Australian Meteorologists Caught Fudging Temperature Measurements

By Darren Nelson

A storm of sorts has been brewing in Australia, a tempest caused by anthropogenic global warming activism.

Scientists Jennifer Marohasy and environment editor Graham Lloyd, among others, have been reporting that the Australian Bureau of Meteorology (BOM) has been “fudging” historical temperature records to fit a warming narrative.

On her blog, Marohasy reported, “[T]emperatures have been diligently recorded at places like Bourke in outback New South Wales since 1871. Then there’s the Bureau’s official record that takes a revisionist approach: first truncating the data and then passing it through complex mathematical algorithms.”

“[BOM] has constructed a synthetic climate record whose relevance to climate change is not scientifically defensible,” said William Kininmonth, a retired meteorologist and former head of the National Climate Centre (NCC) at BOM.

Dr. Robert M. Carter, science policy advisor at the Institute of Public Affairs (IPA), said, “Official correction of the temperature records by national agencies was first

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EPA Carbon Rule Dooms Efficient Coal Plant

By Bonner R. Cohen

One of the nation’s most efficient clean-burning coal power plants will be shuttered in a few years because bringing it into compliance with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency’s new carbon dioxide reduction rule would be too expensive. A similar fate awaits coal-fired power plants across the country.

Operated by the South Carolina Electric & Gas Co. (SCE&G), the 60-year-old McMeekin Power Station has an undersized boiler that would normally put it at a competitive disadvantage versus more modern facilities. The secrets of its success include the plant’s long history of rigorous maintenance and its proximity to Lake Mur-
The Ninth International Conference on Climate Change (ICCC-9) was held on July 7-9, 2014 in Las Vegas, Nevada. Some 650 scientists, economists, policy experts, and guests debated whether man-made global warming is a problem worth addressing. The event was hosted by The Heartland Institute, had 32 cosponsors, and featured 64 keynoters and panelists.

A recent Washington Examiner article highlighted the broad impact of ICCC-9 and described how the event has launched a growing international network of activists opposed to the threats to our freedom, economy, and way of life posed by radical global warming alarmists.

If you missed ICCC-9, you missed what has been universally acclaimed as Heartland’s best climate conference ever – and some attendees told us it was the best and most-informative conference of any kind they had ever attended. You can now view every video presentation, download every PowerPoint presentation, and even grab just the audio of the speeches for listening on-the-go at climateconferences.heartland.org.
Crop Production Sets Records in 2014

By James M. Taylor

The U.S. Department of Agriculture has forecast record U.S. corn yields this year as warmer temperatures, longer growing seasons, more precipitation, and higher atmospheric carbon dioxide levels have enhanced crop output.

In its August crop report, the USDA projected U.S. corn production would surpass 14 billion bushels and shatter 2013’s record corn crop. Ideal climate conditions, especially abundant rainfall, are fueling the record crop, USDA reported.

“Excellent growing conditions in most corn areas support a record forecast production of 14,032 million bushels, breaking the 14-billion-bushel barrier for the first time,” USDA observed in its August Feed Outlook.

The forecast for a new record corn crop caught many analysts by surprise. The 2013 U.S. corn crop of 13.9 billion bushels was nearly a full billion bushels above the prior record, leading some analysts to expect a decline this year. Instead, farmers were treated to more ideal crop conditions and even greater corn production.

Quality as Well as Quantity

USDA reported this year’s crop is also noteworthy for its excellent quality. “Seventy-three percent of the crop is rated good to excellent, compared with 64 percent last year at this time,” USDA reported.

“We’re going to drown in corn this year,” Illinois farmer Jeff Brown told the Wall Street Journal.

“We’re going to see corn in piles all over the Midwest, and it’s going to take forever to eat through it all,” commodities investor Jamey Kohake told the Journal.

The record corn crop will lower costs for corn-related products, such as cattle feed, ethanol, and a variety of consumer food products.

Global corn output also posted strong gains, likewise due largely to favorable climate conditions.

“Global coarse grain supplies for 2014/15 are projected [to be] 4.9 million tons higher, mostly expecting larger expected corn crops in the United States and EU and increased barley production for FSU-12 [Former Soviet Union states],” USDA reported in its August World Agricultural Supply and Demand Estimates.

“EU corn production is raised 1.4 million tons after abundant rainfall and favorable temperatures during July,” USDA noted.

Wheat, Rice, Soybean Records

Ideal climate conditions spurred record production for other crops as well.

USDA forecast a strong U.S. wheat crop and record global wheat production.

In the United States, “After a delay in planting, HRS [hard red spring] wheat had had very good growing conditions and yields are forecast well above average,” USDA reported. “Feed and residual use for all wheat in 2014/15 is raised 10 million bushels to 155 million due to the larger supplies. All wheat exports for 2014/15 are increased to 25 million bushels because of the large HRW [hard red winter] crop.”

Globally, the news was even better. “A record-high global wheat crop is projected this month with large increases in FSU-12 and China,” USDA reported.

The global rice crop is also setting records this year, completing an impressive tally for the Big Three staple crops: corn, wheat, and rice.

“Global rice production for 2014/15 is forecast at 477.3 million tons (milled basis), down 2.1 million tons from last month’s forecast but still the largest crop on record,” USDA observed.

USDA also expects the increasingly important soybean crop to set new records this year.

Warming Enhances Production

“There are many factors involved with increasing crop production, and favorable climate is one of the most important,” said Jay Leh, science director for The Heartland Institute, which publishes Environment & Climate News.

“Warmer temperatures extend growing seasons and cut down on damaging frost events,” said Leh. “As our planet modestly warms, we are also seeing a long-term increase in precipitation and soil moisture, particularly during the key summer months. Add in the strong fertilizing effects of higher atmospheric carbon dioxide concentrations, and we have a promising recipe for even stronger crop production in future decades”

He added, “Whenever the United Nations and global warming alarmists claim global warming is reducing crop production, they never cite real-world crop statistics. Their alarmist claims are solely dependent on computer models that get disproven more emphatically with each successive year’s crop production.”

James M. Taylor (jtaylor@heartland.org) is senior fellow for environment policy at The Heartland Institute.
Showdown Looms over Federal Wind Subsidy

By Bonner R. Cohen

Proponents of extending a federal subsidy to the wind-energy industry—the production tax credit (PTC)—say they plan to leave no stone unturned in their efforts to continue receiving favorable treatment under the tax code.

Navigating an abbreviated congressional calendar, including a midterm election in early November and a “lame-duck” session sometime thereafter, will be challenging for both friends and foes of the PTC.

Together with other tax breaks for an assortment of industries, the wind PTC expired at the end of 2013. In the past, these tax breaks have been retroactively extended in legislative packages known as “tax extenders,” but growing opposition to the PTC has clouded the future of the wind industry’s subsidy.

Opposition to extending the PTC is stronger in the Republican-controlled House than in the Democrat-controlled Senate. With this in mind, and fearing the Senate may change hands as a result of the midterm elections, the American Wind Energy Association (AWEA) prefers congressional action on the subsidy during this session of Congress. In contrast, opponents of the subsidy have every incentive to put off a vote until 2015 when their hand may be stronger.

AWEA Backs Wyden Bill

Party affiliation is not necessarily an indication of how a member of Congress will vote. Democrats overwhelmingly support the PTC and other green-energy programs, and so do some Republicans.

Sen. Charles Grassley (R-IA) is an ardent supporter of the wind industry, vowing to fight all efforts to let the subsidy expiration remain in force. In both the House and Senate, some Republicans from “high-wind” areas of the Great Plains and Inter-Mountain West back the PTC. Some have received campaign contributions from AWEA.

AWEA President Tom Kiernan has called for immediate passage of a bill introduced earlier in the year by Senate Finance Committee Chairman Ron Wyden (D-OR). The bill includes the wind PTC in a package of other tax extenders.

Kiernan stated in a press release, “We can double American wind power by 2020, and double again by 2030, if Congress gets the rules straight by extending these crucial tax policies as soon as possible and continues to work on long-term policies that continue to provide a more predictable business environment.”

A taste of the forthcoming battle was supplied in an August 13 letter from Rep. Mike Pompeo (R-KS) and 54 of his GOP colleagues to House Speaker John Boehner (R-OH) and Majority Leader Kevin McCarthy (R-CA). The letter called for letting the PTC expire, calling it a “crony” subsidy.

