’s borders.

Legislators in Arizona and Utah passed similar legislation demanding less federal intrusion in their state. Utah Gov. Gary Herbert (R) signed the Utah legislation into law last year, while Arizona Gov. Jan Brewer (R) vetoed her state’s legislation last year.

Feds Broke Ownership Promise

Utah state Rep. Ken Ivory (R-West Jordan) told a joint meeting of the Idaho House Resources and Conservation Committee and the Senate Resources and Environment Committee, “This is about economic self-reliance.”

Ivory, who spearheaded the Utah legislation, reminded the Idaho legislators that language from statehood documents dating from the nineteenth century contained a provision that the federal government intended to relinquish control of the land it controlled in each state. While the feds abided by the provision in Great Plains states such as North Dakota, Washington held on to most of the land in the West.

“The federal government has not been disposing of the lands as it promised to do,” said Ivory.

Following Utah’s Lead

If Idaho lawmakers decide to follow Ivory’s recommendation, the resulting bill would likely resemble Utah’s Transfer of Public Lands Act. The Utah measure calls on the federal government to convey about 20 million acres of land (more than 31,000 square miles) to Utah. The Utah act set a deadline of 2014 for the federal government to turn over the land to the state.

With little expectation that the federal government will comply with the Utah law, federal courts would likely decide the issue.

States Suffer under Federal Control

The federal government, primarily through the Bureau of Land Management and the U.S. Forest Service, owns about 64 percent of the land in Idaho. With so much land off the property tax rolls, state and local governments are having a difficult time funding such things as schools, roads, and essential water projects. The large federal estate also has kept Idaho from realizing the potential of its substantial mineral and timber resources.

“Federal control of lands in Idaho is a direct impediment to our state’s ability to put our natural resources to productive use,” Wayne Hoffman, executive director of the Idaho Freedom Foundation, told Environment & Climate News. “This results in less economic vitality for our communities, less money for our industries, less money for education, and less opportunity for our young people.

“Additionally, we get to watch national land mismanagement cause the destruction of millions of acres of public forest land each year,” Hoffman explained. “We can’t keep allowing the federal government to do the same thing year after year and expect a different result. That’s why we favor the plan to put Idaho in charge of public lands in the state.”

Bonner R. Cohen, Ph.D. (bcohen@nationalcenter.org) is a senior fellow at the National Center for Public Policy Research.

The Mad, Mad, Mad World of Climatism

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Maryland Moves Forward with Chicken-Waste Electricity Project

By Alyssa Carducci

Maryland Gov. Martin O’Malley (D) announced his approval of a project to turn chicken waste into electricity, but the idea still faces opposition from consumer advocates and some environmentalists.

Environmental Benefits Asserted

Green Planet Power Solutions presented a bid to state officials to turn chicken waste, containing chicken droppings and incidental waste products such as feathers and chicken feed, into electricity. Electricity generated by the project would count toward the state’s 15 percent renewable power mandate. Proponents claim the chicken-droppings electricity project will benefit the environment and the economy by turning waste into valuable electricity.

“Converting poultry litter into energy helps Maryland prevent nitrogen from polluting the [Chesapeake] Bay and fills an important need for power generation on the Eastern Shore,” Maryland Attorney General Douglas Gansler said in a press statement. “This plant built as a result of this commitment will benefit Eastern Shore farmers, our economy, and the Bay.”

Farmers currently use chicken waste to fertilize crops organically. Rainfall washes some of the residue into the Chesapeake Bay watershed, which elevates nitrogen levels there.

High-Pollution Electricity

Environmental activists warn turning chicken waste into electricity may transform a modest water pollution problem into a larger air pollution problem. Environmental activist groups such as Food & Water Watch, Green Planet, and the Sierra Club have expressed concern or outright opposition to the proposal.

A new study on the potential environmental impact of chicken-droppings electricity adds weight to their concerns. Environmental scientists at Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) conducted a 15-month study of a similar proposal in Virginia, finding chicken-waste electricity would produce substantial pollution and any chicken-waste electricity plant would have to be located in an area currently devoid of much air pollution in order to avoid creating a serious air pollution problem.

“Although use of technologies that convert poultry litter into energy could potentially limit the amount of nutrient pollution in the Chesapeake Bay watershed, it could also introduce a new air pollution source,” the scientists warn in the report.

The report continued, “Both small- and large-scale combustion processes increase ambient air concentrations of potentially harmful substances such as oxides of nitrogen (NOx), oxides of sulfur (SOx), particulate matter (PM), volatile organic compounds (VOC), dioxins/furans, and other substances. In addition to harming air quality, the alternate use of poultry litter to generate energy could also potentially affect current poultry litter management practices—such as its transport and the income and employment that its use generates—which could subsequently affect the health of the population in the Valley.”

Impact Uncertain

“Whether this solution is indeed better for the environment or public health is uncertain,” the VCU scientists observed.

The report explained, “The decision made … on how to manage poultry litter could affect social, economic and environmental factors that impact health. In preliminary community meetings, residents and environmental groups expressed concerns about effects of the potential facility on health and the area economy.”

The study noted citizen opposition was strongest in areas where chicken-waste-to-energy facilities are being considered.

Food & Water Watch Opposition

Although any asserted water quality benefits may be outweighed by negative air quality impacts, the project’s net economic harms are more certain.

As Food & Water Watch pointed out in a fact sheet on the project, Maryland taxpayers will be paying Green Planet Power Solutions $600,000 in subsidies every year. Those subsidies will be in addition to state officials obligating Maryland consumers to purchase the chicken-waste electricity at substantially higher prices than conventional electricity.

Food & Water Watch described the project as “greenwashing corporate welfare.”

“Burning poultry litter may actually produce as much or more toxic air emissions than coal plants” and “[t]he negative impacts of poultry litter incineration are likely to be borne disproportionately by already vulnerable communities,” Food & Water Watch claimed in its fact sheet.

Wide-Ranging Economic Harm

In addition to taxpayers and consumers worrying about the negative economic impacts of taxpayer subsidies and higher electricity prices, farmers fear the diversion of rich organic fertilizer to electricity production will create fertilizer scarcity and drive up fertilizer prices.

“The high nutrient content makes poultry litter an excellent organic fertilizer for crops,” the VCU scientists noted in their study. “Due to the relative scarcity of phosphorus in agricultural areas that lack livestock production, demand for poultry litter outside of the watershed is high.”

“I have a positive opinion of turning poultry waste into energy where it is cost-effective,” said Daniel Simmons, director of regulatory and state affairs at the Institute for Energy Research. “But the real key is that these projects should compete in the market for electricity like everyone else and not receive above-market rates for their electricity.”

“Sadly, it looks like Maryland is subsidizing waste-to-energy and costing Marylanders in the process,” Simmons added. “This facility would not be built if government allowed free-market pricing mechanisms to work without government intrusion.”

Simmons said poultry-litter-to-energy facilities should be held to the same environmental standards as other power plants.

“If they meet the requirements, they should be allowed to operate,” he said. “The state, however, shouldn’t overlook any pollution issues associated with poultry-waste-to-energy facilities simply because their advocates claim these facilities are ‘green.’ Air pollution is air pollution, regardless of what energy source is responsible.”

