

The Week That Was: 2012-05-12 (May 5, 2012)

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The Science and Environmental Policy Project

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Quote of the Week:

“Even a succession of professional scientists—including famous astronomers who had made other discoveries that are confirmed and now justly celebrated—can make serious, even profound errors in pattern recognition.” Carl Sagan [H/t Paul MacRae, see link under Questioning the Orthodoxy]

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Number of the Week: 31.7% higher

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THIS WEEK:

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

Heartland Conference: The Heartland Institute’s Seventh International Conference on Climate Change (ICCC-7) will take place in Chicago, Illinois from Monday, May 21 to Wednesday, May 23, 2012 at the Hilton Chicago Hotel, 720 South Michigan Avenue. The event will follow the NATO Summit taking place in Chicago on May 19–21. The Theme is Real Science, Real Choices. Open to the public, registration is required. <http://climateconference.heartland.org/>

Heartland Flap: Thursday, May 3, the Heartland Institute displayed an ad on an electric billboard on an expressway outside of Chicago. It featured a photo of Ted Kaczynski, the Unabomber, with the statement “I still believe in Global Warming. Do you?” From 1978 to his capture in 1996, Kaczynski mailed a number of bombs to unsuspecting academics and businessmen, eventually killing 3 people and severely injuring 5.

The negative reaction to the billboard was swift. Some supporters of Heartland were outraged. Donna Laframboise withdrew from her scheduled talk at the upcoming Heartland conference. Ross McKittrick demanded the billboard be withdrawn, and it was twenty-four hours after it began. The billboard is a negative example of the logical fallacy *argumentum ad verecundiam*, attempting to transfer the undesirable characteristics of some supporters of a particular position to all those supporting the position.

The outrage by the promoters of global warming and their allies in journalism was predictable. They immediately denounced Heartland and all those associated with it. The hypocrisy is typical. Many of the global warming promoters use similar tactics: logical fallacies that are effective, but for which they are not criticized. They accuse skeptics as being anti-science when skeptics point out that the physical science does not support the assertions and conclusions in the *Summary for Policymakers* of the Fourth Assessment Report of the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC AR4). They label skeptics as deniers, implying they are Holocaust deniers. These promoters claim that skeptics are shills for the tobacco industry, the oil industry, etc. In short, they try to eliminate any possibility of public, rational discourse on the scientific issues.

Therein is the dilemma. The side that is consistently using logical fallacies and irrational arguments is widely accepted by the general media. Should the skeptics use the same tactics, or should they continue to use rational arguments hoping to eventually persuade the general public? There is no easy answer. Czech physicist Lubos Motl advocates the former, Andrew Montford the latter. Under a different circumstance, but a related topic, Roger Pielke, Jr. expresses how difficult it is to engage in rational discourse with some global warming promoters. Please see links under Heartland Flap.

Death Threats: A year ago some Australian scientists who advocate global warming claimed they received death threats. This claim was broadcast around the world. Death threats are a crime in Australia. Now, it appears that no crime was committed, but the scientists may have received some nasty comments. Please see links under Communicating Better with the Public – Make Things Up.

EPA Hearings and Comments: The EPA has proposed rules that will effectively prevent all new coal-fired power plant construction in the US, effectively shutting down the industry in the future. On May 24, EPA is holding one-day public hearings in Chicago and Washington DC. Please contact Ms. Pamela Garrett, telephone 919-541-7966 or email: garrett.pamela@epa.gov. Written comments will be accepted until June 25, 2012. [Instructions for submitting written comments \(PDF\)](#); [Read the proposed rule](#); [Fact sheet summarizing the proposed rule](#) (5pp, 157k); [Regulatory Impact Analysis \(PDF\)](#) (108pp, 1.28MB); [Press release](#)

On a related matter, West Virginia is normally a state favoring the Democratic Party. It is also a major East Coast producer of coal. On May 8, the state held its primary election for president. The Democratic ballot featured two candidates, President Obama and a felon in a Texas Federal prison for extortion. The prisoner received 41 percent of the vote.

Hydraulic Fracturing Safety: Thanks to aggressive publicity campaigns by environmental groups, many in the public question the safety of deep underground hydraulic fracturing, frac'ing, to extract oil and natural gas. Norm Kalmanovitch, a Canadian Professional Geophysicist with over 40 years experience world-wide, sent an article that presents actual data taken from the thousands of wells that used horizontal drilling and hydraulic fracturing in the Barnett Shale (Texas) and the Marcellus Shale (Pennsylvania) formations in the US. Of particular significance is the separation between the tops of the fractures closest to the surface and the depth of the aquifers. He also sent his personal comments on the difficulty of dealing with the environmental industry, which believes that no one in the extraction industries can be environmentally sensitive, and his comments why the capping of the BP Gulf oil spill took so long. Please see link under Energy Issues – US. Norm's comments will be in next week's TWTW.