“We offer our full support of the current process undertaken by the House Committee on Ways and Means that will allow the most anti-competitive and economically harmful tax provisions, specifically the wind energy production tax credit (PTC) to expire,” the letter stated. “Ensuring that our nation’s patchwork tax code undergoes significant reform is a noble goal and, as part of the process, we believe Congress should stop picking winners and losers and end the wind PTC.”

‘Significant Price Distortions’

“Extending the wind PTC is a key priority for the Obama administration and its efforts to prop up wind and other favored ‘green energy’ technologies,” the GOP lawmakers wrote. “Proponents of the wind PTC continue to call for an extension despite growing evidence that this subsidy has not only cost taxpayers billions, but has caused significant price distortions in wholesale electricity markets.”

Enacted in 1992, the wind PTC gave producers a 2.2 cent tax credit per kilowatt hour of electricity generated. What began as a temporary helping hand to enable wind power to compete with traditional sources of energy has become a permanent fixture of the wind industry’s business model.

“The fact is that AWEA has not been able to show that industrial wind energy is a net societal benefit,” said John Droz, a North Carolina-based energy expert.

“The evidence from independent energy experts is that wind energy is an unreliable, expensive, and environmentally destructive option,” Droz explained. “Subsidizing such a niche product makes no sense.”

Bonner R. Cohen, Ph.D. (bcohen@nationalcenter.org) is a senior fellow at the National Center for Public Policy Research.
People’s Climate March: The Face of True Belief

By William Briggs

I liked everybody I met at the People’s Climate March in New York City on September 21. I liked them so much I hate what I have to write about them.

I liked the group that wore cabbages for headpieces. I liked the anarchists from West Virginia University who were sure the capitalist system, which allowed them to go to school and come to this march, had failed.

I even liked the young man from Deep Green Resistance who advocated for, but vaguely promised not to participate in, “industrial sabotage” and other forms of “militant action” that would set off “chain-reaction events” to destroy the country.

Everybody was sincere, everybody was concerned, and everybody was kind and eager to talk. It was a party. I enjoyed myself.

Army of Believers

Absolutely everybody believed. Everybody believed that the world is in deep kimchee, and they believed it was far past the time to do anything about it. Thus, they believed something should be done now. Namely, eliminate universally despised capitalism.

Everybody believed the Arctic is melting, or already has melted, and everybody believed climate change was already killing people—30,000 a year murdered by climate change.

Signs, Signs, Everywhere a Sign

Many carried signs stating what they believed. “CO2 dumping is morally wrong.” “Fracking=Death.” One group boasted, “We can end climate change.” Climate change can be stopped?

Other signs read: “Carbon DIEoxide” and “End CO2lization.”

A set of marchers carried a sign exhorting, “Climate Change is real. Teach Science.” I asked one sign-holder, “Don’t all teachers teach about global warming?” This made him pause. He said, “Oh, I just got the sign today. It’s probably happening, though. Some teachers don’t want to teach about evolution.”

Puppets on Parade

There were puppets, too. The largest was meant to represent Mother Nature, I was told, but it looked more like one of those frowzy, fiftyish women in mumuus who are always holding a liquor bottle as the gumshoe grills them in a 1940s film noir. Another crew held a large puppet that a smiling young woman told me represented a mop. “Domestic workers are cleaning up climate change,” she told me.

Interfaith Occasion

At a park near Columbus Circle sat about 40 yoga people crouched in that cross-legged with pinched-fingers, hands-on-their-knees pose. They had a sign which read “Earth Vigil.”

The Hare Krishnas who Hare-Krishna’d by looked down their noses at the yoga people.

A young man came up to me while I was observing this and said he was happy the parade was interfaith. He said he attended all the good marches, including Occupy Wall Street. To pass the time, he took out his soccer ball and bunted it on his knee.

Just about that time, some feminist religious groups passed by carrying signs demanding justice. I asked a sister what justice meant. She wasn’t sure, nor was her sign mate, but she told me to talk to the sister in charge.

The latter didn’t say what justice meant, instead lamenting it was difficult to attend marches because they had to raise their own funds, “which is now harder, since we’re all getting older.” None of the sisters mentioned Jesus or anything like that.

Lack of Scientific Curiosity

The crowd displayed a distinct and rather surprising lack of curiosity about the subject of the march. I lost count of the number of times I asked somebody what the poster they were carrying meant, or why they had come, and they couldn’t answer except to point and say something like, “You should ask her. I don’t really know too much about it. I just came with my friends.”

It’s not that all these folks didn’t believe in “the cause”; they just couldn’t articulate it. Marching was just something to do.

The group representing Physicians for Social Responsibility was even more depressing. This group of scientists would surely understand how science worked. I asked them how they answered the fact global temperatures showed no increase for the past 18 years. Didn’t that mean global warming wasn’t true?

“It’s a temporary blip” said one. Another said, “A lot of the heat is in the ocean.” I noted global climate models incorporate ocean circulation, and if the models have been saying the temperatures would be way up here, but they haven’t. Doesn’t this mean the models are in error? Isn’t that the scientific way?”

We Don’t Need No Stinking Science!

I then asked him, as I asked many people during the parade, “Actually, for more than two decades, the models have been saying the temperatures would be way up here, but they haven’t. Doesn’t this mean the models are in error? Isn’t that the scientific way?”

The spokes-doctor narrowed his eyes, now full of suspicion, and apparently wondered who I might be. He said nothing. I thanked him and left.

I never received an answer to any of these science questions. If anybody ever understood me—and most clearly did not—the questions were beside the point. It didn’t matter what the science really said. These people believe!

William Briggs (matt@wmbriggs.com) is an adjunct professor of statistics at Cornell University, where he acquired an M.S. in atmospheric science and a Ph.D. in statistics. He works as a consultant with specialties in medicine, the environment, and the philosophy of, and over-certainty in, science. He can be reached at wmbriggs.com.
detected in the USA for NASA, and shortly thereafter the release of the Climategate emails revealed similar procedures were in use by the Climatic Research Unit at the University of East Anglia, which prepares the UK’s temperature records.”

**Changed Cooling to Warming**
Marohasy reported she had “analysed the raw data from dozens of locations across Australia and matched it against the new data used by BOM showing that temperatures were progressively warming. … In many cases,” Marohasy added, “temperature trends had changed from slight cooling to dramatic warming over 100 years.”

BOM said the agency had used global best practices and a peer-reviewed process to modify the physical temperature records from weather stations across the country. The data from some of the weather stations underwent a process known as “homogenization,” allegedly to correct for anomalies. Historical data were altered to account for a wide range of non-climate-related influences, such as the type of instrument used, choice of calibration or enclosure, and where it was located.

Kiminmonth noted, “There is no justifiable basis to modify actual observations without evidence of changed instrumentation or environmental factors; where there is evidence of such changes the adjustments can only be considered speculative, especially if the adjustments are made on the basis of statistical links to independent observations from tens of kilometres away.”

According to former television meteorologist Anthony Watts, “[e]ssentially all the homogenization does is spread the warm bias around.”

**Specific Data Manipulation Revealed**

The Australian and Weekend Australian have been closely following and reporting on this developing story through environment editor Lloyd. In the August 23, 2014 Australian, Lloyd wrote, “It goes to the heart of the climate change debate, in particular, whether computer models are better than real data and whether temperature records are being manipulated in a bid to make each year hotter than the last.”

In a statement to Environment & Climate News, Lloyd emphasized, “The Australian responded to legitimate concerns that were being widely raised. It is the media’s job to ask questions with the aim of making people better informed. I will leave judgement about who is right to others.”

On her website, Marohasy cited a problematic example of BOM’s temperature alterations: “The unhomogenised/raw mean annual minimum temperature trend for Rutherglen for the 100-year period from January 1913 through December last year shows a slight cooling trend of 0.35°C per 100 years. After homogenisation, there is a warming trend of 1.73°C per 100 years. This warming trend essentially was achieved by progressively dropping down the temperatures from 1973 back through to 1913.”

Greenpeace cofounder Patrick Moore blasted the process as “institutional lying.”

“Firstly, ‘homogenization’ of temperature readings is a new and contrived concept. It is a pure rationalization to fake the actual record. Secondly, the motivation for this institutional lying is the continued flow of taxpayer money to support the fiction that we are responsible for the natural change in climate that has been going on since life began,” Moore said.