Alyssa Carducci (ad.carducci@gmail.com) writes from Tampa, Florida.
Ark. Legislature Rejects Renewable Power Mandate

Continued from page 1

Rock) presented HB 1390, which would require Arkansas utilities to enter into distributed generation contracts for 1,200 megawatts of renewable power, equal to approximately 5 percent of the state’s electricity consumption. Distributed generation contracts require utilities to purchase power from numerous small providers, such as the owners of rooftop solar panels or backyard windmills.

Woolsey, Ritter Back Out

HB 1390 appeared to gain momentum when reports surfaced that Woolsey and Ritter confirmed to Sabin they would testify in favor of the bill and made travel arrangements to Little Rock for that purpose.

After HB 1390 opponents confirmed James M. Taylor, senior fellow for The Heartland Institute, which publishes Environment & Climate News, would testify against the bill, Woolsey and Ritter backed out on their plans.

The expected clash between Woolsey and Ritter on one side of the bill and Sabin on the other generated substantial media interest. The cable television network Showtime sent a film crew to Little Rock to film the debate between them. Ultimately, the crew left Little Rock with footage of only Taylor, which it plans to air in a fall 2013 series on the energy and climate debate.

Supporters Claim Economic Benefits

After Sabin presented the bill to the House-Senate Joint Energy Committee, Ball, owner of the Little Rock-based solar power company Stellar Sun and founder of the Arkansas Renewable Energy Association, testified in support of the bill. Ball claimed the bill represented merely a small step toward affordable renewable energy and would not raise electricity costs.

He said the proposed mandates are necessary to boost the state’s job market because renewable energy companies already have begun packing up and leaving because state laws and the state business climate are “not conducive” to renewable energy companies.

Ball also claimed the proposed mandates are consistent with free-market energy principles and said “special-interest groups” were leading the charge to oppose the mandates.

“We don’t want a subsidy, just a chance” to compete in a free market, Ball asserted.

Three other HB 1390 supporters joined Ball in testifyin favor of the bill. They were Frank Kelly, owner of Little-Rock based Solar Source Consulting; Ted Ko, associate executive director of the California-based Clean Coalition; and Terry Tremwel, principal of Arkansas-based Ozark Green Energy.

Real-World Economic Costs

Taylor rebutted the testimony of Ball and the other HB 1390 proponents. Observing energy costs are a key factor encouraging or stifling economic growth, Taylor presented economic data showing renewable power is substantially more expensive than conventional power. Taylor also presented U.S. Energy Information Administration projections indicating renewable power will be substantially more expensive than conventional power for at least the next several decades.

“Rising electricity costs have the same negative economic consequences as rising taxes. As electricity costs rise, people have less money to spend throughout the economy on items such as nutrition, housing, and durable consumer goods,” Taylor explained.

“Rising electricity costs are worse than rising taxes in one important particular,” Taylor added. “When government takes more tax money from people, there is at least the possibility that people will receive goods and services from government in exchange for those additional tax dollars. When electricity prices rise, however, people lose money but receive no additional goods or services in return.”

Expecting Ritter to testify that Colorado’s renewable power mandates are providing affordable energy in Ritter’s home state, Taylor presented EIA data showing Colorado electricity prices are rising more than twice as rapidly as U.S. and Arkansas electricity prices.

“These rising electricity costs have substantial real-world impacts,” said Taylor. “Averaged out over the state’s 1.9 million households, if Coloradans paid the same price for electricity as their neighbors in Wyoming pay, each Colorado household would save $600 every year in electricity costs.”

Contradictory Claims

Taylor concluded his testimony by noting feed-in tariffs play a central role in HB 1390. He reported renewable power industry lobbyists testified just two weeks earlier in an Ohio Senate committee that feed-in tariffs were a primary culprit in rising electricity prices and resultant job destruction from renewable power mandates in several European nations and U.S. states.

Just two weeks ago, the renewable power industry’s own lobbyists acknowledged in testimony to the Ohio Senate Public Utilities Committee that feed-in tariffs are economically destructive. They emphasized in their testimony that Ohio’s renewable power mandates would not bring such economic destruction to Ohio because the Ohio law did not include a feed-in tariff,” said Taylor.

“I pointed out to the Ohio Senate Committee that when I have participated in legislative hearings in other states and in public forums throughout the nation, these same renewable power advocates have consistently pushed for feed-in tariffs,” said Taylor. “They responded, and I quote, ‘We have learned from our past mistakes.’

“I told them I was surprised yet happy to hear them acknowledge the negative economic consequences of feed-in tariffs and I would hold them to their testimony in other states. Now, just two weeks later, renewable power advocates seek to impose feed-in tariffs here in Arkansas,” said Taylor.

After the testimony concluded, Joint Committee Co-Chair State Sen. Linda Chesterfield (D-Little Rock) presented a motion to vote on the bill. No committee member seconded the motion, and the bill failed.

Alyssa Carducci (ad.carducci@gmail.com) writes from Tampa, Florida.
N.C. Bill Would Freeze Renewable Power Mandates

By Bonner R. Cohen

The first Southern state to enact renewable power mandates may be the first to repeal them.

North Carolina state Rep. Mike Hager (R-Rutherford) introduced legislation, the Affordable and Reliable Energy Act, to freeze renewable power mandates at the current 3 percent and repeal escalating future mandates.

Within a few hours of introducing the bill, Hager had 13 cosponsors.

Escalating Mandates
In 2007, North Carolina became the first southern state to enact renewable power mandates. Under the statute, non-hydro renewable energy must account for 3 percent of the state’s electricity by 2012, 6 percent by 2016, 10 percent by 2018, and 12.5 percent by 2021.

Hager’s bill would not repeal the law outright but would cap the renewable power mandates at the current 3 percent. That would allow utilities to honor contracts they have already signed with suppliers, some of which are for 20 years.

Failed Promises
The renewable power mandates have failed to deliver on their supporters’ promises. Like other southern states, North Carolina has relatively poor wind power potential. To the extent some wind power is possible, the most logical places are pristine shorelines and picturesque mountain ridges. Conservationists oppose wind power facilities in those locations.

Several large solar farms have sprouted up as a result of the renewable power mandates, but they consume large amounts of land and produce little electricity.

The renewable power industry is fighting hard against the Affordable and Reliable Energy Act. The North Carolina Sustainable Energy Association (NCSEA), a state trade group representing renewable companies, issued a press statement saying the result of the legislation “would be the loss of jobs, businesses, and investment opportunities.”

NCSEA claims the state’s renewable power mandates have created the equivalent of 21,162 one-year jobs since 2007. Hager points out the mandates have created only 3,500 full-time jobs, and those jobs come at the expense of jobs in the conventional power industry and other jobs throughout the economy as higher electricity prices force consumers to spend less money on other goods and services.

Other States Reconsidering Mandates
“States all across the country are taking a second look at these mandates, which foist higher-cost intermittent electricity on the backs of ordinary citizens,” said Todd Wynn, director of the Energy, Environment, and Agriculture Task Force for the American Legislative Exchange Council. “North Carolina is taking a step forward by ensuring the generation of affordable and reliable energy.”

