

The Week That Was: 2012-1-14 (January 14, 2012)

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The Science and Environmental Policy Project

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SEPP / VA-SEEE Forums:

January 23, 7 pm Mathews County, VA, Cornerstone Fellowship Church, 2243 Buckley Hall Road, Cobbs Creek, Va.

January 24: Virginia Beach, VA, 12:15 to 1:45, Libris Room, Virginia Beach Central Library, 4100 Virginia Beach Boulevard, <http://g.co/maps/upkp3> , Contact Kris Allen, klallen@gmail.com. Seating is limited. Please Register at: <http://www.eventbrite.com/event/2746333357>

Speakers include SEPP President Fred Singer, Dr. Charles Battig, and SEPP Exec. VP Ken Haapala. Topics include: status of global warming science and the divergence between models and observations. Why global models, even if modified for regional conditions, are unsuitable for local and regional planning. UN Agenda 21 and how to contest UN and Federal control over local land use issues.

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On the Road Again: Fred Singer will be traveling to the Southwest and West US to spread the joyous news that the NIPCC Reports are correct and the IPCC models do not conform to observations. Humanity has little to fear from the false claims of unprecedented and dangerous global warming. Although his schedule is not final, his stops include: Houston-Austin from Feb 6 to 8; Southern California from Feb 8 to 12, with a talk at Chapman University on Feb 9, additional meeting in San Diego on February 13 & 14 and the key Sigma Xi lecture at the University of New Mexico on Feb 16.

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Quote of the Week:

"It is error alone which needs the support of government. Truth can stand by itself." --Thomas Jefferson

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Number of the Week: 5 meters – 16.4 feet

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THIS WEEK:

By Ken Haapala, Executive Vice President, Science and Environmental Policy Project (SEPP)

Skepticism or Nihilism? As the global climate refuses to obey the global climate models, advocates of the position that human emissions of carbon dioxide are the principal cause of late 20th century warming are attacking skeptics as anti-science. In effect, they are writing that the skeptics are nihilists – denying that scientific knowledge is possible. These alarmists are misrepresenting the position of most skeptics, namely climate science as articulated by the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) fails to meet the standards of rigor required by modern science.

The problem is induction, which is required to establish the causal link between atmospheric carbon dioxide and temperature change. The problem of induction was forcefully articulated by the ultimate skeptic David Hume, who argued that even if there is a one to one correspondence between two variables and B always follows A, one cannot say with certainty that A causes B. There may be a future instance when it does not.

This problem has also been called the black swan problem in traditional philosophy of science (not to be confused with a recently articulated financial strategy by Nassim Taleb). All swans observed by Europeans were white. Therefore, it was thought that one can deduce that if it is a swan it is white. This example and many others, including using Euclidian geometry, led to the belief that *a priori* knowledge was possible. The discovery by Europeans of black swans in Australia undermined the belief that *a priori* knowledge is possible, which has been completely demolished since. The statement all swans are white is actually induction.

Getting around the problem of induction, as articulated by Hume, requires establishing strong links between A and B, and that A always comes before B. The IPCC has failed to establish a strong link between changes in atmospheric carbon dioxide concentrations and changes in temperatures; contrary to the claims of Al Gore, Antarctic ice cores reveal that B (changes in temperatures) comes before A (changes in atmospheric carbon dioxide concentrations.)

The first two assessment reports of the IPCC contained the temperature variation of the past 1000 years derived from the best available data. These included the Medieval Warm Period and a Little Ice Age. The Third Assessment Report (AR3) replaced the historic data with the infamous “hockey-stick,” without explanation. The Forth Assessment Report (AR4) dropped the “hockey-stick” without explanation and limited the scope to the past 50 years. This is terribly misleading and clearly indicates the models on which AR4 relies cannot explain historic temperature variation. An examination of the best available data on temperature variation for the past 20,000 (from Greenland ice cores backed up by other data) shows wild variation unrelated to atmospheric carbon dioxide, which the IPCC ignores.

As pointed out by Nir Shaviv, and others, actual temperatures are significantly diverging from model projections. Warming alarmists are trying to explain away this divergence with irrelevant claims, such as 2011 was the ninth warmest year on (the instrument) record. But as reader Don Rapp points out, it was also the ninth coldest year in the last 13. What the IPCC does in its next assessment report is difficult to guess, but one can expect a clever effort to avoid rigorous science in establishing the relationship between atmospheric carbon dioxide concentrations and temperature changes.

However in the interim, those accusing the skeptics as being anti-science are actually finding fault with skeptics because the skeptics are applying the principles of science far more rigorously than the IPCC applies them. Given the divergence between model projections and actual temperatures, any studies based on IPCC model projections are pure speculation. Please links under “Challenging the Orthodoxy,” “Questioning the Orthodoxy,” “Communicating Better to the Public,” and the articles by Brown and Gleick under “Below the Bottom Line” (repeats from last week.)

EPA: The EPA posted a master list of the facilities that are the major emitters of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases (GHG). The list is 616 pages long and includes 6157 facilities (SEPP calculated 6224 by category but this may include double listing). This list will be useful for some research, but, no doubt, it will serve as a “black list” of facilities to protest for EPA allies in the environmental industry.

At this time, there is no announcement that the EPA has formally responded to the finding by its Inspector General that the EPA did not perform the necessary scientific due diligence required for its finding that GHGs endanger human health and welfare. It is becoming clear that Lisa Jackson, the Administrator of the EPA, will do anything she thinks the EPA can get away with to expand its control of the US economy. In the current EPA, science is a label to give to studies that support EPA expansion of powers and not a rigorous discipline. Please see links under “EPA and other Regulators on the March.”

Canada: The Harper government of Canada has made development of Canada’s resources, particularly energy resources, a priority to assure Canadian prosperity in the future. In a stunning open letter, Natural Resources Minister Joe Oliver announced that Canada will not allow “environmental and other radical groups” to “hijack our regulatory system to achieve their radical ideological agenda.” In the letter and in interviews he particularly mentioned jet-setting celebrities, US environmental groups, and US foundations that are interfering with the orderly regulatory system for reviewing new projects. The Obama administration’s non-decision on the Keystone pipeline extension, after three years of study, has outraged the government of most reliable source for US oil imports and Canada is looking for more reliable trading partners. Please see links under “Energy Issues – Canada.”

Number of the Week: 5 meters, 16.4 feet. Steve Milloy of Junk Science.com revealed a new study that reported the costs to the city of Washington from a long term rise in sea levels of 5 meters, 16.4 feet. The study is based on IPCC extreme models and dubious reports of rapidly melting of the Antarctic ice sheets. Next up is a report of the costs involved if a meteorite hits Washington. Please see the link under “Below the Bottom Line.”

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ARTICLES:

For the numbered articles below please see this week’s TWTW at: www.sepp.org. The articles are at the end of the pdf.