**Reason for National Shame**

A 2011 independent review panel told BOM “to be more transparent and make public all details of the computer models used to adjust historic temperature … [and] to clearly explain any changes that were made between raw and homogenised data.”

Lloyd said, “Transparency is always important. This was clearly recognized by the bureau’s own independent peer review panel, which called for greater openness. Publication of all adjustments made and the decision-making process is good practice.”

Marohasy has covered this story extensively on her blog. At the outset of the controversy, Marohasy wrote, “the adjusted records resemble propaganda rather than science.” More recently she wrote, “That the Minister has not yet intervened, and that many within the Australian scientific community attempt to justify the practice of homogenisation that creates these adjustments that [change] cooling trends to warming trends at a whim, is reason for national shame.”
Genetic Modification May Defeat Fruit Fly Pests

By H. Sterling Burnett

A genetically engineered fruit fly may be an effective form of pest control, new research indicates.

The Mediterranean fruit fly is an agricultural pest that does extensive damage to more than 300 types of crops annually. This amounts to millions of tons of crops and billions of dollars lost globally.

The genetically modified fly has a gene that interrupts female development, causing females to die before they can breed. Over the span of a few generations, colonies of flies die off.

An English company, Oxitec, created the modified fly. In greenhouse trials, the population of fruit flies collapsed over time, as there were no females left to produce the next generation of flies.

Previously, Oxitec had created genetically modified mosquitoes. In extensive Brazilian field trials, the new mosquitoes prevented the spread of dengue fever. Ninety-six percent of dengue-spreading mosquitoes were killed in the trials.

The new research on Mediterranean fruit flies was published in the Proceedings of the Royal Society B.

The next step for Oxitec will be open field trials. Governments would have to approve any release of genetically modified fruit flies into the general environment.

Environmental activists have protested the development and use of bioengineered organisms, including Oxitec’s flies, asserting the release of genetically modified flies into the wild could have unintended consequences.

Oxitec, however, notes the flies already have been extensively tested with no evidence of negative effects. Adverse effects are unlikely because only males survive. As genetically modified female flies are no longer released, they are quickly removed from the gene pool.

Gregory Conko, executive director of the Competitive Enterprise Institute, argues history demonstrates the safety and efficacy of such genetic modification.

“We’ve now been genetically engineering cell lines and microorganisms to produce pharmaceuticals for 40 years. We’ve been engineering laboratory animals for 35 years. And we’ve been engineering crop plants for 30 years. The technology has been studied extensively, and it has been proven to be safe—oftentimes safer than the conventional breeding it replaces,” Conko said.

Biotechnology benefits the environment, he explained.

“Just as engineered crop plants let farmers use less pesticides and herbicides—which has real benefits for the environment—genetically engineering fruit flies will be vastly better for people and the environment than spraying chemical insecticides,” said Conko.

Dennis Avery, director of the Center for Global Food Issues at the Hudson Institute, said anti-human sentiment, rather than a concern for human welfare, motivates objections to genetically modified organisms.

“Oxitec is pioneering a whole new phase of food productivity and human health,” Avery said. “They’re already using it on Brazilian mosquitoes to suppress dengue fever. The Greens are appalled at more people living long and well. Fortunately, human numbers are already set to turn downward after 2060, even without the Greens’ callous strategy of spreading famine and pestilence.”

H. Sterling Burnett (hsburnett@heartland.org) is managing editor of Environment & Climate News.

INTERNET INFO


Energy and Environment: Clearing the Air

The NCPA’s Environment Team (E-Team) is one of the largest collections of environmental policy experts and scientists in the world. Find out more at http://www.ncpa.org/environment.

And follow our blog at http://environmentblog.ncpa.org/. It is a conversational examination of some of the most controversial environmental news stories and public policies as they happen.
Texas School Books Hit by Lobbying Group

By H. Sterling Burnett

Environmental lobbyists are attempting to censor the portrayal of climate science in textbooks being considered for adoption by the Texas Board of Education (TBOE).

TBOE is approving new social studies textbooks for the first time in 12 years. The books could be used in schools for more than a decade. As Texas is a huge market for textbook publishers, when TBOE adopts a textbook, many school districts across the nation follow.

Science According to NCSE

The National Center for Science Education (NCSE), a group that promotes the view humans are causing catastrophic global warming, sharply criticized the textbooks, issuing a report saying the books were biased because they present basic questions of climate science as open for debate.

Dr. Minda Berbeco, director of NCSE, said, “The scientific debate over whether climate change is happening and who is responsible has been over for years,” in a press statement.

Consensus exists on two points: Carbon dioxide is a greenhouse gas, and humans have had some effect on Earth’s climate. Important issues remain unanswered, and the textbooks recognize that.

One proposed textbook states, “Some scientists say it is natural for the Earth’s temperature to be higher for a few years,” and, “They predict we’ll have some cooler years and things will even out.” NCSE says it knows of no publishing climate scientist who holds that view.

A proposed textbook from McGraw-Hill cites material from The Heartland Institute to balance research from the United Nations’ Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. The textbook suggests scientists do not agree on the cause of climate change and, after providing evidence from both sides, asks students to decide for themselves. The NCSE objects the textbook is wrong, claiming the writers do not understand the material they are covering.

Open Climate Change Questions

Heather Kays, a research fellow and managing editor of School Reform News, published by The Heartland Institute, which also publishes Environment & Climate News, said, “Science is always evolving. It is the responsibility of those who write curriculum to present all sides of a scientific argument. Favoring one stance over another or omitting research and opinion because it does not line up with your own thoughts and ideals is shameful. Students deserve to have all the information presented to them. Anything else is a disservice.”

“In Texas, questions of climate change certainly aren’t settled. Efforts by environmentalists to censor textbooks are typical of their tactics to shut down debate and stifle discussion. I’m happy our BOE is standing up for scientific integrity and against the bullying tactics of environmentalists,” said Colin Cahoon, Dallas attorney and Heartland Institute policy advisor. H. Sterling Burnett (hsburnett@heartland.org) is managing editor of Environment & Climate News.

Environmental Activists Threaten Louisiana Water Purification

By Alyssa Carducci

Environmental activists are targeting Multi-Chem, a company that blends chemicals for oil production, as the company seeks a water discharge permit for its Vermilion Parish, Louisiana facility.

Nearly Identical Discharge Water

Multi-Chem uses reverse osmosis to purify water. The water it wants to discharge into a roadside ditch along Louisiana Highway 92 is similar to the city water it purifies, only with slightly higher concentrations of minerals.

Environmental activists claim the water discharge, though similar to city water, will damage the environment. The activists appear to be targeting Multi-Chem because of a 2011 explosion at its nearby New Iberia plant.

No Charge After Explosion

After the 2011 explosion, the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality decided not to levy environmental fines against the company. No workers were injured during the explosion.

“The agency has not issued a punitive penalty at this point,” said Greg Langley, DEQ press secretary.

“The [water discharge] permit is under consideration, and the agency is collecting information to aid its decision,” Langley added.

A public hearing was held on August 14 regarding the water discharge permit.

Though Louisiana did not punish Multi-Chem, it did not escape unscathed. The company was billed $29,522 for DEQ emergency responders. In addition, the U.S. Occupational Safety and Health Administration fined Multi-Chem $49,000, eventually settling for $24,500.

Multi-Chem’s Rebuilding Efforts

In response to the explosion, Multi-Chem has spent an estimated $22 million on remediation, Langley reports.

“The company was cooperative and submitted the Site Investigation Work Plan approved by DEQ in September 2011. ... Subsequently, soil was excavated and removed to appropriate disposal sites. Monitoring and remediation work continued at the site after the acquisition of the company by Halliburton, which agreed to assume the remediation costs,” Langley said.

After the explosion, Halliburton, a worldwide energy production company, acquired Multi-Chem and built new facilities in 2013 in Vermilion Parish. The company received $1.8 million in property tax exemptions over a 10-year period.

Activist Group Files Suit

Citizens Against Multi-Chem (CAMC), headed by Marcella Manuel, is an outspoken critic of the plant and DEQ’s response to the explosion. The group protested construction of the new plant in 2012 at the Vermilion Parish Police Jury meeting. Despite CAMC’s objections, Multi-Chem reopened its doors in September 2013 on a 64-acre site.