“Federal Plans May Impact Beaches
Complicating the North Carolina renewable mandate debate are potential federal plans to issue wind power leases off the North Carolina coast. The U.S. Department of Interior is considering offering leases at two sites between Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, near the North Carolina border, and Wilmington, North Carolina. Federal officials are also considering a third site beyond the Outer Banks, near Kitty Hawk, Nags Head, and Mateo.

The wind farms, featuring huge turbines anchored to the ocean floor, would be located at least six miles off the coast. Both areas are popular tourist destinations and local economies could suffer if vacationers decide to avoid beaches with wind turbines marring their views.

Bonner R. Cohen, Ph.D. (bcohen@nationalcenter.org) is a senior fellow at the National Center for Public Policy Research.

“North Carolina is taking a step forward by ensuring the generation of affordable and reliable energy and thus protecting low-income families that are hit hardest by costs imposed by state renewable energy mandates.”

TODD WYNN, DIRECTOR
ENERGY, ENVIRONMENT, AND AGRICULTURE TASK FORCE
AMERICAN LEGISLATIVE EXCHANGE COUNCIL

Food for Thought

Mischa Popoff is a Heartland policy advisor and author of the critically acclaimed book, Is it Organic? Since 2003, his work to expose the multi-billion-dollar organic industry, and essentially save it from itself, has been covered by Barron’s, The National Post, and The Packer, as well as by many reputable free-market Web sites.

A former Advanced Organic Farm and Process Inspector, Popoff is now an agricultural policy advisor at Heartland, a public speaker, political columnist, and radio host.

Popoff co-authored a series of articles with Dr. Jay Lehr for Environment & Climate News on modern agriculture and organic farming.

To book Popoff as a speaker for your next event, or for more information, contact Nikki Comerford (ncomerford@heartland.org), 312/377-4000.
Warming Activist Hansen Admits Temperatures Cooler than Expected

By James M. Taylor

Prominent global warming activist James Hansen admits in a new paper that world temperatures are not warming as fast as predicted by the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.

Emissions, Temperatures Diverge

“Annual fossil fuel CO2 emissions have shot up in the past decade at about 3% [per] yr, double the rate of the prior three decades. The growth rate falls above the range of the IPCC (2001) ‘Marketer’ scenarios,” Hansen reports.

Nevertheless, “the rate of global warming seems to be less this decade than it has been during the prior quarter century,” Hansen admits. The slower pace of warming contradicts IPCC computer models projecting accelerating global warming.

Slower Carbon Dioxide Accumulation

Hansen reports atmospheric carbon dioxide is not rising as rapidly as the growth in carbon dioxide emissions. The slower-than-expected atmospheric accumulation likely explains the slowdown in global warming, Hansen claims.

Hansen divided the ratio of atmospheric carbon dioxide increase by annual fossil fuel-related carbon dioxide emissions. Hansen labeled the result of this equation the “airborne fraction.”

“Remarkably, and we will argue importantly, the airborne fraction has declined since 2000 during a period without any large volcanic eruptions,” Hansen writes.

“The 7-year running mean of the airborne fraction had remained close to 60% up to 2000, except for the period affected by Pinatubo,” Hansen observes. “The airborne fraction is affected by factors other than the efficiency of carbon sinks, most notably by changes in the rate of fossil fuel emissions (Gloor et al. 2010). However, it is the dependence of the airborne fraction on fossil fuel emission rate that makes the post-2000 downturn of the airborne fraction particularly striking. The change of emission rate in 2000 from 1.5% [per] yr to 3.1% [per] year, other things being equal, would have caused a large increase of the airborne fraction (the simple reason being that a rapid source increase provides less time for carbon to be moved downward out of the ocean’s upper layers).”

Coal Emissions Aiding Plant Growth

Soil, plants, and other factors absorb carbon from the atmosphere, leading scientists to refer to them as “carbon sinks.” Hansen speculates a large recent increase in carbon sinks is responsible for the declining airborne fraction. Importantly, he links the speculated increase in carbon sinks to more coal power generation, particularly in Third World nations.

“We suggest that the huge post-2000 increase of uptake by the carbon sinks ... is related to the simultaneous sharp increase in coal use,” Hansen writes.

Despite many environmental activist groups’ aggressive opposition to coal power plants, Hansen reports coal emissions benefit plant growth, which in turn absorbs increasing amounts of atmospheric carbon.

“We suggest that the surge of fossil fuel use, mainly coal, since 2000 is a basic cause of the large increase of carbon uptake by the combined terrestrial and ocean carbon sinks. One mechanism by which fossil fuel emissions increase carbon uptake is by fertilizing the biosphere via provision of nutrients essential for tissue building, especially nitrogen, which plays a critical role in controlling net primary productivity and is limited in many ecosystems,” Hansen explains.

“Modeling and field studies confirm a major role of nitrogen deposition, working in concert with CO2 fertilization, in causing a large increase in net primary productivity of temperate and boreal forests,” Hansen writes.

Hansen’s assessment supports the findings of scientists Sherwood Idso and Craig Idso that rising atmospheric carbon dioxide content is fertilizing plant growth and stimulating the biosphere. Rising global crop yields andretreating desserts are among the observed benefits of such plant fertilization.

Methane Accumulation Slowing

Hansen also reports atmospheric methane is rising more slowly than IPCC predicts. Methane is one of the atmospheric gases most effective in trapping heat in the atmosphere. A longterm slowdown in atmospheric methane accumulation would substantially mitigate future warming projections.

“Climate forcing growth rates: Not retreating from his longstanding global warming alarmism, however, Hansen speculates plant life may soon stop benefiting from atmospheric fertilization and global warming may resume its prior pace.

James M. Taylor (jtaylor@heartland.org) is managing editor of Environment & Climate News.

INTERNET INFO

Idaho legislature passed a resolution calling on the federal government to properly manage federal lands in the state that have been ravaged by wildfires.

The lack of federal efforts to restore trails and recreational areas in lands destroyed by wildfire highlight problems with the federal government owning most of the land in western states.

The Idaho House and Senate each approved a resolution urging the U.S. Forest Service to declare the Frank Church-River of No Return Wilderness Area’s trail system a natural disaster area. After wildfires struck the area over several years, the federal government has done little to restore the trails that are supposed to provide recreational access.

Part of Broader Problem
Free-market environmentalists say the Idaho bill highlights a broader problem: The federal government is scarcely equipped to manage its lands properly. The best solution, according to land-rights advocates, is to return the land to the states and to the people.

In Idaho, where more than 65 percent of the land is owned by federal authorities, years of wildfires have devastated the trail system on several nationally owned parks and sites.

The Frank Church-River of No Return Wilderness Area is in particularly poor shape. Many of the trails running through the 2.3 million acre wilderness area have degraded past the point of recreational use. Many trails have eroded away, while others are blocked by fallen trees and other obstacles.

Federal ownership of so much land is a key reason the properties are falling into disrepair, said Mike Hardiman, Washington, DC representative for the American Land Rights Association (ALRA).

The federal government does not have the resources on the ground in western states to properly manage so much land, Hardiman said.

“The Forest Service has a forest fire budget,” said Hardiman. “But frequently, the budget for containing forest fires is exhausted before the fiscal year’s end.”

