The Week That Was: 2012-11-03 (November 3, 2012)
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The Science and Environmental Policy Project

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Quote of the Week: *"…[EPA concluded] that most of the observed increase in global average temperature since the mid-twentieth century is very likely due to the observed increase in human generated greenhouse gas emissions, and very likely is a defined term, which means 90 to 99 percent certain…"* Angeline Purdy, Department of Justice, discussing "the scientific and technical basis for the endangerment finding" of the EPA

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Number of the Week: Year 1926

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THIS WEEK:

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

Storming Sandy: For the US, the biggest news of the week was not the election but the combination of tropical Atlantic cyclone Sandy coming up the east coast from the south and an outside the tropic winter storm coming from . Canada. The tropical storm Sandy was large in diameter, with significant rain and a low barometric pressure, but not significant wind speed. The combining of these storms intensified the wind energy and produced unusual, but not unprecedented, results. For example, Hazel in 1954 was a combination of two storms and was far stronger, but went ashore in North Carolina, not New Jersey. Among the novelties was up to several feet of snowfall in the central mountain regions in states such as West Virginia.

The storm went ashore in mid New Jersey, approximately at high tide that was amplified by a full moon, creating a large storm surge in a natural funnel called the New York Bight. This caused significant flooding of coastal northern New Jersey and the Hudson River estuary including southern Manhattan, Brooklyn, and eastern parts of Long Island, which has one of the greatest concentrations of population and property wealth in the US. The storm surge on the southern tip of Manhattan was over 13 feet (about 4 meters). Of course, the storm attracted great media attention, whereas a similar storm in other parts of the world would attract far less attention. As of this writing less than 100 were killed, but property damage was extensive. The relatively low number of deaths can be attributed to the actions officials in alerting and forcing people to evacuate the area, something that the officials in New Orleans failed to properly do prior to Katarina.

Fortunately, most scientists did not use the occasion to blame global warming / climate change for the natural disaster. Unfortunately, a number of politicians and alarmists did blame global warming – as if stopping carbon dioxide emissions would stop extreme storms.

According to the meteorologists at WeatherBell Analytics, the storm surge was the worst to hit Manhattan since 1821. The 1821 hurricane hit at low tide, the population of New York was far less, and the sea levels have risen since.

A lesson frequently forgotten is if one builds on barrier islands, such as along the New Jersey coast, one must be prepared to lose the structure or heavily barricade it. The same is for underground structures such as the subway in New York. Please see Articles # 1 & # 2 and links under Storming Sandy, Changing Weather, Defending the Orthodoxy, Communicating Better to

the Public – Exaggerate, or be Vague?, and Communicating Better to the Public – Make things up.
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No Consensus: Judith Curry gives a digest of her paper written with P.J. Webster on the claimed consensus of scientists. Of course, the consensus claimed by the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, and by other reports dutifully following it, is manufactured and false. Further, consensus is not physical evidence of an assertion being accurate or correct. The false consensus introduces a bias into climate science that is difficult to address and remove. The false consensus is the result of various methods to suppress dissidents as well as assert "expert judgment" and certainty levels in areas in which there are no ability to quantitatively assess certainty.

Curry states: "Greater openness about scientific uncertainties and ignorance, and more transparency about dissent and disagreement, would provide policymakers with a more complete picture of climate science and its limitations." Given the history of the IPCC, and its dutiful followers, it is doubtful that these required improvements will be achieved within the climate establishment. Please see links under Challenging the Orthodoxy.
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Regulatory Science: Roger Pielke Sr, comments on a new book, **Institutions And Incentives In Regulatory Science** which covers a broad range of issues on how governmental agencies justify regulatory expansion using science as a justification – a science that is unjustified in any rigorous sense. Such agencies include the IPCC, EPA, US Fish and Wildlife, and others.

Pielke states: "As the contributions to this volume show conclusively and in great detail, such agencies (and other assessment organizations such as the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change or IPCC) are far from unbiased in how they assess regulatory science." "…[the authors] paint a picture of a serious crisis in the scientific foundations of the modern regulatory state. But the authors go beyond this, by providing suggestions for reform. These proposals span a wide range." Please see link under Challenging the Orthodoxy.
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More Variables in the Models: According to John Timmer, the new climate models being used to prepare the IPCC Fifth Assessment Report (AR5) have more factors (variables) than the models used in AR4. If the values of these factors are not empirically determined, they will increase the degrees of freedom in the models and may serve to increase, rather than reduce, the uncertainty inherent the models. The models may initially give better appearing results, regionally, but the results may be temporary. The *Wall Street Journal* has labeled these factors as "fudge factors." These efforts do not go to addressing the central issue of empirically determining the temperature sensitivity of the planet to increasing carbon dioxide emissions. Please see link under Models v. Observations
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On-shore Wind: John Hayes, Britain's Energy minister has announced a plan to put a firm limit on the building of new onshore wind farms. This will certainly to cause a great controversy. Many citizens abhor the sight of the wind farms on the countryside, while landed interests greatly benefit from the income received. Please see links under Questioning European Green.
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Electricity Dumping: Several Central and Eastern European countries, such as Poland and the Czech Republic, are moving to disconnect or regulate electricity generated by wind farms in Germany on windy winter days. The excess electricity threatens to overload the girds and cause

blackouts. The issue illustrates a major problem with wind power which its political promoters fail to address. Please see link under Energy Issues – Non US.
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Quote of the Week: From the transcript of the oral arguments in litigation against the EPA's endangerment finding, page 70. Consolidated case number is 09-1322 and the dates of the oral arguments were February 28 and 29, 2012. The transcripts are not available on the web.

The calculations are based on the IPCC Fourth Assessment Report (AR-4). The statement somewhat contradicts the statement by PBS journalist John Hockenberry on Frontline Live Chat who wrote: "The saddest thing about this story is that we heard mostly absolute certainty and dismissive confidence among our skeptic friends…"

The court issues were previously discussed in TWTW March 3, 2012, October 13, 20 & 27, 2012
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Number of the Week: Year 1926. In 1926 the Great Miami Hurricane hit Florida. As reported by Roger Pielke Jr, according to estimates by the catastrophe insurance provider ICAT, if a similar were to strike today it would cause $180 Billion dollars in damage. Please see Article # 2.