1. ‘Reconstructing Climate Policy: Beyond Kyoto’ (AEI: 2003) Revisited

By S. Fred Singer, Master Resource, Jan 11, 2012

<http://www.masterresource.org/2012/01/singer-aei-2003-book/#more-18142>

2. U.S. Settles With Exxon, Statoil Over Huge Oil Find

By Tom Fowler and Russell Gold, WSJ, Jan 7, 2012

http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052970203513604577145542029752930.html?mod=ITP_pageone_1

[SEPP Comment: There are huge amounts of oil in the US Gulf of Mexico. The problems in getting it out are the technology, the economics, and, the government regulations. Today the principal constraint is the government regulations.]

3. How Microbes Teamed to Clean Gulf

Scientists Studied 52 Species of Bacteria and Water Currents to Explain Demise of Oil and Gas Plume

By Gautam Naik, WSJ, Jan 10, 2012

http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052970203436904577150910025591788.html?mod=ITP_pageone_1

4. California's High-Speed Rail Fibs

Florida and Ohio have walked away from dubious train projects. Are Golden Staters more gullible?

By Wendell Cox and Joseph Vranich, WSJ, Jan 10, 2012

http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052970203513604577144351390445434.html?mod=ITP_opinion_0

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NEWS YOU CAN USE:

Climategate Continued

Nature and the Inundation Legend

By Steve McIntyre, Climate Audit, Jan 8, 2012

<http://climateaudit.org/2012/01/08/nature-and-the-inundation-legend/#more-15352>

Challenging the Orthodoxy

On IPCCs exaggerated climate sensitivity and the emperor’s new clothes

By Nir Shaviv, Science Bits, Jan 9, 2012 [H/t Bishop Hill]

http://www.sciencebits.com/IPCC_nowarming

New Paper Finds No Change in Antarctic Snowmelt since Measurements Began in 1979

By Joe D’Aleo, WeatherBell Analytics, Jan 13, 2012

<http://www.weatherbell.com/weather-news/new-paper-finds-no-change-in-antarctic-snowmelt-since-measurements-began-in-1979/>

Is Global Warming A Bipolar Disorder?

By Patrick Michaels, Forbes, Jan 5, 2012 [H/t Bob Dillon]

<http://www.forbes.com/sites/patrickmichaels/2012/01/05/is-global-warming-a-bipolar-disorder/>

Science Journal Now Admits Soot's Major Role In Warming – CO2 Getting Cut Down To Size

By P. Gosselin, No Tricks Zone, Jan 13, 2012

<http://notrickszone.com/2012/01/13/science-journal-now-admits-soots-major-role-in-warming-co2-getting-cut-down-to-size/>

Defending the Orthodoxy

Denmark to push green energy in EU helm

By Staff Writers, Brussels (UPI) Jan 9, 2012

http://www.winddaily.com/reports/Denmark_to_push_green_energy_in_EU_helm_999.html

Cut back on soot, methane to slow warming: study

By Staff Writers, Washington (AFP), Jan 12, 2012

http://www.terradaily.com/reports/Cut_back_on_soot_methane_to_slow_warming_study_999.html

[SEPP Comment: Shows no calculated benefits from enhanced carbon dioxide and warming.]

Carbon dioxide super-scrubber? Potential good news in global warming fight.

Scientists have announced a potential breakthrough in developing a new material that removes carbon dioxide from the air. CO2 scrubbing could be a useful tool against global warming.

By Pete Spotts, Christian Science Monitor, Jan 5, 2012 [H/t Moorad Alexanian]

<http://www.csmonitor.com/Environment/2012/0105/Carbon-dioxide-super-scrubber-Potential-good-news-in-global-warming-fight>

[SEPP Comment: What happens to the carbon dioxide when one cleans it? And at what cost?]

Human CO2 Emissions Could Avert the Next Ice Age, Study Says

By Rebecca Boyle, PopSci, Jan 8, 2012

<http://www.thegwpf.org/science-news/4714-human-co2-emissions-could-avert-the-next-ice-age-study-says.html>

[SEPP Comment: Hallelujah! If you believe it!]

Health and Food Security Benefit From Climate Change Actions

By Adam Voiland and Rani Gran for Goddard Space Flight Center

Greenbelt MD (SPX) Jan 13, 2012

http://www.seeddaily.com/reports/Health_and_Food_Security_Benefit_From_Climate_Change_Actions_999.html

Questioning the Orthodoxy

A Tale of Two Disciplines

Physics and climate science

By Tom Quirk, Quadrant, Jan 13, 2012

<http://www.quadrant.org.au/blogs/doomed-planet/2012/01/a-tale-of-two-disciplines>

A Perversion of Science?

By Sherwood, Keith, and Craig Idso, CO2 Science, Jan 11, 2012 [H/t SPPI]

<http://www.co2science.org/articles/V15/N2/EDIT.php>

Global Warming? No, Natural, Predictable Climate Change

By Larry Bell, Forbes, Jan 10, 2012

<http://www.forbes.com/sites/larrybell/2012/01/10/global-warming-no-natural-predictable-climate-change/>

Please, Global Warming Alarmists, Stop Denying Climate Change - And Science

By James Taylor, Forbes, Jan 12, 2012

<http://www.forbes.com/sites/jamestaylor/2012/01/12/please-global-warming-alarmists-stop-denying-climate-change-and-science/>

UN & EU: Rich and Unaccountable — “A Vast Enterprise of Looting”

By Dennis Ambler, SPPI, Jan 11, 2012

<http://sppiblog.org/news/un-eu-rich-and-unaccountable-a-vast-enterprise-of-looting#more-6817>

The Emperor’s New Climate-Change Agreement

By Bjorn Lomborg, Project Syndicate, Jan 10, 2012 [H/t Judith Curry, Climate, etc]

<http://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/lomborg80/English>

Science and the Leveson inquiry

By Andrew Montford, Bishop Hill, Jan 12, 2012 [H/t GWPF]

<http://www.bishop-hill.net/blog/2012/1/12/science-and-the-leveson-inquiry.html>

A history of scientific alarms

By Kesten Green, Institute of Public Affairs, Jan 2012 [H/t Joe Bast]

<http://www.ipa.org.au/publications/1964/a-history-of-scientific-alarms>

A sustainable depression

Governments find inefficient renewable energy is unaffordable

By Patrick Michaels, Washington Times, Jan 9, 2012

<http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2012/jan/6/a-sustainable-depression/>

Those Who Claim to Speak for the Future

By Donna Laframboise, NFC, Jan 12, 2012

<http://nofrackingconsensus.com/2012/01/12/those-who-claim-to-speak-for-the-future/>

[SEPP Comment: The World Future Council?]

Questioning European Green

Electricity Costs: The folly of Wind Power

By Ruth Lea, Civitas, Jan, 2012 [H/t John Droz]

<http://www.civitas.org.uk/economy/electricitycosts2012.pdf>

UK Report on Renewables

By Donn Dears, Power For USA, Jan 13, 2012

<http://dddusmma.wordpress.com/2012/01/13/uk-report-on-renewables/>

Europe’s Doomed Flight of Decarbonizing Fancy

By Peter C. Glover, Energy Tribune, Jan 10, 2012

<http://www.energytribune.com/articles.cfm/9530/Europes-Doomed-Flight-of-Decarbonizing-Fancy>

Shaky Foundations For Offshore Wind Farms

By Chris Rhodes, Forbes, Jan 12, 2012

<http://www.thegwpf.org/uk-news/4739-shaky-foundations-for-offshore-wind-farms.html>

Wind power is expensive and ineffective at cutting CO2 say Civitas

Wind power could actually produce more CO2 than gas and increase domestic fuel bills because of the need for "back up" power stations, a think tank has warned.