States Deprived of Tax Base
That leaves states to pay, but federal ownership of so much land leaves a very small tax base. In Idaho, the problem of paying for government land maintenance is especially difficult. Tax revenues are tough to come by when the federal government, rather than the private sector, owns most of the property.

“Fire is a perfect example. When we have an extreme fire season, the feds don’t have enough money to adequately address the fires,” said ALRA founder and executive director Chuck Cushman.

“That puts states in a difficult position,” Cushman said, “because they can’t tax those lands, but they have to protect their communities and their residents. They’re caught between a rock and a hard place.”

In the end, he said, the federal government is just a poor partner in land maintenance.

“The federal government has to be a better neighbor,” Cushman said. “Often, the federal government is more an obstacle to solving the problem.”

Cheryl Chumley (ckchumley@aol.com) is a news writer with the Washington Times.
Mont. Bill Would Define Hydro as Renewable Power

By Kenneth Artz

Montana state Sen. Jim Keane (D-Butte) has filed legislation to define hydropower as a renewable power source for meeting Montana’s renewable power mandates.

Keane’s bill follows similar legislation approved by the legislature in 2011 but vetoed by Gov. Brian Schweitzer (D).

The Montana Senate approved Keane’s bill, SB 45, in overwhelming bipartisan fashion by a vote of 46–4. The House concurred by a vote of 70–27. The real drama will be over whether Gov. Steve Bullock (D) vetoes the bill and, if he does, whether the legislature overrides that veto.

Affordable Hydropower

Montana law requires consumers to purchase 15 percent of their electricity from renewable sources by 2015 and 20 percent by 2020. Currently, large-scale hydropower does not count toward that figure, even though hydropower, like wind power, is renewable and emissions-free.

PPL Montana, the state’s largest supplier of hydroelectric power, is finishing up a $240 million expansion of its Rainbow Dam near Great Falls. Keane would like to see inexpensive Rainbow Dam power count toward the renewable mix.

Carl Graham, CEO of the Montana Policy Institute, notes PPL invested millions of dollars to upgrade the dam in Great Falls. The investment benefits consumers in the state by providing electricity that is far more affordable than wind and solar power.

“I’m not in favor of subsidizing renewables, but if we’re going to be in the business of picking renewable energy winners and losers, and hydro is every bit as renewable as wind and solar, then it’s hypocritical to not treat them all the same,” said Graham.

Activists Seek Increased Mandate

Kyla Maki, clean energy program director for the environmental activist group Montana Environmental Information Center, says her organization agrees with the concept of expanding renewable energy and approves retrofitting hydroelectric dams.

Nevertheless, the organization opposes SB 45 because it grandfathers in the Rainbow Dam project, which might dissuade future projects unless the legislature increases the mandate above 15 percent.

“We’ve tried to get that clause changed. It was written specifically for the Great Falls dam, which was finally completed last year,” said Maki. “We’d like to see a bill passed that includes more incentives.

“It comes down to incentivizing. Do we want to incentivize future projects? And if you incentivize other projects, will already completed ones dissuade people from taking on new ones?” she asked.

PPL began retrofitting the Great Falls dam—which was built in 1915— in 2010. The retrofitting will increase the dam’s power output from 30 megawatts to 56 megawatts.

“It’s a substantial project,” said Maki. “We support upgrading these dams and making them more fish-friendly.”

Restoring Affordable Electricity

H. Sterling Burnett, a senior fellow with the National Center for Policy Analysis, says state governments should never have gotten into the business of mandating renewable power production in the first place. In doing so, state legislatures force consumers to purchase more-expensive and less-reliable energy, he said.

Nevertheless, said Burnett, SB 45 would restore affordable electricity to the renewable power mandate.

“Hydroelectric power is more reliable than other forms of renewable energy, like wind or solar, though it can become problematic if there is extended drought or low snowpack. In general, however, you can count on it 24 hours a day and seven days a week for at least some power,” said Burnett.
Nebraska Gov. Heineman Hits Wind Preferences

By Karen Dove

Nebraska Gov. Dave Heineman criticized the state legislature’s Revenue Committee for advancing a bill to give special tax incentives to wind power companies and other expensive renewable power providers.

Broad Tax Relief Preferred

Heineman, a Republican, says the legislature should provide broad tax reductions for all Nebraskans rather than use the tax code to pick winners and losers among competing power providers.

“It is very disappointing that the Legislature’s Revenue Committee has decided to provide out-of-state wind energy developers a tax break, but the Revenue Committee refuses to provide much-needed tax relief to Nebraska families, Nebraska seniors, Nebraska veterans, and Nebraska small business owners,” said Heineman in a press statement.

“The Revenue Committee’s priorities are misguided. Instead of cutting out an exemption for out-of-state special interests, the Legislature should be working to lower the taxes of Nebraskan citizens who continue to bear the burden for special-interest tax breaks,” Heineman added.

Naming the Committee Members

Heineman made a point to list by name the senators who voted for and against the wind power special-interest tax break. State Sens. Galen Hadley of Kearney, Burke Harr of Omaha, Pete Pirsch of Omaha, Paul Schumacher of Columbus, and Kate Sullivan of Cedar Rapids voted for the tax breaks.

Heineman commended Tom Hansen of North Platte, Charlie Janssen of Fremont, and Beau McCoy of Omaha for voting against the wind power tax breaks.

A Few Jobs at What Cost?

Hadley, who chairs the Revenue Committee, argued wind power projects may not be feasible in Nebraska without the special tax breaks.

Trade Wind Energy stands to benefit from the tax credits. The company plans to build 118 turbines in Dixon County, creating between 10 and 16 permanent jobs. Bruce Barton, Trade Wind’s development manager, warned the wind turbines may not be built without the tax breaks.

“Energy economists have repeatedly documented that preferential treatment for wind power and other expensive renewable power punishes the economy and kills more jobs than it creates,” said Jay Lehr, science director for The Heartland Institute, which publishes Environment & Climate News.

“This stands to reason,” he continued, “because renewable power is so much more expensive than conventional power. When you force people to purchase electricity at higher prices, it has all the economy-killing effects of an unnecessary tax on electricity.

“You never see coal and natural gas producers going to state legislatures and presenting ultimatums that they will leave the state if they are not given subsidies, preferential tax treatment, or market share mandates,” Lehr added. “Renewable power providers do this on a regular basis.”

Karen Dove (karendove@icloud.com) is a freelance writer in Bradenton, Florida.

Texas Commission Approves Coal Mine for Mexican Power Plants

By Cheryl K. Chumley and Karen Dove

The Railroad Commission of Texas, which regulates oil, gas, and coal in the state, approved a permit giving a Mexican company the right to start coal mining operations near Eagle Pass, a Texas border town.

Powering Mexican Electricity

Coal from the Eagle Pass mine will be transported to Mexico to fire coal power plants 20 miles from the U.S. border, near Piedras Negras, Mexico. Mexican company Dos Republicas Coal Partnership will oversee transportation of the coal into Mexico.

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency restrictions on coal power make Mexico the most viable market for U.S. coal mines near the Mexican border. Mexico has relatively few restrictions on coal power plants relative to the heavy EPA regulation of U.S. coal power plants.