Methane Hydrates: Essentially gas trapped in the crystal structure of water, methane hydrates are similar to ice and are found in marine sediments and in the Arctic regions. The extent of the gas is not fully understood, but hydrates can be a significant resource if the technology is developed to extract the gas at costs comparable to extraction of similar resources. A project on the North Slope of Alaska by ConocoPhillips and Japan Oil, partially funded by the US Department of Energy, has announced the successful extraction of methane from hydrates. This can be of particular significance to Japan, which has limited conventional natural gas (is importing liquefied natural gas) but may have significant resources of hydrates on its continental shelf. It remains to be seen how commercially viable this technology can become. Please see link under Oil and Natural Gas – the Future or the Past?

Sierra Club: A strident opponent of coal-generated electricity, the Sierra Club campaigned that natural gas was the clean alternative. The Club has bragged that it prevented the construction of some 150 coal fired power plants. Now that the EPA has proposed rules to prevent the construction new coal-fired power plants, the Sierra Club has begun a campaign calling natural gas a dirty fuel. Of course, the objective is to cripple the economy by shutting down all forms of energy use and electric power generation. Please see links under the Environmental Industry.

False Positives: As reader Stan Young alerted TWTW, reports continue that many medical and health studies cannot be replicated. The bulk of these studies tend to be what is termed "observational studies." Actually, they largely involve statistical manipulation of large data bases, which sometimes can be very valuable, other times misleading. These are of great concern because such studies may become the basis

of public policy. Certainly, the EPA has been known to be less than rigorous in invoking studies to proclaim public health threats. Please see Article #2 and links under Health, Energy, and Climate.

Number of the Week: 31.9% higher. According to a study by Robert Bryce of the Manhattan Institute, in 2010, the average price of residential electricity was 31.9% higher in states with renewable portfolio standards (RPS), mandates requiring purchase of renewable electricity, than in states without RPS. Twenty nine of the fifty states have RPS.

Bryce also found that of states with RPS, only Washington and Oregon are included in the ten states having the lowest utility rates. [Both states receive a great deal of electricity from the Bonneville Power Administration that has the largest hydroelectricity generating capacity in the nation.] Further, in the seven coal-dependent states with RPS, rates increased by 54.2 % from 2001 to 2010, twice the increase of coal-dependent states without mandates.

Although there may be other factors affecting the rates, the significant price differences should give pause to legislators considering similar mandates. Also, it gives an indication of the future as the EPA moves to shut down coal-fired power plants. Please see Article # 3 and link under Subsidies and Mandates Forever.

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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. The 'Crucify Them' Presidency

Al Armendariz, the EPA official who resigned in disgrace this week, was no outlier among the Obama administration's regulators.

By Kimberly Strassel, WSJ, May 3, 2012

http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052702304746604577382492416602720.html?mod=ITP_opinion_0

2. Analytical Trend Troubles Scientists

By Gautam Naik, WSJ, May 4, 2012 [H/t ACSH]

<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052702303916904577377841427001840.html>

“...both were so-called observational studies, in which scientists often use fast computers, statistical software and large medical data sets to analyze information collected previously by others. From there, they look for correlations, such as whether a drug may trigger a worrisome side effect.”

3. Gouged by the Wind

Renewable fuel mandates are raising electricity prices in the states.

Editorial, WSJ, May 4, 2012 [H/t Timothy Wise]

http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052702303592404577364244006391420.html?mod=googlenews_wsj

4. Virginia Could Be an Energy Power—If Washington Would Let It

In 2010, my state was poised to become the first on the East Coast permitted to produce oil and natural gas offshore. Then politics intervened.

By Bob McDonnell, WSJ, Apr 30, 2012

http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052702303592404577364330063107046.html?mod=ITP_opinion_0

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NEWS YOU CAN USE:

Science: Is the Sun Rising?

Climatic Effects of a Solar Minimum: Grand Solar Minimum and Climate Response Recorded for First Time in Same Climate Archive

By Staff Writers, Science News, May 6, 2012

http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2012/05/120506160119.htm?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+sciencedaily%2Ftop_news%2Ftop_environment+%28ScienceDaily%3A+Top+News+--+Top+Environment%29

[SEPP Comment: Abrupt cooling 2800 years ago in Germany.]