By Louise Gray, Telegraph, UK, Jan 9, 2012

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/earth/earthnews/9000760/Wind-power-is-expensive-and-ineffective-at-cutting-CO2-say-Civitas.html>

High speed rail: new dawn or false hope?

By Martin Livermore, Scientific Alliance, Jan 12, 2012

<http://www.scientific-alliance.org/scientific-alliance-newsletter/high-speed-rail-new-dawn-or-false-hope>

11 tips, trends and traps for 2012

Energy security expert Matthew Hulbert and European Energy Review's chief editor Karel Beckman got together to provide a quick guide to 2012 for European energy decision-makers. Their most important recommendations: check your plan B, prepare the International Energy Agency for a new future, launch an Apollo programme for energy efficiency, free nuclear power from the embrace of the State, put an end to UN climate conferences and hold on to your hats.

By Matthew Hulbert and Karel Beckman, European Energy Review, Jan 9, 2012 [H/t Hugh Sharman]

<http://www.europeanenergyreview.eu/site/pagina.php?id=3448>

[SEPP Comment: At least one useful suggestion: stop the COPs.]

Double whammy from green taxes: Families will have to pay more for fuel and flights

One in three households will face fuel poverty if Government does not back a new era of nuclear power, says leading expert

By Sean Poulter and Kirsty Walker, Daily Mail, Jan 3, 2012 [H/t Anne Debeil]

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2081509/Double-whammy-green-taxes-Families-pay-fuel-flights.html>

Expanding the Orthodoxy

Rio +20 Earth Summit will tie population into green knots

By Ileana Johnson Paugh, SPPI, Jan 13, 2012

<http://sppiblog.org/news/rio-20-earth-summit-will-tie-population-into-green-knots>

More climate madness

By Walter Starck, Quadrant, Jan 9, 2012

<http://www.quadrant.org.au/blogs/doomed-planet/2012/01/more-climate-madness>

A 100 million dollar Climate DOE Project – Is This Money Well Spent?

Roger Pielke Sr, Pielke Climate Science, Jan 11, 2012

<http://pielkeclimatesci.wordpress.com/2012/01/11/a-100-million-dollar-climate-doe-project-is-this-money-well-spent/>

[SEPP Comment: Unreal! A dedicated program for commercial scale electricity and energy storage is needed, not this.]

Problems within the Orthodoxy

Team finds a better way to gauge the climate costs of land use changes

By Staff Writers, Champaign, IL (SPX) Jan 11, 2012

http://www.terradaily.com/reports/Team_finds_a_better_way_to_gauge_the_climate_costs_of_land_use_changes_999.html

[SEPP Comment: The IPCC global climate change models have problems.]

Seeking a Common Ground

Will The Ice Return?

By David Whitehouse, GWPF, Jan 11, 2012

<http://www.thegwpf.org/the-observatory/4736-will-the-ice-return.html>

Communicating Better to the Public – Exaggerate, or be Vague?

Disaster toll tallied

The soaring cost of natural catastrophes is due more to socio-economic than climatic factors.

By Quirin Schiermeier, Nature, Jan 10, 2012

<http://www.nature.com/news/disaster-toll-tallied-1.9760>

The nuclear, biological and climate threat - 2011 reviewed

By Staff Writers: Washington DC (SPX) Jan 11, 2012

http://www.terradaily.com/reports/The_nuclear_biological_and_climate_threat_2011_reviewed_999.html

[SEPP Comment: A great promotional gimmick. The 1947 clock from the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, based on the probability of nuclear war. How the Fukushima disaster increases the probability of nuclear war is unclear.]

Communicating Better to the Public – Make things up.

Counting the cost of calamities

Death rates from natural disasters are falling; and fears that they have become more common are misplaced. But their economic cost is rising relentlessly

The Economist, Jan 14, 2012 [H/t Roger Pielke Jr.]

<http://www.economist.com/node/21542755>

[SEPP Comment: As many regions of the world become wealthier, and the world becomes more interdependent, the costs of natural disasters increase.]

Bad Economics at NOAA

Roger Pielke Jr, His Blog, Jan 10, 2012 [H/t SPPI]

<http://rogerpielkejr.blogspot.com/2012/01/bad-economics-at-noaa.html>

Also see followup: NOAA to Redo its Billion-Dollar Disasters Database

<http://rogerpielkejr.blogspot.com/2012/01/follow-up-noaa-to-redo-its-billion.html>

[SEPP Comment: Oh, we forgot those extreme weather events that happened years ago! But, why adjust for inflation?]

The Portland State University study of shrinking Mt. Adams glaciers - a good example of bad science

By Don J. Easterbrook, ICECAP, Jan 11, 2012

http://icecap.us/index.php/go/political-climate/the_portland_state_university_study_of_shrinking_mt_adams_glaciers_a_good_e/

Another Bogus report in the Seattle Times from PSU

By Staff Writers, ICECAP, Jan 9, 2012

http://icecap.us/index.php/go/political-climate/another_bogus_report_in_the_seattle_times_from_psu/

Dr Brown and Climate Ethics

By Ed Caryl, No Tricks Zone, Jan 8, 2012

<http://notrickszone.com/2012/01/08/donald-brown-tactics/>

Global Warming May Trigger Winter Cooling

By Sid Perkins, Science Now, Jan 12, 2012 [H/t Toshio Fujita]

<http://news.sciencemag.org/sciencenow/2012/01/global-warming-may-trigger-winte.html?ref=hp>

Changing Climate

“Dramatic” response by flora & fauna to climate change

Birds, plants, and animals adapt to changing weather patterns, who knew?

By Anthony Watts, WUWT, Jan 11, 2012

<http://wattsupwiththat.com/2012/01/11/dramatic-response-by-flora-fauna-to-climate-change/#more-54624>

[SEPP Comment: Could much of the change come from government control of elk hunting? Most hunters realize the best locations for taking deer and elk is in open-broken land.]

Next Ice Age Not Likely Before 1,500 Years: Study

By Nina Chestney, Planet Ark, Jan 10, 2012 [H/t Hugh Sharman]

<http://planetark.org/wen/64368>

Changing Sea Ice

Russian fuel ship battles to reach ice-bound Alaska

By Staff Writers, Anchorage, Alaska (AFP) Jan 11, 2012

http://www.terradaily.com/reports/Russian_fuel_ship_battles_to_reach_ice-bound_Alaska_999.html

[SEPP Comment: The sea ice has returned.]