Creating Jobs in Texas

“The EPA in Texas last year was trying to enact rules severely restricting coal-fired electrical plants,” said Josiah Neeley, a policy analyst with the Texas Public Policy Foundation. “A number of companies said they’d have to shut down operations.”

The Eagle Pass permit will facilitate 40 permanent jobs in mine staff positions and up to 200 area workforce jobs, according to Pete Nielsen, who testified before the Railroad Commission on behalf of the Dos Republicas Coal Partnership.

Environmental Issues Vetted

Critics say transporting the coal to Mexico will not solve environmental problems. They argue pollutants will cross the border and affect residents on the U.S. side.

A commission spokesperson says that issue has been vetted.

“After reviewing extensive testimony and evidence regarding hydrologic, geologic, environmental, water resource, fish and wildlife, air quality, and reclamation data and plans, presented during 19 days of hearing by 36 witnesses, the Commission approved on a 2–1 vote … the application,” Ramona Nye, a spokesperson for the Railroad Commission, told Environment & Climate News.

Texas Railroad Commissioner Barry Smitherman provided Environment & Climate News with a copy of the commission’s “Final Order – Approval of the Application of Dos Republicas Coal Partnership for Renewal/Revision/Expansion of Permit #42-A, Eagle Pass Mine, Maverick County, Texas.”

The final order explains how the commission will carefully administer environmental protection measures to safeguard Texans and the Texas environment. Texas officials also will monitor emissions associated with coal mining and coal power through the National Ambient Air Quality Standards.

The permit safeguards the environment by imposing comprehensive protections for air quality, endangered species, “and other health and safety matters,” Nye added.

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DOE Admits Electric Vehicles Fail to Meet Expectations

By James M. Taylor

In yet another embarrassment for proponents of government picking winners and losers among energy technologies, the Obama administration pulled back from its prediction that automakers, with the assistance of billions of dollars in federal subsidies, will sell 1 million electric vehicles to U.S. consumers by 2015.

President Barack Obama made that claim in his 2011 State of the Union address, heralding electric vehicles as the foundation of modern civilization. As Dr. Rael Jean Isaac writes in this book, today’s environmentalists are using fear of global warming to destroy the foundations of modern civilization.

Sales Are Foundering

The U.S. Department of Energy, however, now says the Obama administration is unlikely to meet that goal. In a February speech at a Washington, D.C. auto show Secretary of Energy Steven Chu said the administration is not especially concerned about the timetable and is focusing its efforts on promoting electric vehicles and lowering their prices.

“Vehicles Fail to Deliver

“The reality is that consumers continue to show little interest in electric vehicles, or EVs, which dominated U.S. streets in the first decade of the twentieth century before being displaced by gasoline-powered cars.”

REUTERS
FEBRUARY 4, 2013

At the present pace of electric vehicle sales, only 310,000 will be on U.S. roads by 2015. And sales at even that slow pace—less than one-third what Obama predicted—may be a pipedream.

Nissan, which has sold more electric vehicles in the United States than any other automaker, is cutting back its investment. Similarly, Toyota in September 2012 scrapped plans to build 100 electric mini-vehicles.

Despite the promise of “green” transportation—and despite billions of dollars in investment, most recently by Nissan Motor Co.—EVs continue to be plagued by many of the problems that eventually scuttled electrics in the 1910s and more recently in the 1990s. Those include high cost, short driving range and lack of charging stations,” Reuters observed.

More Subsidies?

According to the Congressional Budget Office, by 2019 the federal government will have spent $7.5 billion in taxpayer money to subsidize electric vehicles. The Obama administration is seeking to increase those subsidies by an additional $5 billion.

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SolarWorld Lays Off Workers in Oregon, Bankruptcy May Follow

By Karen Dove

Taxpayer-subsidized SolarWorld has laid off workers at its Hillsboro, Oregon plant, marking nearly 300 workers laid off after state officials invited the company to apply for up to $100 million in subsidies and the company accepted at least $27 million in subsidies.

SolarWorld employed 1,000 workers at its Hillsboro factory soon after being lured to Oregon by the state and local subsidies. Now, however, the company employs just over 700 people at the plant. Analysts say the company may soon close its doors completely and file for bankruptcy. State and local taxpayers would have very limited opportunities to reclaim the subsidies if the company files for bankruptcy.

The German-owned company expanded its operations to the United States in 2008, attracted by the state and local subsidies in Oregon. The company opened a 480,000-square-foot plant in Hillsboro, while also employing 300 people in Camarillo, California. Fewer than 100 SolarWorld employees remain employed in Camarillo.

Subsidies Failed Badly

John Charles, president and CEO of the Cascade Policy Institute, minced no words when asked about SolarWorld taking taxpayer subsidies but failing to live up to its promises.

“One hundred million dollars in incentives from the state and local government was just not right,” Charles said. “It’s a bad idea for government to try to pick winners and losers in a volatile and competitive market. That’s what private business should do, not government.”

Solar Industry’s Bleak Outlook

With solar energy projects dependent on government subsidies and mandates to compete against less expensive conventional energy sources, solar companies remain longshot investments. Adding to the U.S. solar industry’s bleak outlook, China is able to sell solar panels and equipment at far lower prices than U.S. companies. Companies such as SolYndra, Evergreen Solar, and Spectra Watt are just a few of the U.S. solar companies that have recently failed and fallen into bankruptcy.

SolarWorld continues to lose hundreds of millions of dollars annually.

Karen Dove (karendove@icloud.com) is a freelance writer in Bradenton, Florida.
Biofuel Programs Are Destroying Grasslands, Scientists Report in New Study

Government biofuel programs are causing the destruction of the nation’s grasslands, scientists report in a newly published study in the peer-reviewed *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*.

As a result of biofuel programs, America’s grasslands are disappearing at a pace comparable to deforestation in Brazil, Malaysia, and Indonesia, the scientists report.

Five percent of the pastureland in states such as Iowa and South Dakota is being converted into cropland each year, the scientists report. In Minnesota, North Dakota, and South Dakota, biofuel programs are encouraging the destruction of ecologically crucial “prairie potholes” that provide key breeding grounds for migratory water birds.

Biofuel subsidies and mandates are a key factor in the development of more than 1.3 million acres of grasslands since 2006, the scientists report. Federally subsidized crop insurance also encourages the development of marginal croplands that are highly susceptible to drought.

Global warming activists have their own reasons for concern, the scientists report. Grasslands hold carbon in the soil better than crops do, so the destruction of grasslands accelerates the increase in atmospheric carbon dioxide concentrations.

— Staff reports

By James M. Taylor

A remarkably frigid spring is putting the freeze on global warming from Russia to the U.K. and from Alaska to Florida.

Sky News reported frigid temperatures this spring will go down in the Russian record books.

“Large stretches of the Moscow River remain frozen, the streets are still packed with ice and snow. The state weather service says the country is experiencing its coldest March for more than half a century. Last week, temperatures dropped to -25°C overnight,” Sky News reported on March 31.

“The unusually cold spring is having serious consequences for the capital’s homeless,” Sky News observed.

“Around 30 homeless people freeze every month—those are official statistics. When it gets warmer and the snow piles melt, there will be many bodies found,” Dr. Elizaveta Glinka told Sky News.