In response, CAMC filed a lawsuit claiming DEQ issued an air permit without a public hearing or notice. DEQ argued minor air emissions do not require public notice before issuing a permit. The lawsuit was dismissed by a district court, but CAMC announced it will appeal to the state supreme court.

Alyssa Carducci (ad.carducci@gmail.com) writes from Tampa, Florida.
Wind Farm Kills Bats While Feds Ignore Problem

By Alyssa Carducci

A Nevada wind farm has killed triple the number of bats allowed under an agreement with federal wildlife officials, yet the federal government has imposed no significant penalties.

Facility Responds to Bat Deaths

Located 260 miles northeast of Las Vegas, the 152-megawatt Spring Valley Wind Energy project supplies energy to approximately 40,000 homes. The project has been forced to make changes in its operations after killing 566 bats in 2013, nearly three times the 169 allowed per year.

Operational changes included adjusting the “cut-in” speeds of the turbines on nights when bat activity is high, so the turbines start turning only when sustained winds reach about 11 mph instead of the normal cut-in speed of 7 mph.

“We will continue to conduct research on both bird and bat activity at the facility, as well as on potential mitigation strategies, to continue to reduce our impact,” said Rene Braud, director of environmental compliance at Pattern Energy, which operates the Spring Valley facility.

“While reducing the cut-in speed does affect production, it is not a major impact on the project’s overall output, and we are willing to accept this in order to reduce our environmental impact,” Braud added.

Wind Turbines Versus Wildlife

The trade-off between wind turbines and wildlife mortality has been a topic of debate among environmentalists. In this case, conservationists foresaw the turbines’ negative impact on birds and bats and fiercely protested construction of the Spring Valley wind power facility. The wind power facility sports 66 turbines and sits on more than 7,600 acres of federal land, nestled between the Schell Creek and Snake mountain ranges.

Each tower stands up to 425 feet tall and holds a rotor the diameter of a football field. The tips of the blades can reach speeds up to 170 mph. According to biologists, even if a bird or bat succeeds in not hitting a blade, the changes in barometric pressure when the blades are spinning can cause their insides to explode.

The Center for Biological Diversity and Western Watersheds Project sued to stop construction of the Spring Valley facility. A federal judge decided to allow construction to proceed, during which time the impact on bats could be studied.

Settlement talks produced an agreement between Pattern Energy and wildlife officials to track and limit bird and bat deaths. Under terms of the agreement, Spring Valley was allowed to kill 178 birds and 169 bats annually.

Contested Value of Dead Bats

Braud said the majority of bats killed by the Spring Valley wind turbines are abundant Mexican free-tail bats.

“The facility has had no impact at all on any threatened or endangered bat species, and the impact on all other kinds of bats has been on the very low end of the national range for wind energy facilities,” she said.

Nevertheless, bats of all species are very important to the ecosystem. Physicist and environmental advocate John Droz cited a study measuring the economic impact bats have on agriculture.

The study, “Economic Impact of Bats in Agriculture,” by Justin G. Boyles, Paul M. Cryan, Gary F. McCracken, and Thomas H. Kunz, measures the economic impact of bats’ insect suppression on a county-by-county basis across the country.

The study found the Spring Valley wind project and its death toll on bats could cost Clark County farmers $471,443.

The Spring Valley wind facility has done a better job minimizing bird deaths, with just 40 reported deaths last year, well below the 178 bird deaths allowed at the wind farm annually. One of those bird deaths was a golden eagle, which is specifically protected under federal law.

Over the objections of Native Americans and environmentalists, in December 2013 the Interior Department exempted wind farms from penalties associated with bald and golden eagle deaths for up to 30 years with use of a take permit. Pattern Energy took advantage of the Interior Department’s decision and applied for a 30-year take permit earlier this year.

Alyssa Carducci (ad.carducci@gmail.com) writes from Tampa, Florida.
By Alan Carlin

I greatly appreciate receiving this award and the efforts of the many people involved at many levels in making it possible. I consider it a great honor and thank you for it.

I wrote my negative comments on the Endangerment Finding support document because I believed EPA was using bad science and EPA’s proposed Endangerment Finding would be easier to stop at that stage than later. It is very encouraging to find others agree with my decision to do so, which EPA clearly did not.

Muzzled for Comments

My offending comments to EPA led to my being immediately muzzled at the same time that Obama was spinning his transparency and scientific integrity line.

The Endangerment Finding was issued later that year, without any of my suggested changes in the support document, of course. This finding is the legally definitive EPA statement on climate science. It has been tested in the courts and is legally no longer an issue; this is what I hoped to avoid by my challenge to the support document.

For the last few years I have been working on a book-length manuscript describing everything touched on here and much more, including my skeptic efforts, how the environmental movement lost its way since my days as a Sierra Club activist and leader, and the main legal, journalistic, governmental, scientific, environmental, and economic aspects of the climate issue.

This manuscript is now complete and up-to-date. If any of you know a good way to get it published so that it will be read, please let me know, as I think it has some vital messages for everyone as we approach the showdown over the proposed EPA regulations.

Endangerment Finding’s Impact

The Endangerment Finding led directly to EPA’s proposed regulations for reducing CO2 emissions from power plants earlier this year. The new EPA proposed regulations are even worse than I expected in 2009, perhaps because the blueprint for them was actually written by an environmental organization.

First of all, they are illegal, as per any reasonable reading of Section 111(d) of the Clean Air Act. They impose many aspects of the Waxman-Markey bill despite Congress’s rejection of it and try to force red states to adopt the usual market-distorting preferences for power generation promoted by radical environmentalists.

The regulations will have major adverse effects on the U.S. economy, all for no more likely negative benefits, and will result in higher costs for electric ratepayers, with particularly adverse effects on lower-income groups. They will also lead to potentially extremely costly electric grid instability and load-shedding when electric power is most needed.

EPA is effectively trying to rewrite the Clean Air Act without consulting Congress or observing the law or the Constitution.

EPA’s ‘Aggressive Unilateralism’

House Speaker John Boehner calls Obama’s behavior in this and other areas “aggressive unilateralism.” I call it dictatorial.

Even if EPA’s science were correct, which it is not, the regulations should be rejected on the basis of EPA’s illegal power grab. I believe that skeptics need to place greater emphasis on this aspect of the situation.

The powers of the presidency have been an issue since the founding of the Republic and are much more readily understood than climate science will ever be. What started out as a scientific issue concerning a proposed Endangerment Finding has now escalated into a major legal and even constitutional issue concerning presidential powers.

The president roams the country calling us “flat-earthers” and science-deniers. Perhaps it is time to characterize his behavior as illegal and even dictatorial.

Time to Change Course

Currently the public favors the EPA regulations by 67 to 29 percent, so there appear to be many possible recipients for better information if we are to succeed in avoiding the future that radical environmentalists want to impose on our country through unjustified federal intervention in still another vital sector of the economy. If their efforts should succeed, we can reasonably look forward to much higher levels of mandated CO2 reductions in this sector and probably many others as well. It is better to stop this mission creep now before it metastasises even further.

We must not fail in our endeavors for the sake of the country’s economic and environmental future and the preservation of the rule of law. These new power plant regulations will happen unless a way is found to stop them.

There are only three possible ways to do this: A president who will withdraw them, Republican control of both houses of Congress, or rejection by the courts. Obama will not willingly withdraw the regulations before he leaves office in 2017. Rejection by the courts has not proved a dependable strategy to date, but the proposals are becoming increasingly outrageous legally.

Congress is the only somewhat dependable avenue in the near term, and there is an election in 2014. A number of environmental groups are already very hard at work trying to influence this election so as to promote their proposed EPA regulations. They have already even sent me two thinly disguised appeals, probably because I live in a state with a Democratic senator up for reelection.

Alan Carlin (info@heartland.org) is an economist and former chapter chairman of the Sierra Club who dedicated 40 years of his life to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.
INTERVIEW

How Politics Infiltrated the EPA

Heartland Institute Senior Fellow James M. Taylor interviewed Alan Carlin after Carlin’s talk at the Ninth International Conference on Climate Change (ICCC-9).

By James M. Taylor

Taylor: What were your main arguments against EPA’s Endangerment Finding?