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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. Bloomberg's November Surprise
By S. Fred Singer, American Thinker, Nov 3, 2012
http://www.americanthinker.com/2012/11/bloombergs_november_surprise.html

2. Hurricanes and Human Choice
Sandy was terrible, but we're currently in a relative hurricane 'drought.'
Connecting energy policy and disasters makes little scientific sense.
By Roger Pielke Jr, WSJ, Nov 1, 2012
http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052970204840504578089413659452702.html?mod=WSJ_hps_sections_opinion

3. Save the Whales, Forget the Children
Greenpeace's war on Golden Rice ignores science in the name of misguided activism.
By Henry Miller, WSJ, Oct 20, 2012
http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052970203897404578078422651627156.html?mod=WSJ_Opinion_LEFTTopOpinion

4. Why America Has Fallen Behind the World in Storm Forecasting
By Kerry Emanuel, WSJ, Oct 28, 2012
http://blogs.wsj.com/speakeasy/2012/10/28/why-america-has-fallen-behind-the-world-in-storm-forecasting/
[SEPP Comment: Critics of the British MET would differ with the author as to the effectiveness of its computer modeling.

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NEWS YOU CAN USE:

Science: Is the Sun Rising?

New Paper: Large Increase in Northern Hemisphere Sunshine Duration since 1982
From The Hockey Stick, GWPF, Oct 28, 2012
http://www.thegwpf.org/new-paper-large-increase-in-northern-hemisphere-solar-radiation-since-1982/

Climategate Continued

Karoly and Gergis vs Journal of Climate
By Steve McIntyre, Climate Audit, Oct 30, 2012
http://climateaudit.org/2012/10/30/karoly-and-gergis-vs-journal-of-climate/#more-17152
[SEPP Comment: The old tricks did not work this time, thankfully.]

Challenging the Orthodoxy

Proposed alternative to APS Statement
By Wallace Manheimer, Letter, Jul 2009
http://www.aps.org/units/fps/newsletters/200907/letters.cfm
[SEPP Comment: A continuation of the controversy regarding the American Physical Society's authoritarian statement on global warming.]

Climate change: no consensus on consensus
By Judith Curry, Climate Etc, Oct 28, 2012
http://judithcurry.com/2012/10/28/climate-change-no-consensus-on-consensus/#more-10322

New Book "Institutions And Incentives In Regulatory Science" (Edited by Jason Scott Johnston, 2012).
By Roger Pielke Sr, Climate Science, Oct 29, 2012
http://pielkeclimatesci.wordpress.com/2012/10/29/new-book-institutions-and-incentives-in-regulatory-science-edited-by-jason-scott-johnston-2012/

Mann's hockey stick disappears – and CRU's Briffa helps make the MWP live again by pointing out bias in the data
By Anthony Watts, WUWT, Oct 28, 2012
http://wattsupwiththat.com/2012/10/28/manns-hockey-stick-disappears-and-crus-briffa-helps-make-the-mwp-live-again-by-pointing-out-bias-in-ther-data/

Defending the Orthodoxy

Al Gore calls Sandy a 'disturbing sign of things to come,' urges climate action
By Ben Geman, The Hill, Oct 30, 2012
http://thehill.com/blogs/e2-wire/e2-wire/264871-al-gore-sandy-a-disturbing-sign-of-things-to-come

Bill Clinton, citing Sandy, hits Romney on climate change
By Ben Geman, The Hill, Oct 30, 2012
http://thehill.com/blogs/e2-wire/e2-wire/264917-bill-clinton-citing-sandy-hits-romney-on-climate-change

'Frankenstorm': Why climate change will not be denied in this election
By Susan Brooks Thistlethwaite, Washington Post, Oct 29, 2012
http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/guest-voices/post/frankenstorm-why-climate-change-will-not-be-denied-in-this-election/2012/10/29/601e5ffc-2206-11e2-ac85-e669876c6a24_blog.html
[SEPP Comment: The Professor of Theology offers no more evidence than those who blame the storm on non-traditional sexual behavior.]

Questioning the Orthodoxy

Announcement: WUWT-TV to counter Al Gore's '24 Hours of Climate Reality' with live webcast
By Anthony Watts, WUWT, Oct 29, 2012
http://wattsupwiththat.com/2012/10/29/announcement-wuwt-tv-to-counter-al-gores-24-hours-of-climate-reality-on-november-14th-and-15th/

David Suzuki and Scientific and Social Responsibility.
By Tim Ball, A Different Perspective, Oct 30, 2012
http://drtimball.com/2012/david-suzuki-and-scientific-and-social-responsibility/

Election Campaigns Prove Global Warming Crisis Skeptics Won The Climate Debate
By Larry Bell, Forbes, Oct 28, 2012
http://www.forbes.com/sites/larrybell/2012/10/28/election-campaigns-prove-global-warming-crisis-skeptics-won-the-climate-debate/

Who were the SECRET 28 who ended all climate debate at the BBC?
'Campaigners, NGOs, communications types - and scientists'
By Andrew Orlowski, The Register, Oct 29, 2012 [H/t GWPF]
http://www.theregister.co.uk/2012/10/29/boaden_tribunal_information_refusal/

U.S. Main stream media duped on global warming polls
By Tom Harris, Canada Free Press, Oct 28, 2012
http://www.canadafreepress.com/index.php/article/u.s.-main-stream-media-duped-on-global-warming-polls

Questioning European Green

Ten years too late, it's good riddance to wind farms – one of the most dangerous delusions of our age
By Christopher Booker, Mail UK, Oct 30, 2012
http://www.dailymail.co.uk/debate/article-2225544/Good-riddance-wind-farms--dangerous-delusions-age.html#ixzz2AsR5TRjz

Death knell for wind farms: 'Enough is Enough' says minister
Wind farms have been "peppered" across Britain without enough consideration for the countryside and people's homes, a senior Conservative energy minister admitted last night as he warned "enough is enough".
By Robert Winnett, Telegraph, UK, Oct 30, 2012 [H/t John Droz Jr.]
http://www.telegraph.co.uk/earth/energy/9644558/Death-knell-for-wind-farms-Enough-is-Enough-says-minister.html

Street lights turned off in their thousands to meet carbon emission targets
Huge swathes of Britain are being plunged into darkness as more and more streetlights are switched off by councils and roads authorities.
By Clair Duffin, Telegraph, UK, Oct 27, 2012 [H/t Malcolm G. Ross]
http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/9637929/Street-lights-turned-off-in-their-thousands-to-meet-carbon-emission-targets.html

Questioning Green Elsewhere

Green Jobs Go 0-for-4
By David Kreutzer, The Foundry, Nov 1, 2012
http://blog.heritage.org/2012/11/01/green-jobs-go-0-for-4/
[SEPP Comment: Because the methodologies differ, the numbers differ for the vaunted Brookings study, but the substance is the same – green jobs have been greatly oversold.]