Thousands of U.K. Lambs Die

The U.K. *Guardian* reported frigid spring conditions killed thousands of newborn lambs throughout the British Isles.

“Fears for the U.K.’s already embattled upland sheep-farmers have been raised by the return of winter to hill country, which has cost thousands of newborn lambs their lives,” the *Guardian* reported on March 26.

“In Northern Ireland, helicopters have been deployed to carry out food drops to animals in isolated rural areas cut off by the snow,” the *Guardian* reported.

“Malcolm Roberts, a farmer in Oswestry, Shropshire, had been expecting 600 lambs before the end of the month but is now having to pile up small victims of the snow while rescuing his 200 ewes,” the *Guardian* noted.

Unaccustomed to such cold conditions, Roberts’ farm “lacks room for indoor lambing, a problem widely shared by small sheep-breeders,” the *Guardian* observed.

Cold Threatens Florida Manatees

The cold spring threatened people and wildlife in the farthest reaches of the southern United States.

“A manatee calf apparently suffering from cold stress was rescued by state biologists Wednesday when it surfaced in Bayboro Harbor near the University of South Florida St. Petersburg campus. It was taken to the Lowry Park Zoo in Tampa for rehabilitation,” the *Tampa Bay Times* reported on March 27.

“Manatees, particularly young ones, are susceptible to stress when the water temperature dips below about 65 degrees. They develop lesions on their bodies and they surface rapidly, trying to catch a breath. The calf found Wednesday was popping up about every 15 seconds rather than every five minutes,” the *Times* reported.

James M. Taylor (jtaylor@heartland.org) is managing editor of Environment & Climate News.
Warmest Temperatures in 4,000 Years? Not So Fast!

By James M. Taylor

The mainstream media are reporting in breathless fashion about a paper claiming current temperatures are the warmest in 4,000 years. Already, however, objective scientists are reporting serious flaws in the paper. The media may wish to paint a picture of runaway global warming, but the science tells a completely different story.

Cherry-Picking Proxies

Recently graduated Ph.D. student Shaun Marcott has published a paper claiming he compiled a proxy temperature reconstruction indicating current temperatures are the warmest in at least 4,000 years. Proxy temperature reconstructions require careful scrutiny because the proxies are not direct temperature measurements but instead represent other data and factors that may or may not have a close correlation with past temperatures.

Some proxies are better than others, and an agenda-driven researcher can easily cherry-pick certain anomalous proxies that support a predetermined conclusion while ignoring a much larger set of data that tell a different story.

Perhaps the most notorious of agenda-driven proxy reconstructions was published by global warming alarmist Michael Mann several years ago. As a young, relatively unknown recent Ph.D. graduate, Mann attained wealth, fame, and adulation among global warming alarmists by assembling a proxy temperature reconstruction that he claimed showed global temperatures underwent a steady, roughly 1,000-year decline followed by a sharp rise during the twentieth century. The media reported on the Mann hockey stick reconstruction as if it settled the global warming debate, but scientists pointed out several crucial flaws that invalidated Mann's claims.

Eventually, Congress commissioned distinguished statistician Edward Wegman to review and report on Mann’s methods and conclusions. After assembling a blue ribbon panel of experts to study Mann’s temperature reconstruction, Wegman reported the criticisms of Mann’s reconstruction were “valid and compelling.”

Repeat of Mann Incident

The Marcott proxy reconstruction has much in common with the Mann hockey stick. Marcott is a young, recently graduated Ph.D. student whose temperature reconstruction has launched him out of obscurity into media fame. As was the case with Mann’s hockey stick, scientists quickly pointed out serious flaws in the Marcott reconstruction.

Also similar to the Mann hockey stick incident, the media are ignoring the devastating critiques of the Marcott reconstruction and misleading the public into believing we finally have a study showing essentially the same thing Mann claimed before his hockey stick was discredited.

Major Flaws Discovered

Although scientists have had little time to dig into the meat of Marcott’s data, methods, and conclusions, their initial observations are devastating.

Don Easterbrook, geology professor emeritus at Western Washington University, has published two papers summarizing and documenting many of the already discovered flaws in Marcott’s reconstruction. Easterbrook reports at least one more paper is on the way as he and other scientists find more and more flaws and areas of concern in Marcott’s reconstruction as they continue to analyze it.

Easterbrook points out 80 percent of the data used by Marcott reflect oceanic data, not atmospheric temperatures. “Thus, they may reflect temperature changes from ocean upwelling, changes in ocean currents, or any one of a number of ocean variations not related to atmospheric climates,” Easterbrook writes. Marcott’s heavy dependence on oceanic rather than atmospheric proxies “in itself means that the Marcott et al. temperatures are not a reliable measure of changing atmospheric climate,” Easterbrook reports.

Easterbrook also notes Marcott recycled Mann’s proxies to help compile Marcott’s small portion of land-based proxies. Discredited proxies by any other name are still discredited proxies.

Perhaps most damaging, Easterbrook notes many other published studies and data, including analyses of reliable Greenland ice core data, contradict Marcott’s asserted proxy data.

Science vs. Sensationalism

When many temperature studies, including research presented by the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, indicate current global temperatures are cooler than the vast majority of the past 4,000 years, and then an outlier study with quickly identified serious flaws claims exactly the opposite, one would think the media would make note of the discrepancies. Unfortunately, they have demonstrated little interest in doing so. There are several likely reasons for this.

First, the news media are prone to overhype the news events of the day. Hype sells newspapers and attracts viewers. This is the case for all news topics and certainly applies to global warming.

Second, fear captivates people. This is one reason television and print news includes so much bad news and so little good news. A single breathless report of impending global warming doom will rope in more viewers and readers than a whole collection of reports explaining current temperatures are actually quite cool in historical perspective.

Third, the media tend to drift toward advocacy of big government on many issues, and on environmental issues in particular.

Combine these three factors and you have a textbook recipe for yellow journalism—a perfect storm representing all the reasons people no longer trust the mainstream media to be fair, balanced, or accurate.

The scientific record shows quite clearly that current temperatures are significantly cooler than the 4,000-year average, yet the media are using a seriously flawed study to claim the opposite. Global warming alarmists put their trust in the media, while global warming realists put their trust in the science.

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17 States Shun Feds to Join New Clean Air Association

By Alyssa Carducci

Seventeen states have come together to form an alternative to the federally run National Association of Clean Air Agencies (NACAA).

The states formed the new association, the Association of Air Pollution Control Agencies (AAPCA), in response to what they characterize as overly restrictive agendas and heavy-handed treatment by federal officials in the NACAA.

In the fall of 2012 several states announced they would leave the NACAA and form an alternative organization. Creation of the newly formed AAPCA was announced in late January 2013; it plans to become operational this spring.

Seeking Realistic Standards

“There are real technical issues with regulations and guidance coming from EPA that need thoughtful consideration across the United States,” Carlos Rubinstein, commissioner with the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality, said in a press statement. “Issues like potentially unachievable air quality standards that keep being lowered and transport issues left in limbo by legal challenges,” he continued. “States participating in this organization will have the opportunity to discuss, educate, and be educated about the latest technical and regulatory actions.”