Acidic Waters – and Atmosphere

UOW data confirm surprising atmospheric findings

By Melissa Coade, Press Release, University of Wollongong, Jan 11, 2012 [H/t Climate Change Weekly]

<http://media.uow.edu.au/news/UOW117161.html>

Agriculture Issues & Fear of Famine

Scientists Refute Greenpeace Claims About GM Corn

By Staff Writers, Lanham, MD (SPX) Jan 10, 2012

http://www.seeddaily.com/reports/Scientists_Refute_Greenpeace_Claims_About_GM_Corn_999.html

EPA and other Regulators on the March

Biggest Hidden Cost Is to Democracy

By Marlo Lewis, CEI, Jan 11, 2012

<http://cei.org/op-eds-articles/biggest-hidden-cost-democracy>

[SEPP Comment: When government officials make secret deals with corporations, democracy and the public suffers.]

Explore Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Emissions from Large Facilities

By Staff, EPA, Dec 2011

<http://ghgdata.epa.gov/ghgp/main.do>

EPA details the carbon pollution from power plants for the first time

By Andrew Restuccia, The Hill, Jan 11, 2012

<http://thehill.com/blogs/e2-wire/e2-wire/203613-a-look-at-the-countrys-most-polluting-power-plants>

EPA Creates Website To ID Biggest Emitters Of Greenhouse Gases

By Richard Harris, NPR, Jan 11, 2012 [H/t Marc Morano, Climate Depot]

<http://www.npr.org/blogs/thetwo-way/2012/01/11/145052073/epa-creates-website-to-id-biggest-emitters-of-greenhouse-gases>

Constitutional right of due process at stake in EPA case

Editorial, Washington Examiner, Jan 9, 2012

http://washingtonexaminer.com/opinion/editorials/2012/01/constitutional-right-due-process-stake-epa-case/2078316?utm_source=1/10:%20Opinion%20Digest%20-%2001/10/2012&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Washington%20Examiner:%20Opinion%20Digest

Moisturizing the EPA

By Robert J. Smith, American Spectator, Jan 13, 2012

<http://spectator.org/archives/2012/01/13/moisturizing-the-epa>

EPA's War on Transparency

By William Yeatman, Global Warming.org, Jan 10, 2012

<http://www.globalwarming.org/2012/01/10/epa%E2%80%99s-war-on-transparency/>

EPA seeks outside review of 'fracking' pollution report

By Ben Geman, The Hill, Jan 13, 2012

<http://thehill.com/blogs/e2-wire/e2-wire/204023-epa-seeks-outside-review-of-fracking-pollution-report->

US extends Grand Canyon mining ban for 20 years

By Staff Writers, Washington (AFP), Jan 9, 2012

http://www.terradaily.com/reports/US_extends_Grand_Canyon_mining_ban_for_20_years_999.html

[SEPP Comment: Everyone in the Department of Interior responsible for making this decision should be forced to hike and camp at least 10 miles per day for 10 days in this desolate area, without outside support, modern equipment, or animals. With his showy cowboy boots, Interior Secretary Ken Salazar would not make it.]

Commerce head wants consumers to pay more for energy

By: Iain Murray and David Bier, Washington Examiner, Jan 12, 2012

<http://washingtonexaminer.com/opinion/op-eds/2012/01/commerce-head-wants-consumers-pay-more-energy/2089831>

Energy Issues - Canada

Open letter: Radicals threaten resource development

An open letter from the Honourable Joe Oliver, Minister of Natural Resources, on Canada's commitment to diversify our energy markets and the need to further streamline the regulatory process in order to advance Canada's national economic interest.

By Joe Oliver, Financial Post, Jan 9, 2012

<http://opinion.financialpost.com/2012/01/09/open-letter-radicals-threaten-resource-development/>

A war on green 'radicals'

Never before has a Canadian politician challenged the hitherto saintly protectors of the environment in such direct language

By Terence Corcoran, Financial Post, Jan 9, 2012

<http://opinion.financialpost.com/2012/01/09/terence-corcoran-a-war-on-green-radicals/>

[SEPP Comment: The current government of Canada is committing its future prosperity on development of its natural resources, and international environmental organizations be dammed.]

Joe Oliver's open letter: The regulatory system is broken

By Yadullah Hussain, Financial Post, Jan 9, 2012 [H/t Myron Ebell]

http://business.financialpost.com/2012/01/09/joe-olivers-open-letter-the-regulatory-system-is-broken/?_Isa=efb19285

Volatile conditions would make a Northern Gateway spill ‘tricky’

Claudia Cattaneo, Financial Post, Jan 11, 2012 – 3:06 PM ET | Last Updated: Jan 11, 2012 6:23 PM ET
http://business.financialpost.com/2012/01/11/volatile-conditions-would-make-a-northern-gateway-spill-tricky/?_lsa=b207fd7d

[SEPP Comment: Some eco-tourism locations attract fewer tourists than the Head-Smashed-In Buffalo Jump in Alberta.]

Energy Issues – US and in General

The Keystone XL Pipeline: A Line in the Sand For America’s Future

By Marita Noon, Energy Tribune, Jan 9, 2012

<http://www.energytribune.com/articles.cfm/9517/The-Keystone-XL-Pipeline-A-Line-in-the-Sand-For-Americas-Future>

On Sustainable Energy (Part II)

By Robert Bradley Jr, Master Resource, Jan 10, 2012

<http://www.masterresource.org/2012/01/energy-sustainability-part-ii/#more-18093>

Black Gold Rush: Cuadrilla Seeking Oil, Not Gas In Southern UK

By Nick Grealy, GWPF, Jan 21, 2012

<http://www.thegwpf.org/uk-news/4740-black-gold-rush-cuadrilla-seeking-oil-not-gas-in-southern-uk.html>

[SEPP Comment: Interesting, if true.]

U.S. Importing, Exporting Ethanol To and From Brazil

By Staff Writers, Corn and Soybean Digest, Dec 20, 2011 [H/t Norm Rogers]

<http://cornandsoybeandigest.com/energy/us-importing-exporting-ethanol-and-brazil>

Oil and Natural Gas – the Future or the Past?

Super Fracking Goes Deeper to Pump Up Natural Gas Production

By David Wethe, Bloomberg, Jan 11, 2012

<http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2012-01-11/super-fracking-goes-deeper-to-pump-up-natural-gas-production.html>

A Shale-Fuelled Economic Miracle for 2012

By Peter C. Glover, Energy Tribune, Jan 5, 2012

<http://www.energytribune.com/articles.cfm/9497/A-Shale-Fuelled-Economic-Miracle-for-2012>

Shale and GHG: Cornell v. Cornell

By Staff Writers, Natural Gas Europe, Jan 6, 2012 [H/t Tom Sheahen]

<http://www.naturalgaseurope.com/cornell-howarth-findings-wrong>

U.K. Shale Drilling Won’t Start Dangerous Earthquakes

By Kan Lundgren, Bloomberg, Jan 12, 2012 [H/t GWPF]

<http://www.businessweek.com/news/2012-01-12/u-k-shale-drilling-won-t-start-dangerous-earthquakes.html>

Administration’s Control of Oil and Gas

Petroleum Prices Set Records in 2011

By Geoffrey Styles, Energy Tribune, Jan 12, 2012

<http://www.energytribune.com/articles.cfm/9556/Petroleum-Prices-Set-Records-in-2011>

Chairman Chu's auto show

By Henry Payne, The Michigan View, Jan 11, 2012 [H/t Cooler Heads Digest]

<http://www.michiganview.com/article/20120111/MIVIEW/201110450/Payne---Chairman-Chu-s-auto-show>

Oil Spills & Consequences

Chemical measurements confirm official estimate of Gulf oil spill rate

By Staff Writers, Washington DC (SPX), Jan 11, 2012

http://www.terradaaily.com/reports/Chemical_measurements_confirm_official_estimate_of_Gulf_oil_spill_rate_999.html

Gulf currents aided breakdown of oil after BP spill, study says

Rather than moving steadily away from the wellhead, oil-laced water often circled back, returning hydrocarbon-consuming bacteria to the plume repeatedly, authors say.