More Green Energy Follies
By Michael Iachetta, American Thinker, Oct 27, 2012
http://www.americanthinker.com/2012/10/more_green_energy_follies.html

Report: Green-jobs program struggling to place workers
By Zack Colman, The Hill, Oct 26, 20122
http://thehill.com/blogs/e2-wire/e2-wire/264353-report-green-jobs-program-struggling-to-place-workers

RET "success" means $18 billion dollars wasted
By Jo Nova, Her Blog, Oct 28, 2012
http://joannenova.com.au/2012/10/ret-success-means-18-billion-dollars-wasted/

Failed Renewable Technologies Are An Expensive Teaching Moment
By Paul Chessser, NL&PC, Oct 30, 2012
http://nlpc.org/stories/2012/10/30/failed-renewable-technologies-are-expensive-teaching-moment

Expanding the Orthodoxy

Doha, Qatar will host a climate conference
What a paradox!
By Lubos Motl, Reference Frame, Oct 28, 2012
http://motls.blogspot.com/2012/10/doha-qatar-will-host-climate-conference.html
[SEPP Comment: Holding a conference to limit the use of fossil fuels in one the world's most opulent examples of wealth derived from the use of fossil fuels. The photos appropriately illustrate the hypocrisy of the UN potentates.]

Problems in the Orthodoxy

EU environment ministers in disarray over "hot air"
By Barbara Lewis, Reuters, Oct 25 2012 [H/t GWPF]
http://uk.reuters.com/article/2012/10/25/us-eu-environment-idUKBRE89O1BK20121025
[SEPP Comment: Oh No, Don't cancel my excess hot air! Is a nation's hot air a nation's property right?]

Seeking a Common Ground

The unbalance sheet
By John Brignell, Number Watch, Oct, 2012
http://www.numberwatch.co.uk/unbalance_sheet.htm
The concept of the balance sheet is important to the provision of information over a wide range of human activities, particularly in science and finance.
[SEPP Comment: Differentiating between seeking to gain advantage by misstatement, and seeking to gain advantage by concealing part of the truth. A series of essays giving examples follows.]

A disaster that science brought upon itself
The jailing of scientists for failing to predict an earthquake is the sad conclusion to the scientific community's depiction of itself as soothsayer.
By Brendan O'Neill, Spiked, Oct 25, 2012 [H/t Tom Sheahen]
http://www.spiked-online.com/site/article/13016/

What Role Do Emissions Reductions Have in Reducing Future Hurricane Losses?
By Roger Pielke Jr, His Blog, Nov 2, 2012
http://rogerpielkejr.blogspot.com/2012/11/what-role-do-emissions-reductions-have.html

A warm welcome back to the MWP
By Andrew Montford, Bishop Hill, Oct 27, 2012
http://bishophill.squarespace.com/blog/2012/10/27/a-warm-welcome-back-to-the-mwp.html
[SEPP Comment: The medieval warm period (MWP) returns to a tree ring record in Sweden. A list of studies that included the prior report without the MWP follows the announcement.]

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

'It's Global Warming, Stupid'
By Joe Romm, Bloomberg, Nov 1, 2012 [H/t Climate Etc.]
http://thinkprogress.org/climate/2012/11/01/1122241/bloomberg-businessweek-its-global-warming-stupid/?mobile=nc

Did Climate Change Cause Hurricane Sandy?
By Mark Fischetti, Scientific American, Oct 30, 2012
http://blogs.scientificamerican.com/observations/2012/10/30/did-climate-change-cause-hurricane-sandy/

Communicating Better to the Public – Make things up.

Global Warming Systemically Caused Hurricane Sandy
By George Lakoff, Huffington Post, Oct 30, 2012 [H/t Joe Bast]
http://www.huffingtonpost.com/george-lakoff/sandy-climate-change_b_2042871.html

Was Sandy systemically caused by CO2?
By Lubos Motl, Reference Frame, Oct 31, 2012
http://motls.blogspot.com/2012/10/was-sandy-systematically-caused-by-co-2.html#more

[SEPP Comment: See link immediately above. A long, but devastating essay on why we must preserve rational and quantitative reasoning and not return to Medieval science.]

Government funds anti-science name-calling crowd: "deniers", skeptics are old "will be gone soon"
By Jo Nova, Her Blog, Oct 30, 2012
http://joannenova.com.au/2012/10/government-funds-anti-science-name-calling-crowd-deniers-skeptics-are-old-will-be-gone-soon/#more-24535

Models v. Observations

Climate models get smarter, but uncertainty just won't go away
The projections in the new IPCC report won't be much more precise than the last.
By John Timmer, ARS Technica, Oct 29, 2012 [H/t Joe Bast]
http://arstechnica.com/science/2012/10/climate-models-get-smarter-but-uncertainty-just-wont-go-away/

Dust's Warming Counters Half of its Cooling Effect
By Staff Writer, Science Daily, Oct 31, 2012
http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2012/10/121031214248.htm?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+sciencedaily+%28ScienceDaily%3A+Latest+Scienc

Global precipitation variability decreased from 1940 to 2009
By Staff Writers, Washington DC (SPX), Oct 30, 2012
http://www.terradaily.com/reports/Global_precipitation_variability_decreased_from_1940_to_2009_999.html

New Paper "Indian Ocean Warming Modulates Pacific Climate Change" By Luo Et Al 2012
By Roger Pielke Sr, Climate Science, Nov 2, 2012
http://pielkeclimatesci.wordpress.com/2012/11/02/new-paper-indian-ocean-warming-modulates-pacific-climate-change-by-luo-et-al-2012/
This is yet another paper that highlights the complexity of the climate system and the difficulty skillful multi-decadal climate predictions and in seeking to attribute regional climate to particular climate forcings.

Measurement Issues

Climate Data Records: Maturity Matrix
By Judith Curry, Climate Etc, Oct 31, 2012
http://judithcurry.com/2012/10/31/climate-data-records-maturity-matrix/#more-10349
[SEPP Comment: More rigorous, sustained procedures for establishing data bases are needed. However, as seen in the disappearance of the historic cooling from about 1940 to the mid-1970s in the NASA-GISS data base, homogenization is not necessarily the answer.]