Carlin: I made three main points in my comments to EPA on the draft Technical Support Document (TSD), the technical basis for EPA’s Endangerment Finding. These were: The Catastrophic Anthropogenic Global Warming (CAGW) hypothesis is invalid from a scientific viewpoint because it fails a number of critical comparisons with available observable data; the draft TSD was seriously dated and the updates made to an abortive 2007 version of the draft TSD used to prepare it were inadequate; and EPA should conduct an independent analysis of the science of global warming rather than adopting the conclusions of outside groups such as the U.N. Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and U.S. government reports based on IPCC’s reports. My full comments can be found at http://www.carlineconomics.com/archives/1.

Taylor: You say EPA used bad science in its Endangerment Finding. Do you believe EPA simply but honestly drew the wrong conclusions, or do you believe EPA had ulterior motives?

Carlin: In my view, the arrival of the Obama administration in 2009 resulted in political decisions in the White House on climate science being imposed on EPA rather than EPA relying on its own independent analysis, which was the case in most previous decisions. The new EPA political appointees involved in climate policy were apparently screened on the basis of their views on climate policy.

EPA career employees generally believed any attempt to oppose CAGW would very likely result in unfavorable personnel or organizational changes by the new EPA administration. Most career employees were primarily interested in protecting their jobs and bureaucratic roles by accepting, or at least not opposing, the politically determined science imposed by the White House.

Taylor: Based on your experience in EPA, what percent of EPA staffers are open-minded and committed to honest science, and what percent are driven by ideology or environmental extremism?

Carlin: All the new Obama political appointees supported the EPA’s proposed Endangerment Finding and the TSD supporting the science on which it was based. A few of the more recent career hires clearly believed the radical environmentalist ideology and strongly supported the CAGW-based finding, and the rest either had no opinion or kept quiet about any concerns they might have had.

Taylor: You mentioned in your ICCC-9 speech that an environmental activist group—the Natural Resources Defense Council—wrote the blueprint for EPA’s recently proposed power plant carbon dioxide restrictions. Why should it bother people that EPA works so closely with environmental activist groups?

Carlin: I believe EPA’s job is to reduce harmful pollution where this reflects good science, economics, and law, and to negotiate the best possible compromises between the interest groups involved to achieve this. Responding only to the regulated community or only to environmental activists does not result in such compromises. Following a script written by an environmental organization, as EPA is apparently now doing with respect to power plants, is thus not a useful approach. It prevents EPA from making a useful contribution of its own, and it is just responding to what one side wants.

Taylor: You also mentioned a book you have written on all this. What is the title, and when will it be available?

Carlin: The book is called Environmentalism Gone Mad: How a Former Sierra Club Activist and Senior EPA Analyst Found a Radical Green Energy Fantasy. Besides a much more detailed discussion of all the issues raised by your questions, the book explores the ideological inconsistencies, practical problems, and likely outcomes resulting from the rise of radical energy environmentalism from scientific, economic, governmental, journalistic, and legal viewpoints.

These problems have arisen because the environmental movement has been hijacked by left-wing radicals who are advocating policies that impair the Western world’s economic future for limited or absolutely no environmental gains, as well as promoting legally questionable government actions whose purpose government cannot achieve in the way proposed.

The book explores why their campaign may lead to regulatory strangulation of the economy through control of energy generation and use and how it threatens the rule of law. It is the threat to the rule of law that is the real danger, not the alleged adverse effects of increasing CO2 levels. The book is expected to be published later this year. Information on it will be available on my website at http://carlineconomics.com as publication approaches.

Dr. Alan Carlin, now retired, was a 37-year career environmental economist and scientist at EPA when, in June 2009, the Competitive Enterprise Institute broke the story of his negative 100-page report reviewing the agency’s draft Endangerment Finding. As a result, Dr. Carlin’s supervisor ordered him not to discuss climate change with anyone outside his group and to stop working on the issue.

For more information about the Climate Change Whistleblower Award and other awards presented at ICCC-9, visit http://climatechangeawards.org/.

“Following a script written by an environmental organization, as EPA is apparently now doing with respect to power plants, is thus not a useful approach. It prevents EPA from making a useful contribution of its own, and it is just responding to what one side wants.”

ALAN CARLIN, PH.D.
FORMER ENVIRONMENTAL ECONOMIST AND SCIENTIST AT EPA
How to Talk About Climate Change So People Will Listen: A Skeptic’s View

By Joseph Bast

A recent essay in The Atlantic purports to instruct readers on “How to Talk About Climate Change So People Will Listen.”

The author, Charles C. Mann, is a longtime contributor to the magazine who writes about history, tourism, and energy issues. With this article, he tries to cut a path between the two warring tribes in the global warming debate—the Alarmists and the Skeptics.

He fails, rather spectacularly I think. The first four paragraphs, out of 45, are good, as are a few paragraphs later on about enviro-fruitcake Bill McKibben. But the rest of the article simply accepts the dubious and sometimes outrageous assertions and false narratives that gave rise to alarmism in the first place—the same ones skeptics delight in debunking.

Mann’s bad advice helps explain why skeptics once again won most of the debates in bars and around grills this summer.

A Good Start

Mann starts out strong, reporting how the media turned an obscure modeling exercise about the melt rate of the western Antarctic ice shelf into hysterical headlines about coastal flooding. Had he waited a couple of weeks, he could have written much the same about “Russian methane holes.” The lesson in both cases, which he doesn’t draw, is that mainstream media organizations are utterly unreliable sources of information on the climate issue. They profit from exaggeration, rely on special interests for advertising revenue, and lack expertise to report on science matters.

Sadly, Mann doesn’t appear to have learned this lesson. In the rest of his article, he treats mainstream media accounts of the climate debate as dispositive. The public understands this better than does Mann; nearly half believe the media exaggerate the climate change problem.

Mann reports, in a single but very nice paragraph, the world’s enormous debt to fossil fuels. The Industrial Revolution, he says, was “driven by the explosive energy of coal, oil, and natural gas; it inaugurated an unprecedented three-century wave of prosperity.”

One might quibble with his take on this: The improvement in the human condition started before 1800 and was the result of changes in institutions (the arrival of markets, private property, and limited government) and embrace of new values (the Scottish Enlightenment), as well as the discovery of fossil fuels. Without the first and second discoveries, the third would have done little more than heat some feudal castles and light some cobblestone streets.

Economists and Julian Simon

Mann correctly scolds alarmists for “rhetorical overreach, moral miscalculation, shouting at cross-purposes . . . ,” a “toxic blend” that damages their cause and fuels the skeptic backlash. But then he miscategories their opponents as economists, whom he calls “cheerleaders for industrial capitalism.” That line reveals how little Mann knows about public opinion or economics.

Surveys show two-thirds of the American people don’t think global warming is manmade or a serious problem. Are two-thirds of the American people economists? Not the last time I checked.

In the national (and global) debate over global warming, economists aren’t prominent, despite some attempts and wishes. The skeptics’ strongest weapon isn’t economics; it’s common sense. Temperatures aren’t rising even though carbon dioxide levels are. Reducing our emissions won’t affect climate so long as other nations keep increasing their own outputs. Some continued warming would produce more benefits than harms. Future generations will be far wealthier than us despite a small increase in temperatures. Each of these common-sense (and true) observations is deadly to the alarmists’ cause.

Everybody knows we reap tremendous benefits from affordable fossil fuels today. You don’t need to be an economist to know that those benefits vastly exceed the benefits, two centuries from now, of slowing the advance of manmade climate change by one degree or two, assuming the alarmists’ worst scenarios and most dubious science are correct.

Mann’s appreciation for fossil fuels,
Politics and Environmental Protection

Mann says global warming legislation no longer wins congressional approval due to a polarization in views over the value of environmental protection that occurred in the 1970s and 1980s, illustrated by the debates and eventually the famous bet over the future price of some commodities between Paul Ehrlich and Julian Simon. In Mann’s telling of the story, concern for the environment began as a conservative movement, but then businesses “realized that environmental issues had a price tag. Increasingly, they balked. Reflectively, the anti-corporate left pivoted; Earth Day, erstwhile snow job, became an opportunity to denounce capitalist greed.”

Some of us who were part of the environmental movement in the 1970s and 1980s saw something different taking place. The great environmental protection legislation of the 1970s passed with nearly unanimous support because the problems were real and begged for national solutions. After early major successes, an iron triangle of bureaucrats, grandstanding politicians, and yellow journalists started a drumbeat for pursuing ever-more stringent and expensive emission reductions regardless of their soaring costs and negative consequences on businesses.