By Bettina Boxall, Los Angeles Times, Jan 9, 2012

<http://www.latimes.com/news/nationworld/nation/la-na-gulf-oil-20120110,0,1839654.story>

Nuclear Energy and Fears

Garbage In, Anti-Nuclear Propaganda Out: The 14,000 Death Fukushima Lie

By Josh Bloom, Forbes, Jan 11, 2012

<http://www.forbes.com/sites/realspin/2012/01/11/garbage-in-anti-nuclear-propaganda-out-the-14000-death-fukushima-lie/>

Alternative, Green (“Clean”) Energy

Wind turbine output a lie (Vermont & NY)

By William Post, Windturbinesyndrome, Jan 5, 2012

<http://www.windturbinesyndrome.com/news/2012/wind-turbine-output-a-lie-vermont-ny/>

[SEPP Comment: Explains why projected capacity on wind turbines placed along ridgelines falls short.]

Sharp Contraction Ahead For The Solar Industry

By Andrew McKillop, GWPF, Jan 10, 2012

<http://www.thegwgf.org/energy-news/4728-andrew-mckillop-sharp-contraction-ahead-for-the-solar-industry.html>

GM's flop in green

Hybrid is one part lemon, one part taxpayer albatross

By Patrick Michaels, NY Post, Jan 12, 2012

http://www.nypost.com/p/news/opinion/opedcolumnists/gm_flop_in_green_cSgFeqJfSLWcvruADOr4zO

Review of Recent Scientific Articles by NIPCC

For a full list of articles see www.NIPCCreport.org

Southern Hemisphere Tropical Cyclone Trends Flat to Down

Reference: Kuleshov, Y., Fawcett, R., Qi, L., Trewin, B., Jones, D., McBride, J. and Ramsay, H. 2010. Trends in tropical cyclones in the South Indian Ocean and the South Pacific Ocean. Journal of Geophysical Research 115: 10.1029/2009JD012372.

<http://www.nipccreport.org/articles/2012/jan/10jan2012a2.html>

Rising Temperatures and Corn Production in Northeast China

Reference: Chen, C., Lei, C., Deng, A., Qian, C., Hoogmoed, W. and Zhang, W. 2011. Will higher minimum temperatures increase corn production in northeast China? An analysis of historical data over 1965-2008. Agricultural and Forest Meteorology 151: 1580-1588.

<http://www.nipccreport.org/articles/2012/jan/10jan2012a3.html>

The MWP and LIA in the Canadian Arctic Archipelago

Reference: Vare, L.L., Masse, G., Gregory, T.R., Smart, C.W. and Belt, S.T. 2009. Sea ice variations in the central Canadian Arctic Archipelago during the Holocene. *Quaternary Science Reviews* 28: 1354-1366.

<http://www.nipccreport.org/articles/2012/jan/11jan2012a3.html>

Temperature Effects on Hospital Admissions in Shanghai, China

Reference: Ma, W., Xu, X., Peng, L. and Kan, H. 2011. Impact of extreme temperature on hospital admission in Shanghai, China. *Science of the Total Environment* 409: 3634-3637.

<http://www.nipccreport.org/articles/2012/jan/11jan2012a4.html>

Recent Mass Balance Estimates of the Antarctic Ice Sheet

Reference: Zwally, H.J. and Giovinetto, M.B. 2011. Overview and assessment of Antarctic Ice-Sheet mass balance estimates: 1992-2009. *Surveys in Geophysics* 32: 351-376.

<http://www.nipccreport.org/articles/2012/jan/11jan2012a5.html>

Oh Mann!

Will Replicated Global Warming Science Make Mann Go Ape?

By Patrick Michaels, World Climate Report, Jan 10, 2012

http://www.worldclimaterreport.com/index.php/2012/01/10/mann_go_ape/

Mann, straw man and SciAm

By Andrew Montford, Bishop Hill, Jan 10, 2012

<http://www.bishop-hill.net/blog/2012/1/10/mann-straw-man-and-sciam.html>

Environmental Industry

US health experts seek more study on 'fracking'

By Staff Writers, Washington (AFP) Jan 9, 2012

http://www.energy-daily.com/reports/US_health_experts_seek_more_study_on_fracking_999.html

[SEPP Comment: A small group demands epidemiological information on a new technology. It is impossible to have such information before the implementation of the technology.]

Other Scientific News

Revolutionary COI Disclosure Principles from the American Economic Association

By Roger Pielke Jr, His Blog, Jan 6, 2012

<http://rogerpielkejr.blogspot.com/2012/01/revolutionary-coi-disclosure-from.html>

[SEPP Comment: A set of principles regarding possible conflict of interest disclosures in AEA publications. Perhaps these should apply to all.]

False (?) Positives

By Judith Curry, Climate Etc, Jan 12, 2012

<http://judithcurry.com/2012/01/12/false-positives/#more-6530>

[SEPP Comment: A discussion of some issues applying to any scientific field relying on statistical analysis and inference.]

World's most extreme deep-sea vents revealed

By Staff Writers, Southampton, UK (SPX) Jan 12, 2012

http://www.terraviva.com/reports/World_most_extreme_deep_sea_vents_revealed_999.html

[SEPP Comment: Seeking life in locations previously considered hostile to life.]

Future development of smaller and more powerful electronics requires the understanding of 'quantum jamming' physics

By Staff Writers, Donostia, Spain (SPX) Jan 13, 2012

http://www.energy-daily.com/reports/Future_development_of_smaller_and_more_powerful_electronics_requires_the_understanding_of_quantum_jamming_physics_999.html

Other News that May Be of Interest

Winegate: Red wine health research falsified data

By Anthony Watts, WUWT, Jan 12, 2012

<http://wattsupwiththat.com/2012/01/12/winegate-red-wine-health-researcher-falsified-data/#more-54691>

[SEPP Comment: Oh no! Tell me it is not so!]