Blockbuster: Earth's Energy Balance measured – models are wrong
By Jo Nova, Her Blog, Oct 31, 2012
http://joannenova.com.au/2012/10/blockbuster-earths-energy-balance-measured-models-are-wrong/#more-24658

Storming Sandy

New York's worst storm surge since 1821's Great Hurricane; Northeast's Damage larger than Irene
By Staff Writers, ICECAP, Oct 30, 2012 [H/t Paul Refern]
http://icecap.us/index.php/go/joes-blog/new_yorks_worst_storm_surge_since_1821s_great_hurricane/

What Is Making Frankenstorm Sandy Exceptional?
By Roy Spencer, His Blog, Oct 29, 2012
http://www.drroyspencer.com/2012/10/what-is-making-frankenstorm-sandy-exceptional/

The Big Apple survives Sandy and shows how to live with climate change
Technology and human ingenuity can defuse natural disasters that once killed thousands
By Fraser Nelson, Telegraph, UK, Nov 1, 2012
http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/northamerica/usa/9648540/The-Big-Apple-survives-Sandy-and-shows-how-to-live-with-climate-change.html

Blaming Hurricane Sandy on the greedy and industrious is just as mad as blaming it on gays
By Brendan O'Neill, Telegraph, UK, Oct 30, 2012
http://blogs.telegraph.co.uk/news/brendanoneill2/100187070/blaming-hurricane-sandy-on-the-greedy-and-industrious-is-just-as-mad-as-blaming-it-on-gays/

Top 10 Damaging Hurricanes Within 50 Miles of Sandy's Landfall
By Roger Pielke Jr, His Blog, Oct 29, 2012
http://rogerpielkejr.blogspot.com/2012/10/top-10-damaging-hurricanes-within-50.html

The worst hurricanes? It depends
Terence Corcoran, The Financial Post, Oct 30, 2012
http://opinion.financialpost.com/2012/10/30/terence-corcoran-the-worst-hurricanes-it-depends/
If the 1926 Great Miami hurricane struck today, the damage would put Sandy in the dust

Frankenscience
Sandy doesn't tell us -anything about climate change
By Terence Corcoran, Financial Post, Oct 29, 2012
http://opinion.financialpost.com/2012/10/29/terence-corcoran-frankenscience/

The 'Screw Science' Media and Super Storm Sandy
When science departs from the scary-story script, journalists are the first to dismiss its importance.
By Donna Laframboise, NFC, Oct 30, 2012
http://nofrakkingconsensus.com/2012/10/30/the-screw-science-media-and-super-storm-sandy/

Vast Hurricane Sandy packs a wallop for millions along East Coast and beyond
By Joel Achenbach and Colum Lynch, Washington Post, Oct 29, 2012 [H/t Malcolm Ross]

http://www.washingtonpost.com/national/health-science/in-hurricane-sandys-path-dire-warnings-of-epic-storm-still-elicit-some-shrugs/2012/10/29/6549f9da-21e0-11e2-ac85-e669876c6a24_story.html?hpid=z3
The tropical cyclone formed south of Jamaica a week and a half ago and began to cruise north, paralleling the U.S. East Coast, *dutifully following the track laid out by computer models*.
[SEPP Comment: Which of the many computer model tracks? If a storm dutifully follows such a track, would it not be responsible for the modelers to track it off-shore?]]

Was Hurricane Sandy Caused by Global Warming?
As widespread power outages and flooding affect millions on the East Coast, speculation continues as to whether or not climate change caused the storm
By Teresa Welsh, US News, Oct 30, 2012
http://www.usnews.com/opinion/articles/2012/10/30/was-hurricane-sandy-caused-by-global-warming

Changing Weather

It's the AMO stupid
By Joseph D'Aleo, Weatherbell Analytics, Oct 31, 2012
http://icecap.us/index.php/go/new-and-cool/its_the_amo_stupid1/

"Hurricanes: Their Nature And Impacts On Society" Published In 1997 By Pielke Jr. and Pielke Sr. Available As A PDF
By Roger Pielke Sr, Climate Science, Oct 31, 2012
http://pielkeclimatesci.wordpress.com/2012/10/31/hurricanes-their-nature-and-impacts-on-society-published-in1997-by-pielke-jr-and-pielke-sr-available-as-a-pdf/

Learning (?) lessons from Sandy
By Judith Curry, Climate Etc, Nov 1, 2012
http://judithcurry.com/2012/11/01/learning-lessons-from-sandy/#more-10357
[SEPP Comment: Hurricanes have been a part of the world long before man created an industrial economy.]

We must prepare for extreme weather events, not vainly try to stop them
By Tom Harris, New Ideas, Oct 31, 2012
http://www.fcpp.org/blog/we-must-prepare-for-extreme-weather-events-not-vainly-try-to-stop-them/

U.S. faces gap in weather satellite data
By Staff Writers, Washington (UPI), Oct 26, 2012
http://www.terradaily.com/reports/US_faces_gap_in_weather_satellite_data_999.html

Changing Climate

Wind Turbines and Clouds – Another Human Climate Forcing
By Roger Pielke Sr, Climate Science, Oct 30, 2012
http://pielkeclimatesci.wordpress.com/2012/10/30/wind-turbines-and-clouds-another-human-climate-forcing/

[SEPP Comment: Wind turbines may have a significant impact on regional weather, not just local weather.]

Changing Seas

Finally: JPL intends to get a GRASP on accurate sea level and ice measurements
By Anthony Watts, WUWT, Oct 30, 2012
http://wattsupwiththat.com/2012/10/30/finally-jpl-intends-to-get-a-grasp-on-accurate-sea-level-and-ice-measurements/

La Nina Caused Global Sea Level Drop
By Staff Writers, Washington DC (SPX), Oct 30, 2012
http://www.terradaily.com/reports/La_Nina_Caused_Global_Sea_Level_Drop_999.html

Century-long trend of global ocean warming identified
By Staff Writers, Washington DC (SPX), Oct 30, 2012
http://www.terradaily.com/reports/Century_long_trend_of_global_ocean_warming_identified_999.html
[SEPP Comment: Nothing particularly new here.]

Changing Earth

Tsunami hit Geneva in AD 563: scientists
By Staff Writers, Paris (AFP), Oct 28, 2012
http://www.terradaily.com/reports/Tsunami_hit_Geneva_in_AD_563_scientists_999.html

Review of Recent Scientific Articles by NIPCC
For a full list of articles see www.NIPCCreport.org

Extreme Precipitation and Flooding Events in the Mediterranean French Alps
Reference: Wilhelm, B., Arnaud, F., Sabatier, P., Crouzet, C., Brisset, E., Chaumillon, E., Disnar, J.-R., Guiter, F., Malet, E., Reyss, J.-L., Tachikawa, K., Bard, E. and Delannoy, J.-J. 2012. 1400 years of extreme precipitation patterns over the Mediterranean French Alps and possible forcing mechanisms. *Quaternary Research* 78: 1-12.
http://www.nipccreport.org/articles/2012/oct/30oct2012a2.html

Ocean Acidification, Marine Food Production, and Calcification
Reference: McCarthy, A., Rogers, S.P., Duffy, S.J. and Campbell, D.A. 2012. Elevated carbon dioxide differentially alters the photophysiology of Thalassiosira pseudonana (Bacillariophyceae) and Emiliania huxleyi (Haptophyta). *Journal of Phycology* 48: 635-646.
http://www.nipccreport.org/articles/2012/oct/30oct2012a3.html
[SEPP Comment: Does not mention pH, but increasing CO2 in the water increases primary marine food production.]