It was at this point, during the 1980s, that liberals, or “progressives,” saw the opportunity and the need to take over the environmental movement and use its members as shock troops in its war on “capitalism.” It was easy, since conservatives and libertarians were willing to step down and move on to other, more important, civic causes. Many histories of the left’s takeover of the environmental movement have been written; see a partial list in Jay Lehr’s recent Heartland Institute Policy Brief on “Replacing the Environmental Protection Agency.”

More False Narratives

Mann says, “I remember winters as being colder in my childhood. ...” The 1970s brought some of the coldest winters in the twentieth century, so it’s no surprise many of us remember them that way. But the 1930s and 1940s were warmer, and human carbon dioxide emissions couldn’t have been responsible for that warm period. This past winter was the coldest, longest, and snowiest in my life—I live in Illinois and part-time in Wisconsin—and recent summers have been among the coolest I can recall. This morning it was 51 degrees when I walked to my train—on August 15. I don’t remember having to wear coats in August, do you?

Mann says “a few critics argue that for the past 17 years warming has mostly stopped. Still, most scientists believe that in the past century the Earth’s average temperature has gone up by about 1.5 degrees Fahrenheit.” This is wrong on a couple of counts. The United Nations’ Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), which Mann and alarmists generally hold out as the gold standard of climate research, admitted there’s been no warming for the past 15 years in its final draft Summary for Policymakers, before politicians and environmental activists made them take it out. Is that “a few critics”? And skeptics don’t deny a warming of 1.5 degrees Fahrenheit occurred “in the past century.”

Explaning Away the Facts

By now, most readers have probably figured out that Mann isn’t an impartial observer of the global warming debate. I wasn’t surprised to read, “rising temperatures per se are not the primary concern,” which is the alarmists’ pat answer when confronted by the fact that warming stopped 17 years ago. But here’s the problem with that: According to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), the alarmists’ computer models “rule out” any zero trends for 15 years or more, meaning an observed absence of warming of this duration invalidates the models and the alarmists’ theory.

Swallowing the Left’s Rhetoric

After a few paragraphs of criticism of easy-target Bill McKibben, presumably to throw skeptical readers off his alarmist scent, Mann swallows the left’s biggest falsehood: that it can predict the weather centuries from now based on how much carbon dioxide we release today. “Let’s assume that rising carbon-dioxide levels will become a problem of some magnitude at some time and that we will want to do something practical about it.”

Um, how about we not make a series of such dumb assumptions, and in the process save billions (even trillions) of dollars and millions (maybe billions) of human lives?

This is the crux of the problem, both with Mann’s attempt to find a middle ground in the global warming debate and with the left’s obsession with the issue. Global warming alarmism rests on assumptions, not facts, logic, or reason. “Let’s just assume there’s a reason for government to take over a quarter of the nation’s economy and fix it, just like Obamacare will fix health care.”

Let’s simply assume the missing science exists, that the warming will be big enough to notice, that it will happen before mankind has found a substitute for fossil fuels or is colonizing other planets, and that the benefits of stopping or slowing climate change would be worth the expense.

Anyone who stops and thinks about this, even for a moment, realizes it’s nonsense. Why would you make these assumptions? Why would you give up the benefits of affordable fossil fuels? How stupid do you think we are?

This is why alarmists always lose debates against skeptics. It’s why alarmists looked and acted like fools this summer at countless cookouts and family parties, while skeptics sounded thoughtful and reasonable. It’s not because, as Mann insists, people are too stupid to understand graphs; it’s because alarmists are wrong and skeptics are right.

And that, my friends, is how to talk about climate change so people will listen.

Joseph Bast (jbast@heartland.org) is president of The Heartland Institute.
Free Speech Groups Defend CEI in Mann Lawsuit

By Alyssa Carducci

Several media and civil rights groups are siding the Competitive Enterprise Institute (CEI), National Review, and two individual commentateurs after Pennsylvania State University meteorology professor Michael Mann sued CEI and National Review for what Mann claims were libelous comments.

Liberals, Others Support Defendants

On August 11, the Reporters Committee for the Freedom of the Press and 26 other groups, including the American Civil Liberties Union, Bloomberg, and Fox News, filed “friend of the court” briefs in support of the defendants.

The Cato Institute, Goldwater Institute, Individual Rights Foundation, and Reason Foundation filed separate briefs on behalf of CEI and National Review.

Protecting the First Amendment

Sam Kazman, general counsel for CEI, says the First Amendment is a prominent issue in this case.

“We think the law is pretty straightforward. We think the two lower court judges applied an incorrect legal standard, and I think the fact that we got so many First Amendment and freedom of speech groups supporting us … [indicates] the importance of this issue.”

SAM KAZMAN, GENERAL COUNSEL
COMPETITIVE ENTERPRISE INSTITUTE

EPA Carbon Rule Dooms Efficient Coal Plant in S. Carolina

Continued from page 1

ray, which provides McMeekin with 45-degree water year-round. Cold water from the lake’s bottom helps produce an excellent heat rate.

EPA’s proposed Clean Power Plan, issued June 2, requires states to reduce power plant carbon dioxide (CO2) emissions 30 percent below 2005 levels by 2030. Reluctantly, SCE&G determined the investments required for McMeekin to comply with EPA’s mandate are not economically justified. Accordingly, the plant is set to close in 2019.

State Attorneys General Oppose

On August 26, 13 state attorneys general sent a letter to EPA Administrator Gina McCarthy demanding the agency withdraw the proposed CO2 rule. They allege EPA failed to disclose information to the public as required under the Clean Air Act (CAA).

The CAA requires EPA to publish data, information, and documents on policy considerations underlying the proposed rule. According to the letter, EPA failed to produce 84 percent of the modeling runs on which it based its proposed emissions rule. EPA also neglected to release net heat rate and emissions data.

“We think the law is pretty straightforward. We think the two lower court judges applied an incorrect legal standard, and I think the fact that we got so many First Amendment and freedom of speech groups supporting us … [indicates] the importance of this issue.”

Sam Kazman, general counsel for CEI, says the First Amendment is a prominent issue in this case.

Lawsuit History

In August 2012, an attorney representing Mann demanded CEI retract and apologize for the post, stating his intention “to pursue all appropriate legal remedies on behalf of Dr. Mann.” CEI removed the statement in question, but not before National Review writer Mark Steyn linked to the post and called Mann’s research fraudulent. Fox News reported the deleted statement, which referred to Mann as “the Jerry Sandusky of climate science” because he “molested and tortured data in the service of politicized science.”

In July of this year, a District of Columbia trial court dismissed efforts by the defendants to have the lawsuit dropped.

Marketplace of Ideas Must Operate

Ilya Shapiro, a senior fellow in constitutional studies at the Cato Institute, released a statement arguing the First Amendment would be violated if Mann’s lawsuit prevails. Shapiro said the First Amendment allows room “for the marketplace of ideas to operate,” particularly regarding scientific progress.

“The point in this appeal is that courts should not be coming up with new terms like ‘scientific fraud’ to squeeze debate over issues impacting government policy into ordinary tort law,” Shapiro wrote.

Alyssa Carducci (ad.carducci@gmail.com) writes from Tampa, Florida.
Conservationists, Wind Industry Clash over Eagle Deaths in Minnesota

By Bonner R. Cohen

Concerned the proliferation of wind farms in the Upper Midwest and Great Plains will lead to more eagle kills, wildlife advocates clashed with wind industry officials at a public hearing in Bloomington, Minnesota.

Conservationists, many of whom favor wind, solar, and other forms of renewable energy in principle, are upset by the Obama administration’s decision to give wind producers 30-year permits to kill eagles. As part of its program to promote renewable energy, the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (FWS) in 2009 offered wind producers a first-ever five-year permit for the unintentional killing of bald and golden eagles.

Under pressure from the wind industry in December 2013, FWS proposed expanding the permit to 30 years. The wind industry argues the 30-year permits offer a constructive approach to balancing desired growth of electric power provided by wind farms with the desire to preserve protected raptors.

“The birds don’t belong to these companies—they belong to the American people,” Michael Hutchins, national coordinator for the American Bird Conservancy’s Bird Smart Wind Energy Program, told the Minneapolis Star-Tribune before the mid-July meeting.