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BELOW THE BOTTOM LINE:

Study: Global warming to cause massive flooding in Washington DC

By Steve Malloy, Junk Science, Jan 11, 2012

<http://junkscience.com/2012/01/11/study-global-warming-to-cause-massive-flooding-in-washington-dc/>

World's 'most expensive' tea grown in Chinese panda poo

By Staff Writers.Chengdu, China (AFP) Jan 9, 2012

http://www.seeddaily.com/reports/Worlds_most_expensive_tea_grown_in_Chinese_panda_poo_999.html

[SEPP Comment: If panda poo is rare, then the tea grown in it must be rare?]

Italy violated human rights in garbage crisis: court

By Staff Writers, Strasbourg, France (AFP) Jan 10, 2012

http://www.terradaily.com/reports/Italy_violated_human_rights_in_garbage_crisis_court_999.html

Ethical Analysis of the Climate Change Disinformation Campaign: Introduction to A Series.

By Donald Brown, Climate Ethics, Penn State, Jan 3, 2011 [H/t Marc Morano, Climate Depot]

<http://rockblogs.psu.edu/climate/2012/01/ethical-analysis-of-the-climate-change-disinformation-campaign-introduction-to-a-series.html>

The 2011 Climate B.S.* of the Year Awards

[*B.S. means "Bad Science." What did you think it meant?]

By Peter Gleick, Forbes, Jan 5, 2012 [H/t Joe Best]

<http://www.forbes.com/sites/petergleick/2012/01/05/the-2011-climate-b-s-of-the-year-awards/>

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ARTICLES:

1. 'Reconstructing Climate Policy: Beyond Kyoto' (AEI: 2003) Revisited

By S. Fred Singer, Master Resource, Jan 11, 2012

<http://www.masterresource.org/2012/01/singer-aei-2003-book/#more-18142>

Reconstructing Climate Policy: Beyond Kyoto **By Richard B. Stewart and Jonathan B. Wiener 193 pp., Washington, D.C.: American Enterprise Institute Press, 2003.** This review was published in *Regulation* magazine (Cato Institute). MasterResource revisits Mr. Singer's book review and asks: how does it read today?

What is it about academic economists that makes them salivate like Pavlovian dogs whenever they hear the magic words "market solution"? Sure, market-based solutions are always more efficient and less

liable to be politically influenced than those based on command-and-control. But before we apply solutions, should we not first ask if there is a problem that needs to be solved?

And so it is with this book. The authors confidently assert the existence of a future climate problem more or less on faith, but they also see many difficulties with the 1997 Kyoto Protocol that is supposed to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases. So they propose a clever alternative to Kyoto — yet another solution to a non-problem.

They visualize a U.S.-China bilateral deal to limit emissions (mainly of carbon dioxide from fossil-fuel burning) that would operate in parallel with the Kyoto Protocol (which neither country plans to ratify). In their plan, the United States buys emission rights from an arbitrary excess quota allotted to China. The authors call it “headroom” but I call it a subsidy. The United States pays, China gets, and the atmosphere does not benefit because emissions continue essentially unabated.

Eventually and somehow, this U.S.-China deal is supposed to merge with Kyoto. Every nation in the world would then actually limit its emissions, and thereby save the climate, humanity, and Lord knows what else. What a pious hope!

Gentlemen’s Agreement

What else is wrong with the Stewart-Wiener scheme? *Plenty*, although it may be no worse than another dozen or so clever schemes thought up by other lawyers, economists, and policy analysts that are duly referenced in this volume but never critically discussed. Is there some kind of gentlemen’s agreement here?

All emission trading depends on having a “cap” – whether sectorial, national, regional, or global. Then, as emissions rise with population growth and economic prosperity, this kind of rationing creates a scarcity and imparts increasing value to emission permits.

The Pew Center keeps coming up with emission-trading schemes, and so do any number of academics in the United States and Europe. Resources for the Future published a cap-and-trade scheme with “soft” caps: whenever the price of permits becomes too high, the cap is relaxed and — Presto! — the price moderates.

In other words, the regulatory body can arbitrarily limit the value of the permits. And with political price control in place, why would anyone buy such permits?

Solution Without a Problem?

But enough of belittling esoteric schemes cooked up by would-be energy planners. Do we need to limit the emission of greenhouse gases at all?

First, there may not be a global warming problem. The climate history of the past century does not seem to be consistent with the greenhouse theory, throwing doubt on the predictions of appreciable future warming. And even if the climate were to warm, the consequences are more likely to be beneficial.

With the estimated cost of the Kyoto Protocol ranging from high to huge to ruinous (depending on the analyst), the cost-benefit analysis becomes pretty simple.

In any case, it is agreed by all that the Kyoto Protocol — even if punctiliously obeyed by all adherent (industrialized) nations — would have a negligible effect on reducing future warming. The reduction in

calculated temperature by 2050 is only 0.02 C. If the United States were to participate, the reduction would rise to 0.05 C, which is also essentially unmeasurable. And of course, if adhering nations buy emission rights instead of reducing emissions, there would be no effect at all on the atmosphere and temperatures. Zilch.

Even supporters agree that the Kyoto Protocol is only a “first step” and that much more drastic reductions are required by all nations, developed and developing, to keep greenhouse gas levels from rising much further. A 60 to 80 percent cut is required instead of the five percent called for by Kyoto. (I could not find any reference to those facts in the book.)

Finally, it is not even clear that we should be reducing the accumulation of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. It is not a pollutant and does not produce any adverse physiological effects. On the contrary, it is basic plant food and makes crops and forests grow faster with less water. (The American Enterprise Institute, publisher of the Stewart-Wiener book, earlier issued a study by Yale economist Robert Mendelsohn that documents the benefits of a warmer climate.)

So why reduce carbon dioxide levels? What does the Climate Treaty itself have to say? The 1992 Framework Convention on Climate Change (FCCC) is strangely uninformed about this question. Article 2 of the FCCC states only that “the ultimate objective is to achieve stabilization of greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere at a level that would prevent dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system.”

The concern here seems to be with the stability of the climate against sudden and possibly irreversible changes. But the FCCC gives no indication what the greenhouse gas level should be, or even whether it should be lower or higher than the present level. Empirically, we do know that the climate underwent many abrupt changes during the recent ice age and has been relatively stable during the Holocene (the warm interglacial period of the last 10,000 years). I have argued, in a Hoover Institution essay and elsewhere, that the FCCC (properly interpreted) actually favors a warmer climate and therefore higher carbon dioxide levels.

All of the foregoing suggests that the Kyoto Protocol is not only ineffective but also counterproductive. Nevertheless, diplomats and technical experts from 180 nations have been meeting endlessly for the past decade to argue about minutiae like the specifications of “sinks” for carbon dioxide and, of course, about the desirability and procedures of “emission trading.”

Convergence

A historical footnote is in order here. We need to remember the mind-set of the Clinton/Gore White House that engineered adoption of the Kyoto Protocol in 1997. Recall, for example, Under Secretary of State Timothy Wirth repeating Gore’s claim that “the science is settled” on global warming. And former Secretary of State Warren Christopher, in a speech at Stanford University in 1996, announcing that global warming was the single most important threat facing the United States in the 21st century.