AAPCA’s objectives include:
• create a technical forum for agencies to exchange ideas and gather information on requirements needed to meet the standards of the Clean Air Act;
• develop a structure where the most efficient practices of air pollution control agencies can be identified, shared, and implemented at other agencies; and
• allow staff at the member agencies to develop their knowledge and understanding of air pollution issues.

The 17 member states are Alabama, Florida, Indiana, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, Nebraska, New Mexico, Nevada, North Dakota, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, West Virginia, and Wyoming.

All states that join the association will be represented on its board of directors.

State Officials Explain Decision

“North Dakota has joined AAPCA as a means of belonging to a forum that will provide the state with technical assistance as well as an exchange of ideas and concepts regarding air pollution issues,” said Terry O’Clair, director of the Division of Air Quality at the North Dakota Department of Health.

“Florida chose to move to the AAPCA in order to focus on sharing data and information to better understand the complex and technical federal regulations set forth by EPA,” said Patrick Gillespie, spokesman for the Florida Department of Environmental Protection.

“Florida believes AAPCA will be an organization where air regulation experts from across the country share data without taking policy positions unless there is full concurrence of its members,” Gillespie explained.

States Taking Initiative

“The individual states are increasingly taking the initiative to formulate their own solutions to environmental issues,” explained Jay Lehr, science director for The Heartland Institute, which publishes Environment & Climate News. He noted, “The federal government, which used to work as a resource and partner with the states, is increasingly attempting to impose costly, burdensome restrictions on the states that create few real-world benefits.

“State environmental officials are more knowledgeable regarding local and regional environmental issues than the federal government. It simply makes sense for state environmental officials to band together to work constructively toward regional solutions to regional issues,” Lehr added.

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studies confirm the scientists’ reports. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration, European Food Safety Authority, Health Canada, Food Standards Australia New Zealand, and other scientific bodies have found BPA is safe for humans.

Using the precautionary principle, however, activists have succeeded in banning BPA in Canada and Japan. Activists are targeting individual states and municipalities in the United States hoping to impose similar bans.

Concerns About BPA Replacement

Responding to the bans, manufacturers have sought to find a replacement for the chemical, which is used in a wide array of products such as cash register receipts, food containers, and sippy cups for children’s beverages. Bisphenol S (BPS) has emerged as the most viable alternative. However, a recent study finds BPS mimics estrogen and can cause severe endocrine disruption. Notably, BPS is up to 19 times more absorbable in the skin than BPA, according to a recent study by René Viñas and Cheryl S. Watson of the University of Texas, published in the American Chemical Society journal Environmental Health Perspectives.

“Our study is the first to demonstrate that the BPA-substitute BPS can induce rapid nongenomic signaling in estrogen-responsive pituitary cells at low (femtomolar to picomolar) concentrations. Another cause for concern is that BPS also interferes with physiologic E2 signaling that leads to several functional end points,” the authors explained.

“BPS, once considered a safe substitute for BPA, disrupts membrane-initiated E2-induced cell signaling, leading to altered cell proliferation, cell death, and PRL [prolactin] release,” the study concluded.

Neither Chemical Concerns Scientists

Gilbert Ross, M.D., the medical/executive director for the American Council on Science and Health (ACSH), says there is no need to look for safe BPA alternatives because BPA itself is safe for human use. He said the Viñas/Watson study is suspect because it makes the same erroneous assumption made by earlier BPA studies: It assumes that chemicals that harm rats in mega-dose quantities also harm humans in much smaller quantities.

“There are not little people,” Ross explained. “Rodent physiology is markedly different from humans’.”

Ross said current laws regulating the introduction of harmful chemicals into the marketplace are already strong enough.

“Witness the lack of significant episodes of chemical-induced harm. The Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC) alleged in 2011 that there were a bunch of toxic-chemical-related clusters. We debunked that big-time,” he said.

“Our society has an irrational fear of chemicals, called ‘chemophobia,’” said Ross. “Our world is becoming highly risk-averse, and it’s stifling progress and innovation in many fields.”

Safe in Five Thousand Studies

Henry I. Miller, M.D., the Robert Wesson Fellow in Scientific Philosophy and Public Policy at the Hoover Institution, says he has doubts about replacing BPA with BPS because studies purporting to show risks from BPA are not only wrong but have been comprehensively refuted in multiple scientific studies.

“There have already been more than 5,000 studies of BPA over the past several decades, and none of them have ever shown any human harm from the chemical in normal consumer use,” Miller observed. “It’s easy to make a case that continued research on BPA is a waste of time and a waste of increasingly scarce research funding. The only thing it seems to do is generate more junk science, more bad reporting, and more unwarranted fear among consumers.”

Angela Logomasini, a senior fellow at the Competitive Enterprise Institute, agreed, saying BPA is falling victim to hype and scaremongering, not science.

“Its replacement, BPS, is less tested, but I don’t have any real concerns about it, either. The Greens do because they claim that it is an endocrine disrupter, but I think that’s a lot of junk science,” said Logomasini.

John Dale Dunn, M.D., a policy advisor for the American Council on Science and Health and The Heartland Institute, which publishes Environment & Climate News, said claims that BPA and BPS harm human health through endocrine disruption are incredibly unreliable and plagued by scandal.

“One of the problems with the asserted claims regarding endocrine disrupters is the conclusions don’t stand up to scrutiny. Activists often mine data for nonexistent human health impacts and misrepresent the results of actual scientific studies,” said Dunn.

“The field is rife with panic-mongering,” Dunn explained. “Predictably, politicians have jumped in because it’s so easy to scare people into thinking something is going to happen to them because of this chemical or that one. You say ‘endocrine disrupter’ and people associate that with abnormalities at birth. But the truth of the matter is there just aren’t a lot of eunuchs running around because of something in the water.”

Kenneth Artz (iamkenartz@hotmail.com) writes from Dallas, Texas.

"Rats are not little people. Rodent physiology is markedly different from humans'."

DR. GILBERT ROSS, MEDICAL/EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, AMERICAN COUNCIL ON SCIENCE AND HEALTH

INTERNET INFO

Lomborg: Electric Cars Get Dumber by the Day

By Jay Lehr

Writing in the Wall Street Journal on March 11, Bjørn Lomborg, author of *The Skeptical Environmentalist*, documented that electric automobiles are not the least bit environmentally friendly.

Lomborg may allow environmental activists to pull the wool over his eyes regarding assertions of a global warming crisis, but his understanding of the electric car swindle is spot on.

**Failed ‘Green’ Promises**

President Barack Obama champions electric automobiles as the transportation technology of the future, but the facts tell a different story, as Lomborg shows. Obama has predicted there will be one million electric vehicles on the road by 2015, yet private citizens bought fewer than 50,000 of them in 2012 despite a $7,500 purchasing subsidy per vehicle.

Moving beyond the economics, Lomborg conducted some excellent research and determined electric automobiles fail to live up to their “green” promises and in fact cause more environmental harm than good. Lomborg would be among the last people to fudge such environmental facts, as he is still an environmental activist who believes humans are causing a global warming crisis. He infuriates the activist left by proposing mentally friendly. Lomborg would be among the last people to fudge such environmental facts, as he is still an environmental activist who believes humans are causing a global warming crisis.