“The eagle is a national trust. It’s a symbol of our liberty and freedom,” echoed Mary Hartman, a Rochester resident who is active in the burgeoning eagle-protection movement, reported the Star-Tribune.

The 30-Year Permit
The prospect of a federal 30-year permit for eagle kills has put the wind industry on the defensive. FWS reports wind turbines already kill 440,000 birds in the United States each year. A 2013 peer-reviewed study found the combined bird and bat death toll is 1.4 million each year. As the death toll mounts, local resistance to wind turbines grows. FWS is in the process of improving its monitoring and research capabilities to minimize the impact wind farms have on eagles.

Minnesota is home to one of the nation’s largest eagle populations. Also, birds are essential to the state’s agriculture, helping control the insect population. Such considerations put wildlife advocates and the wind industry on the path to the present conflict.

In February, Minnesota regulators rejected a proposed wind power facility near Red Wing by AWA Goodhue Wind, demanding the company provide better research on the number of eagles and bats that fly through the region.

Shortly after Gopher State regulators pulled the plug on the Red Wing wind farm, FWS announced a series of hearings throughout the Upper Midwest to air opinions on what to do about wind turbines and eagles. The gathering in Bloomington was the third of five scheduled hearings.

Minnesota Power Under Pressure
The wind industry receives a federal subsidy known as the Production Tax Credit (PTC), and it also benefits from renewable power mandates in 29 states and the District of Columbia, which require a certain percentage of electricity come from renewable sources.

Minnesota’s Renewable Portfolio Standard (RPS) requires the state’s largest utility, Xcel Energy, to derive 25 percent of its electricity from wind or solar by 2020. This mandate will likely be difficult to meet, especially if the issue of bird kills hampers the ability to license wind farms. Additionally, the industry requires capital from investors to cover initial costs. Industry officials see the 30-year permit as an assurance to its investors their capital will return a profit over the long term.

The conflict between wildlife advocates and the wind industry is rooted in the latter’s claim the growing number of wind turbines will counteract man-made global warming, observes John Droz, a North Carolina-based energy expert.

“The justification for extensive wildlife carnage is the American Wind Energy Association’s sales pitch that industrial wind turbines are ‘saving the planet’ [by countering global warming],” Droz explained. “However, the irony is that the industry has never been required to provide scientific proof of that claim.

“Evaluations of the wind industry’s claim by independent experts have concluded the wind industry’s contribution to mitigating global warming is minuscule,” Droz observed. “So, in effect, the birds and bats are being slaughtered simply to improve profit margins.”

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

Rein in EPA

EPA Is a Rogue Agency
The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is the nation’s leading job killer, implementing and enforcing laws that impose impossible regulatory burdens on American businesses.

The Solution
Congress must rein in EPA through deep cuts in the size, power, and cost of the agency. Congress can repeal EPA’s authority to regulate carbon dioxide in the name of “global warming.”

The Petition
The Citizen’s Petition to Rein in the Environmental Protection Agency calls out EPA’s unscientific and destructive campaign to frighten people over the threat of man-made global warming and demands “deep cuts in the size, power, and cost of the EPA.” You can sign it online at heartland.org, print out copies and fax signed copies to 312/377-5000, or mail them to us at The Heartland Institute, One South Wacker Drive #2740, Chicago, IL 60606.

You Can Help! By working together we can protect the environment without sacrificing jobs or our essential freedoms. Please help us by signing the petition today.

The Heartland Institute
heartland.org
California Solar Towers Blamed for Massive Bird Kills

By Bonner R. Cohen

A giant, state-of-the-art solar power complex in the Mojave Desert is incinerating birds and drawing scrutiny from federal wildlife officials and environmental groups.

In operation since February, the $2.2 billion Ivanpah solar energy project has achieved notoriety far beyond the expectations of its developers, BrightSource Energy, NRG Solar, and Google. Instead of kudos for producing green energy, Ivanpah is rapidly becoming a symbol of a technology that poses a lethal threat to wildlife and a safety hazard to passenger jets using the busy international airports in Los Angeles and Las Vegas.

The project was made possible by a $1.6 billion loan guarantee from the U.S. Department of Energy, as part of the Obama administration’s support of renewable energy.

300,000 Mirrors

Located on five square miles of federal land overseen by the Bureau of Land Management, Ivanpah uses 300,000 seven-by-ten-foot mirrors to redirect concentrated sunlight upward toward three 459-foot boiler towers, dubbed power towers. The water inside the towers is heated to 1,000 degrees Fahrenheit, producing steam that turns turbines to generate electricity.

The bright light created by the reflecting mirrors attracts huge numbers of insects, which in turn attract birds, and both are burned in mid-air by Ivanpah’s intense heat. Estimates of the number of birds killed vary from 1,000 per year by BrightSource to 28,000 annually by the Center for Biological Diversity.

Federal and state wildlife officials have confirmed birds flying over Ivanpah are being lethally singed, with numerous reports of puffs of smoke suddenly appearing, followed by dead birds, called “streamers,” falling to the earth. Nonetheless, the California Energy Commission is considering an application by Oakland-based BrightSource to build another mirror field with a 75-story power tower near Palen, California, between Joshua Tree National Park and the California-Arizona border. The facility would be on a flight path for birds between the Colorado River and California’s largest lake, the Salton Sea.

‘Highest Lethality Potential’

The area contains protected golden eagles and peregrine falcons, as well as more than 100 other species of birds. In July, U.S. Fish & Wildlife (FWS) officials warned California power-tower-style solar technology holds “the highest lethality potential” of any of the solar projects planned for the Golden State’s deserts.

The July warning followed a federal report calling the Ivanpah facility a “mega-trap” for birds and recommending steps to reduce solar power tower bird deaths.

Responding to the bad publicity from Ivanpah’s bird deaths, BrightSource has proposed donating $1.8 million to programs that spay and neuter cats, claiming the program will protect birds because cats sometimes kill small birds.

Jay Lehr, science director for The Heartland Institute, which publishes Environment & Climate News, said, “That’s like a drunk driver who caused an accident offering to pay to educate teen drivers concerning the perils of drinking intoxicated rather than being punished for his crime. BrightSource’s offer may reduce bird deaths, but it doesn’t make up for the birds it kills.”

The Fish & Wildlife Service remains concerned. Pete Sorenson, division chief of the FWS Palm Springs office, posted a letter on the California Energy Commission website urging extreme caution before approving more power tower projects.

“We are concerned about the increasing number of power tower projects that are proposed or undergoing permitting review, given the outstanding questions about the impacts of utility-scale application of the technology,” Sorenson wrote. “As such, it would be beneficial to the permitting process for pending and future projects, including the Hidden Hills and Rio Mesa, to gather monitoring data that answer some of the questions about avian physiological tolerance and behavioral response to power towers, from already approved projects, before approving more projects.”

Beyond merely researching the bird impacts, “we suggest that the Agencies limit the number of power tower projects that are considered for permitting and development until we obtain a more detailed understanding of this technology and its impacts, based on at least a couple of years of scientifically robust monitoring,” Sorenson explained. “Deploying technology of this scale in multiple places and on a short timeframe without such an understanding compromises our ability to make informed decisions on projects that would permanently and cumulatively impact species and the extensive tracts of desert habitat upon which they depend.”

FAA Warning

Ivanpah’s power towers also interfere with aviation. The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has issued warnings to pilots who fly in and out of Las Vegas and other destinations in Southern California.

“For years, advocates of renewable power have touted a ‘free energy’ narrative in trying to convince the public it is possible to power the world on butterflies, rainbows, and pixie dust,” said Marita Noon, executive director of Energy Makes America Great. “What they have been trying to push on consumers is now exposed as the fairy tale it is.

“While the wind blows and the sun shines for ‘free,’ turning them into electricity is expensive—both to consumers and the avian population,” Noon explained. “There is obviously a lot of money to be made in the solar industry to enable it to offer $1.8 million in compensation for anticipated bird deaths that does nothing to help the poor birds that are instantly fried mid-flight.

Where is PETA [People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals] when you need them?”

Noon concluded, “The California Energy Commission must not approve the proposed Palen Power Tower project that is projected to kill one bird every 30 seconds.”