Climategate Continued

Yamal FOI Sheds New Light on Flawed Data

By Steve McIntyre, Climate Audit, May 6, 2012

<http://climateaudit.org/2012/05/06/yamal-foi-sheds-new-light-on-flawed-data/#more-15956>

[SEPP Comment: The cover-up of questionable actions by the University of East Anglia's Climatic Research Unit (CRU)]

The administrators' view

By Andrew Montford, Bishop Hill, May 10, 2012

<http://bishophill.squarespace.com/blog/2012/5/10/the-administrators-view.html>

Acton and parliamentary privilege

By Andrew Montford, Bishop Hill, May 10, 2012

<http://www.bishop-hill.net/blog/2012/5/10/acton-and-parliamentary-privilege.html>

[SEPP Comment: The University of East Anglia uses the same false techniques as the University of Virginia. Tell one party that requested emails do not exist; tell another that they do exist. Is this called academic integrity?]

Challenging the Orthodoxy

The Belief That CO2 Can Regulate Climate Is “Sheer Absurdity” Says Prominent German Meteorologist

By P Gosselin, No Tricks Zone, May 9, 2012 [H/t ICECAP]

<http://notrickszone.com/2012/05/09/the-belief-that-co2-can-regulate-climate-is-sheer-absurdity-says-prominent-german-meteorologist/>

Our Response to Recent Criticism of the UAH Satellite Temperatures

By John Christy and Roy Spencer, Spencer's Blog, May 9, 2012

<http://www.drroyspencer.com/2012/05/our-response-to-recent-criticism-of-the-uah-satellite-temperatures/>

[SEPP Comment: Countering yet another attempt to discredit the University of Alabama, Huntsville satellite measurements. Somewhat technical.]

Defending the Orthodoxy

The new “10 year plan” for global change

By Anthony Watts, WUWT, May 1, 2012

<http://wattsupwiththat.com/2012/05/01/the-new-10-year-plan-for-global-change/>

[SEPP Comment: The US Global Change Research Program announced a new ten year plan. Based on the announcement, it will use global climate models, adjusted for regions. Unfortunately, the models have never been validated and verified.]

Report: US oil boom won't end price shocks, military commitment

By Ben Geman, The Hill, May 8, 2012

<http://thehill.com/blogs/e2-wire/e2-wire/225951-report-us-oil-boom-wont-end-price-shocks-military-commitment->

[SEPP Comment: This issue is not price stability; but energy security. The web site promotes electric cars that have a base price of \$15,000 to \$20,000 more than comparable gasoline cars.]

Questioning the Orthodoxy

Why climate science is a textbook example of groupthink

By Paul MacRae, WUWT, Apr 30, 2012

<http://wattsupwiththat.com/2012/04/30/why-climate-science-is-a-textbook-example-of-groupthink/>

Global Warming Chorus Discord Rising To Feverish Pitch

By Larry Bell, Forbes, May 8, 2012

<http://www.forbes.com/sites/larrybell/2012/05/08/global-warming-chorus-discord-rising-to-feverish-pitch/>

Climate Science Not Settled Nor Rock Solid: Quicksand Is Better Analogy

By Tim Ball, A Different Perspective, Apr 29, 2012

<http://drtimball.com/2012/climate-science-not-settled-nor-rock-solid-quicksand-is-better-analogy/>

Hellfire and Heresy: Global Warming Hotheads Inflamed About Skeptical Challengers

By Larry Bell, Apr 29, 2012

<http://www.forbes.com/sites/larrybell/2012/04/29/hellfire-and-heresy-global-warming-hotheads-inflamed-about-skeptical-challengers/>

Global warming crusaders lose steam, tempers

By Matt Petterson, Washington Examiner, May 6, 2012

http://washingtonexaminer.com/opinion/op-eds/2012/05/global-warming-crusaders-lose-steam-tempers/573771?utm_source=Washington%20Examiner%20Opinion%20Digest%20-%2005/07/2012&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Washington%20Examiner:%20Opinion%20Digest

Questioning European Green

“Sustainable energy” just isn’t well, sustainable

By Roger Helmer, MEP, His Blog, Apr 27, 2012

<http://rogerhelmermep.wordpress.com/2012/04/27/sustainable-energy-just-isnt-well-sustainable/>

Green Energy Crisis: German Network Agency Calls For Suspension Of Emission Laws For Old Coal Plants

By D. Wetzel and D. Siems, GWPF, May 11, 2012

<http://thegwgf.org/international-news/5695-green-energy-crisis-german-network-agency-calls-for-suspension-of-emission-laws-for-old-coal-plants.html>

"The sun is giving us time to come up with smarter solutions for the Energiewende"

The optimistic message of Fritz Vahrenholt, climate dissenter and CEO of RWE Innogy

By Marcel Crok, European Energy Review, May 2, 2012 [H/t Gordon Fulks]

http://www.europeanenergyreview.eu/site/pagina.php?id_mailing=272&toegang=7a614fd06c325499f1680b9896beedeb&id=3681

[SEPP Comment: Vahrenholt, who largely accepts the global warming orthodoxy, believes that the solar influence is greater than the IPCC states and a decline in solar activity will give the world time to adapt better to lower carbon dioxide emissions.]