Clinton/Gore never submitted the Kyoto Protocol to the Senate for ratification. (They were well aware that the Senate’s Byrd-Hagel resolution against any Kyoto-like protocol had just passed unanimously in July 1997.) But they tried to make ratification more palatable by proposing unlimited emission trading that would have allowed the United States to continue more or less in a business-as-usual fashion while buying surplus emission permits from Russia. This fudge was, of course, opposed by Greens and by many Europeans who wanted to see the United States undertake actual emission cuts and feel the consequent economic pain.

The whole matter came to a head at the sixth Conference of the Parties (to the Kyoto Protocol) in The Hague in November of 2000. But as the U.S. position softened and the United Kingdom, true believers in the Kyoto process, tried to broker a deal, the position of “Old Europe” hardened. French President Jacques Chirac, in particular, took a radical stance, telling delegates, “France proposes that we set as our ultimate objective the convergence of per-capita emissions.”

Convergence is based on the idea that everyone in the world should have the right to emit carbon in equal amounts — so requiring a vast decrease in the amount emitted by industrialized nations and a massive increase in the amount emitted by the Third World. Chirac admitted that Kyoto therefore represented “the first component of an authentic global governance.”

French intransigence killed the UK-brokered deal to allow progress on Kyoto. British Deputy Prime Minister John Prescott blamed continental European politicians in no uncertain terms: European ministers should have taken a chance and made the change, he said. “That’s what I decided to do and everyone was with us until we got into those Euro-ministers and they split.” He was especially critical and even insulting to the French environment minister.

The irony of it all is that the Europeans made all those concessions to Russia and Japan at the 2001 Conference of the Parties in Marrakesh, hoping to induce them to ratify Kyoto. Japan did so, but Russia continued to hold out. By then it was too late to get the United States aboard; George W. Bush had been elected president on a platform that included opposition to the ratification of the Kyoto Protocol, which he pronounced as “fatally flawed.” In September of 2003, Russia refused to ratify, with President Putin terming the Protocol “scientifically flawed,” an even more accurate description. And without the US or Russia, Kyoto cannot reach the magic 55 percent threshold needed to go into effect.

Social Engineering

We have now come full circle. The Stewart-Wiener scheme is really a variant of the concept of convergence. And as is well recognized, the concept depends crucially on whether it sets a national quota or a per-capita quota for rapidly developing nations, where population policies are often enforced by their governments. The authors do not spell out the political and social consequences of the two alternatives, nor do they specify the choice of carbon-dioxide limits or the political path for making that choice. It does not require much imagination to recognize the risks inherent in giving authoritarian governments the incentive to control their populations’ fertility and access to energy. We are no longer talking about climate policy, but about international social engineering.

2. U.S. Settles With Exxon, Statoil Over Huge Oil Find

By Tom Fowler and Russell Gold, WSJ, Jan 7, 2012

http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052970203513604577145542029752930.html?mod=ITP_pageone_1

[SEPP Comment: There are huge amounts of oil in the US Gulf of Mexico. The problems in getting it out are the technology, the economics, and the government regulations. Today the principal constraint is the government regulations.]

Federal officials have settled a dispute with Exxon Mobil Corp. and Statoil ASA over one of the largest offshore oil discoveries ever made in the Gulf of Mexico because the companies had failed to come up with a plan to begin producing oil.

Under the settlement, filed Friday, Exxon Mobil and Statoil will get to keep their leases in the Julia deepwater field—which Exxon estimates could hold one billion barrels of recoverable oil.

Exxon and Statoil also agreed to several major concessions, including a major increase in the royalty rate, which could end up meaning Exxon Mobil pays billions of additional dollars to the federal Treasury over the 35-year life of the oilfield. In addition, it agreed to build and install an offshore platform and begin producing oil by the middle of 2016.

"The settlement will allow Exxon Mobil to develop this very large, but technically challenging, resource as quickly as possible using a phased approach," said company spokesman Patrick McGinn in a statement.

If the lease had expired, Exxon would have faced the prospect it would revert back to the government, essentially losing a multibillion dollar asset.

The stakes in the case were also high for the government, which didn't want to be seen as bending its own rules even as it attempts to strengthen its offshore rules in the wake of the Deepwater Horizon oil spill.

An Interior Department spokeswoman said the agreement "provides incentives for timely and thorough development of the leases, and secures a fair return on those resources to the U.S. Treasury."

Oil prices spiked recently on worries over Iran's moves in the Persian Gulf, but Liam Denning argues that tighter sanctions on Iran will actually force Iran to sell at a discount. Photo: AP.

While the government extracted several concessions from Exxon, the Texas-based oil giant dodged a major embarrassment and loss of future revenue. Exxon was facing the prospect of having made one of the largest oil finds ever in its century-long history, only to lose it because it failed to follow federal rules for getting a lease extension.

The dispute over the Julia field began in October 2008, about a month before Exxon's 10-year lease expired. It applied for a five-year extension, but was denied because it hadn't set forth a specific development plan. Exxon and its partner Statoil, sued in federal court to prevent the government from taking back the lease.

3. How Microbes Teamed to Clean Gulf

Scientists Studied 52 Species of Bacteria and Water Currents to Explain Demise of Oil and Gas Plume
By Gautam Naik, WSJ, Jan 10, 2012

http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052970203436904577150910025591788.html?mod=ITP_pageone_1

A fortuitous combination of ravenous bacteria, ocean currents and local topography helped to rapidly purge the Gulf of Mexico of much of the oil and gas released in the Deepwater Horizon disaster of 2010, researchers reported on Monday.

After spewing oil and gas for nearly three months, the BP PLC well was finally capped in mid-July 2010. Some 200,000 tons of methane gas and about 4.4 million barrels of petroleum spilled into the ocean. Given the enormity of the spill, many scientists predicted that a significant amount of the resulting chemical pollutants would likely persist in the region's waterways for years.

According to a new federally funded study published Monday by the National Academy of Sciences, those scientists were wrong. By the end of September 2010, the vast underwater plume of methane, plus other gases, had all but disappeared. By the end of October, a significant amount of the underwater offshore oil—a complex substance made from thousands of compounds—had vanished as well.

"There was a lot of doomsday talk," said microbiologist David Valentine of the University of California, Santa Barbara, and co-author of the study, published in Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences. But it turns out "the ocean harbors organisms that can handle a certain amount of input" in the form of oil and gas pollutants, he said.

A year ago, Dr. Valentine and other scientists published a paper describing how bacteria that feed on naturally occurring oil and gas leaks underwater had apparently devoured much of the toxic chemicals released in the BP spill. That federally funded study, published in the journal Science, triggered disbelief among other researchers who questioned whether microbes could gobble up that much gas and oil so quickly.

Dr. Valentine and colleagues have now used a computer model to explain just how that scenario might have played out, though some scientists remain skeptical.

It was an intricate challenge. The first step was to estimate the flow rate of the various hydrocarbons from the well over the 87 days that the spill continued. The researchers identified 26 classes of such chemicals; they then had to figure out which of these chemicals stayed in the deep plume that remained more than 3,000 feet underwater, and which ones rose up to the surface. For example, in the plume, certain chemicals dissolved completely in the water, including the methane gas, while some of the oil droplets were atomized and remained suspended in the water. A lot of the surface oil evaporated or washed up on Gulf shorelines.