As Lomborg notes, by the time we have driven an electric car 90,000 miles, we have emitted more carbon than from conventional petroleum-powered cars.

**Just Six Miles Per Hour**

My favorite fact that Lomborg uncovered was an attempt by the British Broadcasting Corporation to test-drive an electric car on a long-distance trip.

After factoring in the time necessary to recharge the car’s electric battery every 75 miles, the driver achieved an average speed of just six miles per hour for the journey. Putting this in perspective, Lomborg notes this is about the speed of the average jogger. (Lomborg apparently has never jogged with my wife, who is much faster than that.)

As reported in the April issue of *Environment & Climate News, New Times* columnist John Broder underwent a similarly dreadful experience test-driving a new Tesla electric sedan. He attempted to drive the Tesla from Washington, DC to Boston, but the sedan delivered far fewer miles per charge than advertised, required constant recharging, and eventually left Broder stranded by the side of the road.

All of this could be considered amusing stupidity provided at the expense of electric automobile manufacturers were it not for the fact the U.S. government is forcing taxpayers to fund these electric automobile follies. There would be no electric automobiles on the roads, now or in the foreseeable future, if it were not for the $5.5 billion of your money the federal government has invested in this amazing boondoggle.

Given the poor performance of electric vehicles, it is unlikely there will be many electric vehicles on the road in the foreseeable future even with billions of government dollars propping up the electric vehicle market. The lack of electric vehicles on the roads is a good thing given their poor environmental performance.

Obama, despite the nation’s tremendous budget deficit, would like to ramp up the amount of taxpayer dollars spent on electric vehicles. Lomborg shows this would be economically foolish and environmentally counterproductive.

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Thank you.

In February 2012, corporate documents belonging to The Heartland Institute were stolen and given to liberal environmentalists and journalists, along with a fake memo alleging to present our “climate strategy.”

Radical environmentalists used the stolen and fake documents to wage campaigns against our donors, policy advisors, and staff. The mainstream media participated in the campaign, surrendering any pretense of objectivity or fairness.

Some people surrender to the pressure and distanced themselves from us. But many more stood by us, including the Hon. Vaclav Klaus, president of the Czech Republic, and nearly 50 other political leaders, scientists, and policy experts who spoke at our Seventh International Conference on Climate Change in May 2012.

We thank President Klaus, all our donors, staff, policy advisors, and friends who stood by us during those difficult times. And we welcome more than 100 new first-time donors since February 2012.

Thanks to you, our best days are ahead of us.
A Compelling Description of Water Resources and Global Water Policies

The Big Thirst: The Secret Life and Turbulent Future of Water
By Charles Fishman

Review by Jay Lehr

Charles Fishman, longtime newspaper reporter and author of the bestselling book The Wal-Mart Effect, has written an excellent book about the water resources we so frequently take for granted.

Fishman traveled the world gathering stories and technical details about how water is managed, developed, delivered, used, and misused, putting all this information together in a compelling manner in The Big Thirst: The Secret Life and Turbulent Future of Water.

Great Information, Excellent Writing
Fishman does more than merely spell out the facts, challenges, and opportunities presented by water resources, he does so with the talent of an expert writer who can vividly bring to life topics that might seem mundane if presented by a less skillful writer.

I heartily recommend The Big Thirst to Environment & Climate News readers who want a world tour of water problems with excellent profiles of the people either impacted, involved, or in control.

One must take some of Fishman’s assertions with caution, however: He believes humans are creating a global warming crisis and he weaves those beliefs into his narrative. But separating his facts from his opinions is fairly easy. Ultimately, he is optimistic about our ability to supply adequate quantities of water to the world’s population.

Fishman adores numbers and statistics and presents them liberally, but he occasionally gets some incorrect, such as his statement that more than 100 billion people have lived over the past 50,000 years. The commonly accepted number is less than half that amount.

He frequently portrays water in poetic imagery, which is not at all unjustified. Fishman describes water as “tirelessly resilient, … participating in a mind-bending array of physical, chemical, biochemical, geological and human created process every minute of a day.”

More People Using Less Water
Fishman accurately recounts progress in the United States in using water much more judiciously than in years past. Americans use less water today than we did in 1980, not just in per-capita terms but also in absolute terms, he explains. He notes water use in the United States peaked in 1980 at 440 billion gallons per day. Now, 25 years later, we are using less than 410 billion gallons a day even though our population increased by 70 million people.

Early on, Fishman indicates his belief vast additional quantities of water lie deep within the Earth. In doing so, he missed an opportunity to reference my book on the very same subject, coauthored with Robert Bisson, Modern Groundwater Exploration. We will forgive Fishman for his oversight though I suspect he will appreciate the additional information our book provides on the topic.

Contrasts in Water Policies
Fishman’s strongest chapter, “Dolphins in the Desert,” features Las Vegas. Area water manager Patricia Mulroy has spent 20 years teaching a wide variety of conservation techniques that allow the hotels to seemingly flaunt their water use in fountains and greenery while impressing on area residents the need to conserve their scarce water resources with tender love and care. This chapter is a fantastic tutorial on water management where water could hardly be of shorter supply.

In contrast to Las Vegas’s wise water policies where water is scarce, Fishman discusses Atlanta’s poor policies where water would seem to be more abundant. He then takes the reader on a water tour through Texas and California farmland, favorably describing agriculture biotechnology company Monsanto’s vigorous work to develop drought-tolerant crops.

“Monsanto is spending tens of millions of dollars a year developing drought-tolerant varieties of crops—plants whose genes have been tweaked so, biologically, they make better use of less water,” writes Fishman.

Fishman spends 107 pages describing water issues in Australia, where water is in short supply. You will learn everything about Adelaide’s and Perth’s water supply and the Murray River basin. This is certainly interesting and not dissimilar to many places in the United States, such as the over-allocation of the Colorado River serving California farmers and Las Vegas casinos.

Fishman then moves on to India, where the world’s largest democracy has arguably the worst water supply system. Nearly half the nation depends on water trucks driving the streets and allowing people to fill their buckets from the backs of the trucks.

Tales Tied Together
The book reminds me of Freakonomics, where authors Steven D. Levitt and Stephen J. Dubner tied together unrelated stories vaguely connected to economic principles and ended up with a bestseller that had little academic rigor. Fishman takes a similar tack, but his stories and personal profiles are outstanding.

Fishman brings water issues home to consumers. He tells us how much water is used in creating a pair of Levi’s blue jeans and how much water is desalted and used each day on a cruise ship. His description of the bottled water industry is interesting but at times a little too preachy.

Markets Can Solve Problems
Fishman powerfully explains the primary cause of water problems: Governments have made water free or nearly free for most people. Putting a price on water, he observes, seems heartless when everybody needs it. The downside, however, is that free water causes people to misuse water. Without market incentives, many important water problems will remain unsolved.

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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/data/msu/t2lt/uahncdc.lt

**FEBRUARY 2013**

**GLOBAL AVERAGE**

The global average temperature for February was 0.18°C above normal.

**NORTHERN HEMISPHERE**

The Northern Hemisphere's temperature was 0.37°C above normal.

**SOUTHERN HEMISPHERE**

The Southern Hemisphere's temperature was 0.01°C below normal.

**219,000 years of Temperature Variation**