Forget Global Warming And Move Up To Real Climate Change

By Andrew McKillop, Market Oracle, May 4, 2012

<http://www.marketoracle.co.uk/Article34489.html>

Energy policy should remain a top priority

By Martin Livermore, Scientific Alliance, May 9, 2012

<http://www.scientific-alliance.org/scientific-alliance-newsletter/energy-policy-should-remain-top-priority>

Questioning Green Elsewhere

Canada won't attain greenhouse gas goals: government

By Staff Writers, Montreal (AFP), May 8, 2012

http://www.terradaily.com/reports/Canada_wont_attain_greenhouse_gas_goals_government_999.html

[SEPP Comment: No surprise here after it pulled out of Kyoto Protocol.]

Expanding the Orthodoxy

Microsoft vows to go carbon neutral

By Staff Writers, San Francisco (AFP) May 8, 2012

http://www.terradaily.com/reports/Microsoft_vows_to_go_carbon_neutral_999.html

[SEPP Comment: According to the May 9 Ycharts, Microsoft has a gross profit margin of 29.34%, about 4 times the profit margin of ExxonMobil at 7.26%. Which one makes the obscene profits?

<http://ycharts.com/companies/MSFT>]

Rio + 20 – World Control?

Rio+20: Developing Nations Push Back Green Agenda

By Timothy Hermann, Turtle Bay and Beyond, May 10, 2012

<http://thegwfpf.org/international-news/5686-rio20-developing-nations-push-back-green-agenda.html>

EU lawmakers won't go to Rio+20, can't afford the hotel

By Lubos Motl, Reference Frame, May 10, 2012

<http://motls.blogspot.com/2012/05/eu-wont-go-to-rio20-cant-afford-hotel.html#more>

[SEPP Comment: The legislators cannot afford to attend, but how many bureaucrats will attend?]

EU flying big team to Rio summit but to cap expenses

By Staff Writers, Brussels (AFP) May 10, 2012

http://www.terradaily.com/reports/EU_flying_big_team_to_Rio_summit_but_to_cap_expenses_999.html

[SEPP Comment: An approximate answer to the above question.]

'Low' expectations from new round of climate talks

By Staff Writers, Paris (AFP) May 11, 2012

http://www.terradaily.com/reports/Low_expectations_from_new_round_of_climate_talks_999.html

Problems within the Orthodoxy

EU shifts climate change targets again

By Nitin Sethi, Times India, May 10, 2012 [H/t GWPF]

<http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/environment/global-warming/eu-shifts-climate-change-targets-again/articleshow/13074640.cms>

[SEPP Comment: The EU teaming with the Association of Small Island States (AOSIS) to fight the emerging economies such as India, China and Brazil.]

EU nations get cold feet over climate change fund

Green fund aims to channel up to \$100 billion/yr by 2020

By Barbara Lewis, Reuters, May 7, 2012 [H/t Hugh Sharman]
<http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/05/07/eu-climate-idUSL5E8G7E9620120507>

Study finds stream temperatures don't parallel warming climate trend

By Staff Writers, Corvallis, OR (SPX) May 07, 2012

http://www.terradaily.com/reports/Study_finds_stream_temperatures_dont_parallel_warming_climate_trend_999.html

[SEPP Comment: Could it be that the urban heat island effect affects land thermometers showing an increase in general temperatures?]

Heartland Flap and other Political Points

Why I Won't Be Speaking at the Heartland Conference

By Donna Laframboise, NFC, May 5, 2012

<http://nofrackingconsensus.com/2012/05/05/why-i-wont-be-speaking-at-the-heartland-conference/>

McKitrick Letter to Heartland

By Ross McKitrick, Climate Audit, May 4, 2012

<http://climateaudit.org/2012/05/04/mckitrick-letter-to-heartland/>

Kaczynski Heartland billboard wasn't a blunder

By Lubos Motl, Reference Frame, May 5, 2012

<http://motls.blogspot.com/2012/05/kaczynski-heartland-billboard-wasnt.html#more>