Bonner R. Cohen, Ph.D. (bc@ nationalcenter.org) is a senior fellow at the National Center for Public Policy Research.
Polls Show Democrats Face Election Backlash over Global Warming

By James M. Taylor

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epublicans have an opportunity to use their opponents’ obsession with global warming as a political weapon, slamming Democrats for ignoring much more important issues.

Democratic politicians and funding groups are attempting to make global warming a key issue in the November elections even though the public considers global warming a very low priority. The Republican response to date has been low-key, trusting the global warming attacks will not find much political traction. But recent polling numbers may induce Republicans to be bolder on the issue.

Polling Shows Low Priority

In mid-August, Gallup asked more than 1,000 American adults the following open-ended question: “What do you think is the most important problem facing the country today?” Gallup listed the top 12 responses, which accounted for 99 percent of the answers. Global warming did not make the list. If any of the 1,032 American adults answered global warming, the answer failed to reach even the 1 percent threshold.

In another poll released in late August, the Pew Research Center and USA Today presented more than 1,500 American adults with a list of nine potential threats to the United States and asked the respondents to indicate which ones they consider to be “major threats.” Global warming ranked dead last among Republicans and Independents, but first among Democrats.

Bucking Voter Sentiment

When Democrats and Republicans have strong differences of opinion on a particular issue, polling among independents typically offers clues regarding who should emphasize the issue. Given that independents side with Republicans on the relative unimportance of global warming claims, it would seem most likely Republicans would push the issue and Democrats would not. Nevertheless, moneyed interests and environmental extremists have convinced some Democrats to emphasize their unpopular global warming views in the current election cycle.

Billionaire environmental activist Tom Steyer—who made his fortune by bankrolling coal projects—is spearheading a $100 million effort to produce and air campaign ads targeting Republicans who do not sign on to global warming alarmism. There has been little Republican pushback as yet, but the recent polling data appear to offer an opportunity to turn on its head the Democratic narrative that Republicans are out of touch on global warming.

Six years after the 2008 elections, the economy continues to be stuck in neutral, at best. Obamacare failed to deliver on its promises, and even most Democrats say it needs fixing. Gasoline and electricity prices have soared to all-time records. The Russian foreign relations “reset” button appears to have been a cleverly disguised “reconquer” button. The Middle East is an utter mess. Terrorism appears to be on the upswing again with the rapid emergence of ISIS. Iran continues on its path toward developing a nuclear weapon. Out-of-touch Democrats say the issue on which American leaders should focus is global warming.

Key Races Targeted

Steyer is pulling out all the stops to assist incumbent U.S. Democratic Senators Mark Udall (Colorado) and Jeanne Shaheen (New Hampshire). He is also pouring money into the Bruce Braley (Iowa) and Gary Peters (Michigan) election efforts. At the state level, Steyer is giving financial muscle to Charlie Crist’s attempt to make global warming a decisive issue in the Florida gubernatorial race.

At some point, Cory Gardner [right] in Colorado and Scott Brown [left] in New Hampshire may sense an advantage in asking, ‘What the heck are Mark Udall and Jeanne Shaheen doing spending so much time, money, and attention on global warming while they ignore or have screwed up the national economy, health care, energy prices, and foreign policy?’”

The polling numbers are clear and compelling in suggesting Republicans should fire back against Democrats’ global warming obsession. Charlie Crist, Gary Peters, and other global warming Democrats should be very worried.

James M. Taylor (jtaylor@heartland.org) is senior fellow for environment policy at The Heartland Institute.

What’s all the racket?

That sound you hear is the environmental “roosters” and their frightening predictions of disaster. Don’t listen. 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.

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Billionaire Leftists Are Infiltrating EPA, Report Says

By H. Sterling Burnett

A group of liberal billionaires and large foundations they support exert undue influence on the Obama administration’s Environmental Protection Agency and the nation’s environmental regulations, a U.S. Senate staff report explains.

The report, *The Chain of Environmental Command,* was published by the Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works’ minority staff.

*Insidious Tampering with EPA*

*The Chain of Environmental Command* shows how the Obama administration allows an elite group of left-wing millionaires and billionaires, which the report calls the “Billionaire’s Club,” to encourage or develop environmental policy in collusion with EPA staff and management.

“Wealthy donors, referred to ... as the ‘Billionaire’s Club,’ funnel money to far-left environmental activists through public charities,” the staff wrote in an accompanying press statement. “It also shows that current leadership at the EPA is very much an active partner in the far-left environmental movement, and even sponsors their efforts through grants to environmental activists.”

Through their funding and contacts, the Billionaire’s Club directs and controls the environmental movement, the report states. Environmental lobbyists, in turn, influence or control major policy decisions and lobby on behalf of EPA. One of these controversial activist organizations is Sea Change Foundation, which relies on funding from foreign company donors.

*Hiding the Money*

The report found wealthy foundations and individuals often donate large sums to intermediaries—sometimes a pass-through and sometimes a fiscal sponsor that then funnels the money to other 501(c)(3) and 501(c)(4) organizations—which makes the interrelationships among donors, recipients, and governmental agencies difficult to track.

Making the influence of these nonprofits even less transparent, the Senate report found many instances in which 501(c)(3) educational organizations, which can receive tax-deductible donations but face strict lobbying limits, often make grants to or exchange funds with 501(c)(4) lobbying groups whose donations aren’t tax-deductible and are allowed to lobby directly. The funds go both ways, with 501(c)(4)s often transferring funds to 501(c)(3)s.

*Inserting Activists in EPA*

In addition to indirect influence through their grant-making power, the Billionaire’s Club also exploits ties to key employees at EPA. According to the report, the Obama EPA has been deliberately staffed with “far-left environmental activists” who work with their former activist group colleagues to shape policy. The report states this “green-revolving door at EPA” is a valuable asset for activist groups and their wealthy allies.

*Paying Back Old Friends*

In addition to providing critical insider access in shaping important policies, activists now at EPA funnel taxpayer money through grants to their former employers and colleagues. The report tracked millions of dollars doled out to activist groups often in violation of agency ethics rules.

For example, Region 2 Administrator Judith Enck is under investigation by EPA’s Office of Inspector General (OIG) for what appears to be inappropriate personal involvement in allocating EPA grants. The committee found Enck required a subordinate to find grants that could benefit a particular activist group known as El Puente. Though El Puente seems to have violated the terms of an EPA award, Enck intervened to delay termination of the grant by 10 months.

The report also cites evidence Enck improperly funneled federal grants to environmental activist groups with whom she had a personal connection. Before Enck joined EPA, she was the president of Hudson River Sloop Clearwater. Since Enck assumed her position as Region 2 Administrator in 2009, Hudson River Sloop Clearwater received four EPA grants totaling $159,342.

*Leftist Foundations Pulling the Strings*

Ron Arnold, executive vice-president of the Center for the Defense of Free Enterprise, has been researching the green revolving door for many years. Arnold said, “The real culprits in the foundations’ influence are ... those who manage grants. The real problem is foundation program managers.”

The revolving door between environmental activist groups, grant-making foundations, and government agencies has allowed the most radical environmental interests to drive the agenda, Arnold explains.

“The program managers’ personal preferences guide grant making, and their preferences are formed in the environmental nonprofits and government agencies from which they emerged,” said Arnold.

Arnold cites examples such as Donald Ross, who joined the Rockefeller Family Fund after serving for the liberal Public Interest Research Group; Peter Teague, program manager of the Nathan Cummings Foundation, who was previously an environmental policy advisor to Leon Panetta, Sen. Dianne Feinstein, and Sen. Barbara Boxer, and later the environmental funder for the Tides Foundation; and Joshua Reichert, who left the United Farm Workers to join the congressionally funded Inter-American Foundation, eventually joining the Pew Charitable Trust, a major donor to environmental activist causes.

*Funding Faux Grassroots Groups*

The report cites another approach the Billionaire’s Club takes to direct environmental policy: “assembling and funding fake grassroots movements to assist in ballot measures and other state initiatives. The efforts in New York and Colorado to ban fracking are prime examples. ... These faux grassroots efforts are actually funded by foundations outside the states they seek to influence. All these groups are similarly utilizing their platform to attack jobs, economic development, and infrastructure projects across the country.”

“There is an unbelievable amount of money behind the environmental movement and far too much collusion between national environmental groups and the Obama EPA. This report really gets to the core of tracking the money and exposing the collusion.”

David Vitter, U.S. Senator - Louisiana
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AUGUST 2014

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