The Medieval Warm Period in Northeast China
Reference: Wang, L., Rioual, P., Panizzo, V.N., Lu, H., Gu, Z., Chu, G., Yang, D., Han, J., Liu, J. and Mackay, A.W. 2012. A 1000-yr record of environmental change in NE China indicated by diatom assemblages from maar lake Erlongwan. *Quaternary Research* 78: 24-34.
http://www.nipccreport.org/articles/2012/oct/31oct2012a2.html

How Best to "Weatherproof" Earth's Corals Against Warming-Induced Bleaching
Reference: Wooldridge, S.A. and Done, T.J. 2009. Improved water quality can ameliorate effects of climate change on corals. *Ecological Applications* 19: 1492-1499.
http://www.nipccreport.org/articles/2012/oct/31oct2012a4.html

The Political Games Continue

Romney Seen Scuttling EPA Proposals, Letting Rules Stand
By Mark Drajem, The Hill, Oct 31, 2012
http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2012-10-31/romney-seen-scuttling-epa-proposals-letting-rules-stand.html

Obama shows support for natural gas
By Jacob Fischler, Medill News Service
Washington (UPI) Oct 26, 2012
http://www.energy-daily.com/reports/Obama_shows_support_for_natural_gas_999.html

Mayor Bloomberg's Deft Climate Politics
By Roger Pielke Jr, His Blog, Nov 2, 2012
http://rogerpielkejr.blogspot.com/2012/11/mayor-bloombergs-deft-climate-politics.html

Cap-and-Trade and Carbon Taxes

Conservative think tank AEI brings carbon tax debate out in the open
By Ben Geman, The Hill, Nov 26, 2012
http://thehill.com/blogs/e2-wire/e2-wire/264355-conservative-think-tank-with-doors-open-explores-carbon-tax

Eco-Taxes? Study Financed by U.S. Treasury Will Link Tax Code to Carbon Emissions
By Geoege Russell, Fox, Nov 1, 2012 [H/t SPPI]
http://www.foxnews.com/world/2012/11/01/eco-taxes-study-financed-by-us-treasury-will-link-tax-code-to-carbon-emissions/?test=latestnews#ixzz2BAFFUr4I
[SEPP Comment: The president of the National Academy of Sciences is a global warming alarmist.]

EPA and other Regulators on the March

Obama EPA set to derail fracking, kill 1.7 million jobs
Administration's energy regulations stifling the economy
By Thomas Mullikin, Washington Times, Nov 2, 2012
http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2012/nov/2/mullikin-obama-epa-set-derail-fracking-kill-17-mil/

Energy Issues – Non-US

Windmills Overload East Europe's Grid Risking Blackout: Energy
By Ladka Bauerova and Tino Andresen, Bloomberg, Oct 25, 2012 [H/t GWPF]
http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2012-10-25/windmills-overload-east-europe-s-grid-risking-blackout-energy.html
Germany is dumping electricity on its unwilling neighbors and by wintertime the feud should come to a head.

Oil majors back Kurdistan
By Lawrence Solomon, Financial Post, Oct 26, 2012
http://opinion.financialpost.com/2012/10/26/lawrence-solomon-oil-majors-back-kurdistan/

Oil and Natural Gas – the Future or the Past?
Utah oil sands projects gets green light
By Staff Writers, Salt Lake City (UPI), Oct 26, 2012
http://www.energy-daily.com/reports/Utah_oil_sands_projects_gets_green_light_999.html
[SEPP Comment: No word on EPA approval, which is not necessary but may be required in the future.]

Return of King Coal?
US shale gas drives up coal exports
By Staff Writers, Manchester UK (SPX), Oct 30, 2012
http://www.terradaily.com/reports/US_shale_gas_drives_up_coal_exports_999.html

Breaking News – The Internet and The Cloud Are (Still) Growing... Fast
By Mark Mills, Energy Facts Weekly, Oct 31, 2012
http://us1.campaign-archive2.com/?u=29bc7d5d85828d574f86c157a&id=4036ba7a69&e=

Nuclear Energy and Fears
China's emerging nuclear power policy
By Staff Writers, WNN, Oct 24, 2012
http://www.world-nuclear-news.org/NP_Chinas_emerging_nuclear_power_policy_2410121.html
[SEPP Comment: Only Generation III reactors will be approved. Among other improvements, these rectors feature standardized design and passive safety features, not needing external power or human controls.]

Hitachi Buys U.K. Nuclear Power Venture for $1.1 Billion
By Tsuyoshi Inajima and Yuji Okada, Bloomberg, Oct 30, 2012 [H/t GWPF]
http://www.businessweek.com/news/2012-10-30/hitachi-to-buy-horizon-nuclear-jv-from-eon-rwe-for-1-dot-1-billion

Alternative, Green ("Clean") Solar and Wind
Installing Windmills Doesn't Make the Wind Blow
By David Kreutzer, The Foundry, Oct 30, 2012
http://blog.heritage.org/2012/10/30/installing-windmills-doesnt-make-the-wind-blow/

Alternative, Green ("Clean") Energy -- Other
Biofuel breakthrough: Quick cook method turns algae into oil
By Staff Writers, Ann Arbor MI (SPX), Nov 01, 2012
http://www.biofueldaily.com/reports/Biofuel_breakthrough_Quick_cook_method_turns_algae_into_oil_999.html

Alternative, Green ("Clean") Vehicles
CBO Finds Electric Cars Not Smart: Toyota Pulls Plug On Its iQ

By Larry Bell, Forbes, Oct 30, 2012
http://www.forbes.com/sites/larrybell/2012/10/30/cbo-finds-electric-cars-not-smart-toyota-pulls-plug-on-its-iq/

California Dreaming

Ethanol suit hints at climate split between states
Editorial, Washington Post, Oct 29, 2012 [H/t Conrad Potemra]
http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/ethanol-suit-points-to-split-between-states-over-climate-policy/2012/10/29/1786dc40-17d6-11e2-8792-cf5305eddf60_story.html
[SEPP Comment: Not all identical Biofuels are created equally. More Balkanization of California.]