Next, the scientists set about identifying the main species of oil-and-gas-eating bacteria that lived in the deep Gulf. They identified 52 main species of such microbes. The scientists also estimated how quickly the bacteria consumed oil and gas and how much the bacteria colonies grew.

The final step was to model the complex movement of the water in the Gulf to determine where the oil and gas—and the bacteria—got transported. Igor Mezic, a colleague of Dr. Valentine's and also a co-author, had published a study in 2011 predicting where the BP oil slick had spread. That analysis included data from the U.S. Navy's model of the Gulf's ocean currents and observations of the water's movements immediately after the spill and for several months after it ended.

The UC Santa Barbara researchers decided to marry their two computer models—the one about the spill-eating bacteria with the one capturing the movement of water. When they ran the joint model, they found that it helped to explain the puzzle of the rapidly vanishing oil spill.

The model showed that the topography in the Gulf had played a vital role. Because the Gulf is bounded on three sides by land—north, east and west—the water currents don't flow in a single direction as in a river. Instead, the water sloshes around, back and forth, as if it were trapped in a washing machine.

An initial population of bacteria encountered the spill near the BP well, its population grew, and then it was swept away by the ocean currents. But when the water circled back—that washing-machine effect—it was already loaded with these hungry bacteria, which immediately went on the attack again, mopping up another round of hydrocarbons. These repeated forays over the BP well, by the ever-growing bacterial populations, sped up the rate at which the methane and offshore oil got devoured.

Dr. Valentine suggested that oil companies ought to ascertain the currents, water motion and native microbial community in the water before embarking on any major offshore drilling project. "Then, if there is an event, we'd be many steps ahead of understanding where the oil may go and what the environment's response may be," he said.

Ira Leifer, a petroleum geochemist also at UC Santa Barbara who co-wrote a rebuttal to the 2011 paper published in Science, said the latest study was limited because it was based on a computer model "which is only as good as the input or assumptions" on which it is based. He noted, for example, that the authors had neglected to include a discussion of whether the bacteria would run out of critical nutrients necessary for them to consume the oil and gas and reproduce.

The research was funded by the National Science Foundation, the Department of Energy and the Office of Naval Research.

4. California's High-Speed Rail Fibs

Florida and Ohio have walked away from dubious train projects. Are Golden Staters more gullible?

By Wendell Cox and Joseph Vranich, WSJ, Jan 10, 2012

http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052970203513604577144351390445434.html?mod=ITP_opinion_0

A few days ago, the California High Speed Rail Peer Review Group, an expert body mandated by state law, expressed serious doubts about the proposed Los Angeles-San Francisco rail system. It concluded that it "cannot at this time recommend that the legislature approve the appropriation of bond proceeds" because the project "represents an immense financial risk" to the state.

But hell hath no fury like a state agency scorned. The California High-Speed Rail Authority issued a quarrelsome response claiming that the rail system is, well, a bargain! The agency repeated its claim that without high-speed rail, Californians would pay more because the state would have to build equivalent transportation capacity through road and airport expansions costing about \$171 billion, or between \$53 billion and \$73 billion more than the \$98 billion to \$118 billion estimated cost of a rail line.

The constant refrain that it's "more expensive not to build the rail line" is specious. But it deserves further explanation because of the light it sheds on tricks used to justify other ill-conceived projects to an unsuspecting public.

Estimating the cost to build additional highway and airport capacity in the absence of the rail line requires estimating how many people would be attracted to the train from cars and planes. But that's not how they did the math, judging by the methodology the authority published.

Proponents based their estimate on train capacity (including empty seats) of 1,000. Their rail plan calls for trains with only 500 seats, but this fictional doubling of capacity nicely boosts the amount of highway construction they can claim would be needed if the train line isn't built. The authority also assumed that more than twice as many trains would run as they now plan to run when the line is complete. They even include the cost of some highway expansions that would not be needed for hundreds of years at normal growth rates. All of this is absurd. Empty seats do not increase the demand for roads (or airports, for that matter).

Yet inflating the amount of new highways that would have to be built is the name of this game. By imagining huge new demand for train travel and other false premises, for instance, rail planners concluded that it would be necessary to add three lanes to each adjacent highway segment to handle the same demand, whether in the busy Los Angeles and San Francisco

metropolitan areas or the far lower-demand segments in the San Joaquin Valley. They also doubled the supposed cost of road construction by assuming that the state would need to build three lane expansions on both Interstate 5 and the parallel state Route 99 between places like Bakersfield and Fresno.

The capacity that proponents used to justify additional highway expenditures is more than three times the total current travel on some freeway segments. Not even the rail authority forecasts high-speed rail ridership that will remotely approach the exaggerated capacities used to estimate alternative highway expansion costs. It's as if rail planners value empty seats on future trains as contributing to reducing highway congestion.

International studies show that car users typically avoid high-speed rail because of its high cost and the time and expense added by having to rent a car or hire taxis to reach their final destinations. World-wide, the largest share of high-speed rail riders are people who used to ride slower trains. There are not enough California train riders now to create a solid base of future fast-train riders. And there is nothing to support the notion that current motorists will switch to rail in substantial numbers.

The claimed cost of airport expansion is bloated, too. Bullet train proponents assume a very small average plane size into the future, as if airlines wouldn't use larger planes—such as the latest generation single-aisle Boeing 737s or Airbus 321s—to meet demand. Even without high-speed rail, in other words, no new runways or gates would have to be built beyond what will be needed anyway, and the assumed billions of dollars required to expand airports is just another unsubstantiated claim by rail promoters.

These absurdities aren't surprising. A study we prepared for the Reason Foundation in 2008—*"The California High-Speed Rail Proposal: A Due Diligence Report"*—showed that high-speed rail proponents had overstated costs for alternative highway and airport capacities by a factor of more than 60.

There is more that is wrong with the California high-speed rail project. The Alice-in-Wonderland plan is based on greatly exaggerated ridership projections, hallucinatory promises of billions in private investment pouring into the system, and the expectation that the now-canceled federal high-speed rail program will magically provide many billions more.

Highly questionable claims are not new to major infrastructure projects. A team of European researchers, led by Oxford professor Bent Flyvbjerg, reviewed large transportation projects over the last 80 years and found a systematic pattern of error, which they politely referred to in one instance as "strategic misrepresentation," and then by its real name: "lying."

Not everyone in America has been so easy to deceive as Californians. A Tampa-Orlando high-speed rail program also was based on misleading cost and ridership projections, prompting Florida Gov. Rick Scott to cancel it and protect taxpayers. Wisconsin Gov. Scott Walker and Ohio Gov. John Kasich walked away from high-speed rail projects that would have depleted billions from federal and state treasuries.

Trying to keep the California high-speed rail project alive by claiming that it would be more costly to not build it sets a new low for planning projections in a field that has been rife with abuse.

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