Other Scientific News

Voyager observes magnetic field fluctuations in heliosheath
By Staff Writers, Washington DC (SPX), Oct 31, 2012
http://www.space-travel.com/reports/Voyager_observes_magnetic_field_fluctuations_in_heliosheath_999.html

Oak Ridge and NVIDIA unveil Titan supercomputer
By Emi Kolawole, Washington Post, Oct 29, 2012
http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/innovations/post/oak-ridge-and-nvidia-unveil-titan-supercomputer/2012/10/28/78bf2e98-2110-11e2-8448-81b1ce7d6978_blog.html

Other News that May Be of Interest

Polar bears seen taking refuge on icebergs
By Staff Writers, Iqaluit, Nunavut (UPI), Oct 30, 2012
http://www.terradaily.com/reports/Polar_bears_seen_taking_refuge_on_icebergs_999.html
[SEPP Comment: From hunters? Perhaps this is why polar bear populations are, in general, expanding?]

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ARTICLES:

1. Bloomberg's November Surprise
By S. Fred Singer, American Thinker, Nov 3, 2012
http://www.americanthinker.com/2012/11/bloombergs_november_surprise.html

The multibillionaire mayor of New York City has combined bad climate science and bad politics, hoping to help swing the electorate toward reelecting Barack Obama.

The New York Times (Nov 2) reports:

> In a surprise announcement, Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg said Thursday [Nov 1] that Hurricane Sandy had reshaped his thinking about the presidential campaign and that as a result, he was endorsing President Obama. But he said he had decided over the past several days that Mr. Obama was the better candidate to tackle the global climate change that he believes might have contributed to the violent storm which took the lives of at least 38 New Yorkers and caused billions of dollars in damage.

The Christian Science Monitor reminds us that:

> One of Bloomberg's major concerns as mayor for the past 11 years has been global warming. He's tried to lower New York City's carbon footprint by planting more trees, getting more people to ride bikes, and looking for alternative energy supplies for one of the nation's largest consumers of power. From Bloomberg's viewpoint, Obama has marched in the same direction by setting higher fuel-efficiency standards for cars and trucks, tightening controls on mercury emissions, and closing the dirtiest coal plants.

In an editorial for Bloomberg View he wrote:

> Our climate is changing -- and while the increase in extreme weather we have experienced in New York City and around the world may or may not be the result of it, the risk that it may be - given the devastation it is wreaking - should be enough to compel all elected leaders to take immediate action."
>
> In making his endorsement, Mr. Bloomberg listed the various steps that Mr. Obama had taken over the last four years to confront the issue of climate change, including pushing regulations that seek to curtail emissions from cars and power plants. But the mayor cited other reasons for endorsing Mr. Obama, including the president's support for abortion rights and for same-sex marriage, two high-priority issues for the mayor."

This is not to say Bloomberg is overjoyed with Obama.

> "As president he devoted little time and effort to developing and sustaining a coalition of centrists, which doomed hope for any real progress on illegal guns, immigration, tax reform, job creation and deficit reduction," he writes. "And, rather than uniting the country around a message of shared sacrifice, he engaged in partisan attacks and has embraced a divisive populist agenda focused more on redistributing income than creating it.

Yet a leading British newspaper presents a quite different view:

> Had Superstorm Sandy struck five years ago, we would by now be hearing all manner of theories linking it to climate change or murky claims that it represented Gaia's revenge. But as science evolves, the hysteria is draining out of the climate change debate - and a new rationalism taking its place. We might not be sure that we can make any meaningful difference to its trajectory, but we know that we can adapt to it.
>
> In the old days, prime ministers would jet off to climate summits, making Flash Gordon-style declarations about there being only so many hours left to save the world. If you believed that the planet is warming, and that human activity is at least in part to blame (which I do) then you were asked to sign up to all manner of carbon-cutting schemes, regardless of what they'd accomplish. Environmentalism became the new Live Aid. Posters linked third-world floods to wasteful British household habits.
>
> It has since become harder to sustain such simplistic, emotive claims. The latest report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change admitted that the extent of mankind/s influence on extreme weather events is uncertain - and may not be clear for another 30 years. Fossil fuel consumption in the rich world peaked five years ago; the rise now

> comes from poorer countries, where millions are living longer, better (and yes, more carbon-intensive) lives. It would be impossible, not to say sadistic, to try to impede such progress.
>
> So rising carbon emissions are, to a significant extent, a side effect of alleviating global poverty. And poverty is by far a bigger killer than climate. At least 74 people died from Superstorm Sandy, but had a similar storm struck Asia, the toll could have run into the thousands. A recent MIT study into natural disasters between 1980 and 2002 found that America suffered an average of 17 deaths per windstorm, compared to almost 2,000 in Bangladesh. The average flood cost six lives in the former, but 210 in the latter. It wasn't that the storms were more severe or more frequent - just that America had the money to cope better.
>
> Nature's fury can be awesome - but man's resilience and inventiveness is more awesome still.

Bloomberg's climate science is abysmal

Evidently, Mayor Bloomberg has imbibed climate hype, even as US public opinion has become increasingly skeptical. Tellingly, neither Obama nor Romney has been discussing climate change. Bloomberg should listen to University of Colorado climate expert Prof. Roger Pielke, writing in the Wall Street Journal (Oct 31):

> Sandy was terrible, but we're currently in a relative hurricane 'drought.' Connecting energy policy and disasters makes little scientific sense...But to call Sandy a harbinger of a "new normal," in which unprecedented weather events cause unprecedented destruction, would be wrong. This historic storm should remind us that planet Earth is a dangerous place, where extreme events are commonplace and disasters are to be expected. In the proper context, Sandy is less an example of how bad things can get than a reminder that they could be much worse.
>
> While it's hardly mentioned in the media, the U.S. is currently in an extended and intense hurricane 'drought.' The last Category 3 or stronger storm to make landfall was Wilma in 2005. The more than seven years since then is the longest such span in over a century.
>
> Flood damage has decreased as a proportion of the economy since reliable records were first kept by the National Weather Service in the 1930s, and there is no evidence of increasing extreme river floods. Historic tornado damage (adjusted for changing levels of development) has decreased since 1950, paralleling a dramatic reduction in casualties. Although the tragic impacts of tornadoes in 2011 (including 553 confirmed deaths) were comparable only to those of 1953 and 1964, such tornado impacts were far more common in the first half of the 20th century.
>
> The United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change reports that drought in America's central plains has decreased in recent decades. And even when extensive drought occurs, we fare better. For example, the widespread 2012 drought was about 10% as costly to the U.S. economy as the multiyear 1988-89 drought, indicating greater resiliency of American agriculture.

> There is therefore reason to believe we are living in an extended period of relatively good fortune with respect to disasters. A recurrence of the 1908 San Francisco earthquake today, for example, could cause more than $300 billion in damage and thousands of lives, according to a study I co-published in 2009. (snip)
>
> Humans do affect the climate system, and it is indeed important to take action on energy policy-but to connect energy policy and disasters makes little scientific or policy sense. There are no signs that human-caused climate change has increased the toll of recent disasters, as even the most recent extreme-event report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change finds. And even under the assumptions of the IPCC, changes to energy policies wouldn't have a discernible impact on future disasters for the better part of a century or more.
>
> The only strategies that will help us effectively prepare for future disasters are those that have succeeded in the past: strategic land use, structural protection, and effective forecasts, warnings and evacuations. That is the real lesson of Sandy. [http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/northamerica/usa/9648540/The-Big-Apple-survives-Sandy-and-shows-how-to-live-with-climate-change.html]

Will Bloomberg make a difference?

I don't expect that the Bloomberg endorsement will make a discernible impact on the presidential elections. After all, New York is a blue state and will go for Obama no matter what. But voters in the swing states Ohio and Virginia certainly don't relish Obama's war on coal and are worried that his EPA would severely restrict 'fracking' for shale oil and gas. In Florida, another key state, retired elderly New Yorkers are more likely to follow former mayor Ed Koch, a Democrat who has endorsed Romney.

On the other hand, Bloomberg has increasingly used his personal wealth and the bully pulpit of his office to support same-sex marriage and gun control. His active campaign for incumbent senator Scott Brown (R-MA), with whom he shares gun-control policies, may yet result in Republican control of the US Senate.

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2. Hurricanes and Human Choice

Sandy was terrible, but we're currently in a relative hurricane 'drought.'
Connecting energy policy and disasters makes little scientific sense.
By Roger Pielke Jr, WSJ, Nov 1, 2012
http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052970204840504578089413659452702.html?mod=WSJ_hps_sections_opinion

Hurricane Sandy left in its path some impressive statistics. Its central pressure was the lowest ever recorded for a storm north of North Carolina, breaking a record set by the devastating "Long Island Express" hurricane of 1938. Along the East Coast, Sandy led to more than 50 deaths, left millions without power and caused an estimated $20 billion or more in damage.

But to call Sandy a harbinger of a "new normal," in which unprecedented weather events cause unprecedented destruction, would be wrong. This historic storm should remind us that planet Earth is a dangerous place, where extreme events are commonplace and disasters are to be

expected. In the proper context, Sandy is less an example of how bad things can get than a reminder that they could be much worse.

In studying hurricanes, we can make rough comparisons over time by adjusting past losses to account for inflation and the growth of coastal communities. If Sandy causes $20 billion in damage (in 2012 dollars), it would rank as the 17th most damaging hurricane or tropical storm (out of 242) to hit the U.S. since 1900—a significant event, but not close to the top 10. The Great Miami Hurricane of 1926 tops the list (according to estimates by the catastrophe-insurance provider ICAT), as it would cause $180 billion in damage if it were to strike today. Hurricane Katrina ranks fourth at $85 billion.

To put things into even starker perspective, consider that from August 1954 through August 1955, the East Coast saw three different storms make landfall—Carol, Hazel and Diane—that in 2012 each would have caused about twice as much damage as Sandy.

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There is therefore reason to believe we are living in an extended period of relatively good fortune with respect to disasters. A recurrence of the 1906 San Francisco earthquake today, for example, could cause more than $300 billion in damage and thousands of lives, according to a study I co-published in 2009.

So how can today's disasters, even if less physically powerful than previous ones, have such staggering financial costs? One reason: There are more people and more wealth in harm's way. Partly this is due to local land-use policies, partly to incentives such as government-subsidized insurance, but mostly to the simple fact that people like being on the coast and near rivers.

Even so, with respect to disasters we really do make our own luck. The relatively low number of casualties caused by Sandy is a testament to the success story that is the U.S. National Weather Service and parallel efforts of those who emphasize preparedness and emergency response in the public and private sectors. Everyone in the disaster-management community deserves thanks; the

mitigation of the impacts from natural disasters has been a true national success story of the past century.

But continued success isn't guaranteed. The bungled response and tragic consequences associated with Hurricane Katrina tell us what can happen when we let our guard down.

And there are indications that we are setting the stage for making future disasters worse. For instance, a U.S. polar-satellite program crucial to weather forecasting has been described by the administrator of the federal agency that oversees it—the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration—as a "dysfunctional program that had become a national embarrassment due to chronic management problems." The lack of effective presidential and congressional oversight of this program over more than a decade can be blamed on both Republicans and Democrats. The program's mishandling may mean a gap in satellite coverage and a possible degradation in forecasts.

Another danger: Public discussion of disasters risks being taken over by the climate lobby and its allies, who exploit every extreme event to argue for action on energy policy. In New York this week, Gov. Andrew Cuomo declared: "I think at this point it is undeniable but that we have a higher frequency of these extreme weather situations and we're going to have to deal with it." New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg spoke similarly.

Humans do affect the climate system, and it is indeed important to take action on energy policy—but to connect energy policy and disasters makes little scientific or policy sense. There are no signs that human-caused climate change has increased the toll of recent disasters, as even the most recent extreme-event report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change finds. And even under the assumptions of the IPCC, changes to energy policies wouldn't have a discernible impact on future disasters for the better part of a century or more.

The only strategies that will help us effectively prepare for future disasters are those that have succeeded in the past: strategic land use, structural protection, and effective forecasts, warnings and evacuations. That is the real lesson of Sandy.

Mr. Pielke is a professor of environmental studies and a fellow of the Cooperative Institute for Research in Environmental Sciences at the University of Colorado.

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3. Save the Whales, Forget the Children

Greenpeace's war on Golden Rice ignores science in the name of misguided activism.
By Henry Miller, WSJ, Oct 20, 2012
http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052970203897404578078422651627156.html?mod=WSJ_Opinion_LEFTTopOpinion

Say what you will about Greenpeace, the organization has always had a flair for publicity. From its early days of dodging harpoons and Japanese whalers in outboard motor boats, it has used media savvy and an aptitude for political theater to become a $360 million-plus per year behemoth with offices in more than 40 countries.

But what few members of the public know is that Greenpeace isn't just about saving whales and other appealing sea creatures. Its PR machine is now spearheading an effort to deny millions of children in the poorest nations the essential nutrients they need to stave off blindness and death.

The targets are new plant varieties collectively called "golden rice." Rice is a food staple for hundreds of millions, especially in Asia. Although it is an excellent source of calories, it lacks certain micronutrients necessary for a complete diet. In the 1980s and '90s, German scientists Ingo Potrykus and Peter Beyer developed the "Golden Rice" varieties that are biofortified, or enriched, by genes that produce beta-carotene, the precursor of vitamin A.

Vitamin A deficiency is epidemic among poor people whose diet is composed largely of rice, which contains no beta-carotene or vitamin A. In developing countries, 200 million-300 million children of preschool age are at risk of vitamin A deficiency, which increases their susceptibility to illnesses including measles and diarrheal diseases. Every year, about half a million children become blind as a result of vitamin A deficiency and 70% of those die within a year.

Golden rice could thus make contributions to human health on a par with Jonas Salk's polio vaccine. Instead, antitechnology groups such as Greenpeace have given already risk-averse regulators the political cover to delay approvals.

Genetically modified food has been a bête noire of left-wing groups for years, perhaps because it combines the evils of being somehow "unnatural" and often comes from corporate research labs. Greenpeace hasn't been swayed by the scientific consensus about the safety of genetically engineered crops—a consensus that is the result of hundreds of risk-assessment experiments and vast real-world experience. In the United States alone, approximately 85% of all corn and 91% of all soy grown is genetically engineered, and in almost 20 years of consumption around the world not a single health or environmental problem has been documented.

Greenpeace has variously alleged that the levels of beta-carotene in golden rice are too low to be effective or so high that they would be toxic. But feeding trials have shown the rice to be highly effective in preventing vitamin A deficiency, and toxicity is virtually impossible. So with no science to support its antagonism, the organization has been forced to adopt a new strategy: try to scare off the developing nations that are considering adoption of the lifesaving products.

In August, Greenpeace issued a press release stating that 24 children had been "used as guinea pigs in [a] genetically engineered 'golden rice' trial." The reference was to the results of a 2008 study conducted by Chinese researchers and Tufts University and funded by the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the National Institutes of Health.

The 2008 study demonstrated that the new varieties of golden rice did indeed deliver sufficient vitamin A and were superior to spinach for that purpose. As to the ethics of the study, the journal article states clearly: "Both parents and pupils [subjects] consented to participate in the study."

The Greenpeace press release nonetheless produced a furor in China. Chinese news agencies inaccurately reported that the researchers had conducted dangerous, unauthorized experiments on poor children, and within days Chinese police had interrogated the researchers and coerced statements disavowing the research.

While Tufts is cooperating with the Chinese and responsible organizations in the U.S. to conduct a review, for the time being Greenpeace has achieved its aim of significantly delaying, if not actually eliminating, further development of golden rice in China.

Greenpeace is also taking its scare campaign on the road to other nations. In the Philippines, where field trials of golden rice are under way, Greenpeace is warning that "the next 'golden rice' guinea pigs may be Filipino children," and it has persuaded the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines, the highest Catholic authority in that country, to weigh in against Golden Rice.

It has never been clear why Greenpeace—which has also raised money and its profile by bragging about sabotaging efforts to test insect-resistant crops that need less pesticide—persists in some of its campaigns. But none is likely to be more harmful for the world's children than its assault on golden rice.

Dr. Miller, a physician and molecular biologist, is a fellow at Stanford University's Hoover Institution and was the founding director of the FDA's Office of Biotechnology. His most recent book is "The Frankenfood Myth" (Praeger, 2004).

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4. Why America Has Fallen Behind the World in Storm Forecasting

By Kerry Emanuel, WSJ, Oct 28, 2012

http://blogs.wsj.com/speakeasy/2012/10/28/why-america-has-fallen-behind-the-world-in-storm-forecasting/

[SEPP Comment: Critics of the British MET would differ with the author as to the effectiveness of its computer modeling.

As Hurricane Sandy (or “Frankenstorm”) pummels the mid-Atlantic and Northeast, we are reminded that our technological advancement has not altogether spared us the tragic side of our relationship to nature. Yet we should be thankful that much has changed for the better since the Northeast was devastated by the “Long Island Express” hurricane of 1938. That storm hit with no warning at all, with the U.S. Weather Bureau confidently predicting that the storm would stay out at sea just hours before it struck. The lack of warning led to over 600 deaths.

As early as a week ago, some computer models were predicting that a strong and unusual storm would develop and bring dangerous weather to our area. Other models predicted that a storm might develop but would head out to sea and spare us. Then, as time went by, these various models gradually came to agree that the storm would pose great risks to the region extending from the Chesapeake to New England. The advanced information provided by computer models ingesting data from satellites, aircraft, weather balloons, and other platforms gave residents and governments time to prepare, and key businesses time to rush needed supplies to our region, sparing many lives and saving millions of dollars.

Americans should take great pride in the fact that computer weather modeling was invented here, along with weather satellites and other scientific and technological marvels. Sadly, the skill of our computer models fell substantially behind that of other nations some decades ago, and by many measures we are in third or even fourth place today. The overall star performer is a computer

model operated by a consortium of European nations; that model accurately predicted Sandy's track and evolution well before U.S. models caught up later last week.

Why have we fallen so far behind? While there are many nuances to this answer, the basic reason is a failure of political will. The Europeans spend somewhat more on numerical weather prediction and run their models on larger and faster computers; they have also been more effective that we have in involving academic researchers in the development and improvement of their models. They appear to recognize that the monetary savings of skillful weather forecasts far outstrip what governments spend on the weather enterprise.

Still, weather forecasting in the U.S. has much going for it. We have a weather research enterprise second to none, and our researchers are eager to contribute to better operational weather forecasts. Unlike the Europeans, we recognize that environmental information is a public good, and as its acquisition is funded largely by the taxpayer, it should be made freely available to the public. (Ironically, some European businesses prefer to use U.S. forecasts because they are free, while some U.S. businesses spend large sums for European forecasts because they are better.) We have a vital private sector weather enterprise that partners effectively with academia and government. And we have a dedicated pool of scientists and computer engineers who heroically continue to advance numerical weather prediction in the face of small budgets and inadequate computers. In short, we have almost all the components needed to regain our place as the world leader in weather forecasting skill.

What we need is a dedicated effort to create a numerical weather prediction enterprise second to none. Our current effort takes up about 3% of the overall budget of its parent organization, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). In my view, we should double this to 6%. But money alone will not put us on top; we need to shake up NOAA's dysfunctional organizational structure and create, perhaps with our neighbors Canada and Mexico, a center for numerical weather prediction that routinely taps into the enormous pool of talent across our government, academic, and private sectors, and that welcomes innovation. We are a country that suffers disproportionate economic losses from natural disasters, and we should create and operate the world's finest weather prediction models. Not only would we be able to take pride in this accomplishment, but the benefits we would reap would greatly exceed what it would cost to get there. It is a win-win proposition.

Kerry Emanuel is a professor at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology's Program in Atmospheres, Oceans, and Climate and the author of "Divine Wind: The History and Science of Hurricanes."

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