On abusive analogy

By Andrew Montford, Bishop Hill, May 6, 2012

<http://bishophill.squarespace.com/blog/2012/5/6/on-abusive-analogy.html>

What I Learned this Week

By Roger Pielke Jr, His Blog, May 11, 2012

<http://rogerpielkejr.blogspot.com/2012/05/what-i-learned-this-week.html>

Heartland climate conference keeps sponsors despite billboard controversy

By Andrew Restuccia, The Hill, May 7, 2012

<http://thehill.com/blogs/e2-wire/e2-wire/225859-some-groups-stand-by-heartland-institute-amid-firestorm-over-climate-billboard>

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

Game Over for the Climate

By James Hansen, NYT, May 9, 2012

http://www.nytimes.com/2012/05/10/opinion/game-over-for-the-climate.html?_r=1&nl=todaysheadlines&emc=edit_th_20120510

The UN's Environmental 'Holocausts'

By Donna Laframboise, NFC, Apr 30, 2012

<http://nofrackingconsensus.com/2012/04/30/the-uns-environmental-holocausts/>

Communicating Better to the Public – Make things up.

Clouds' Effect on Climate Change Is Last Bastion for Dissenters

By Justin Gillis, NYT, Apr 30, 2012

<http://www.nytimes.com/2012/05/01/science/earth/clouds-effect-on-climate-change-is-last-bastion-for-dissenters.html>

[SEPP Comment: Advocacy journalism instead of reporting.]

The NYT Puts the Hit On

By Roger Pielke, Jr, His Blog, May 1, 2012

<http://rogerpielkejr.blogspot.com/2012/05/nyt-puts-hit-on.html>

[SEPP Comment: See linked article immediately above.]

Paging David Appell – ‘death threats against climate scientists’ story even deader than yesterday

By Anthony Watts, WUWT, May 3, 2012

<http://wattsupwiththat.com/2012/05/03/paging-david-appell-death-threats-against-climate-scientists-story-even-deader-than-yesterday/>

'Death threat' fictions

By Tony Thomas, Quadrant, May 7, 2012

<http://www.quadrant.org.au/blogs/doomed-planet/2012/05/death-threat-fictions>

Measurement Issues

A Summary Of Why The Global Annual-Average Surface Temperature Is A Poor Metric To Diagnose Global Warming

By Roger Pielke Sr, Climate Science, May 7, 2012

<http://pielkeclimatesci.wordpress.com/2012/05/07/a-summary-of-why-the-global-average-surface-temperature-is-a-poor-metric-to-diagnose-global-warming/>

[SEPP Comment: A somewhat technical piece on an important issue.]

Changing Climate

Little Ice Age cold interval in West Antarctica: Evidence from borehole temperature at the West Antarctic Ice Sheet (WAIS) Divide

By Orsi, Cornuelle, & Severinghaus, GRL, May 9, 2012 [H/t Hockey Schtick]

<http://www.agu.org/pubs/crossref/2012/2012GL051260.shtml>

[SEPP Comment: Chilling the claim that the Little Ice Age was not global.]

University of Pittsburgh Geologists Map Prehistoric Climate Changes in Canada's Yukon Territory

By Staff Writers, Pittsburgh PA (SPX), May 10, 2012

http://www.terraviva.com/reports/University_of_Pittsburgh_Geologists_Map_Prehistoric_Climate_Changes_in_Canada_Yukon_Territory_999.html

[SEPP Comment: Recognizing that rapid climate change in the Arctic is not unusual. The actual web site of the Arctic Research Consortium states that during the Holocene thermal maximum (8000 years ago) Arctic sea ice was probably the smallest during the current interglacial period, roughly the past 12,000 years. Also step-like changes have occurred during the latter part of the Holocene. It is suggested that these are driven by slow changes in the earth's orbit. <http://www.arcus.org/synthesis8k/index.php>.]

Decades of Data Show Spring Advancing Faster Than Experiments Suggest

By Leslie McCarthy for Goddard Institute for Space Studies, New York, NY (SPX) May 07, 2012

http://www.terraviva.com/reports/Decades_of_Data_Show_Spring_Advancing_Faster_Than_Experiments_Suggest_999.html

[SEPP Comment: Could it be due to carbon dioxide enrichment? A fact not recognized in the article.]

Changing Seas

No sea level rise catastrophe?

By Patrick Michaels, World Climate Report, May 9, 2012

<http://www.worldclimatereport.com/index.php/2012/05/09/no-sea-level-rise-catastrophe/#more-538>

[SEPP Comment: Greenland glacier flow varies and is not accelerating. Based on these observations, its contribution to sea level rise will be below the low end of that estimated by the IPCC.]

Nutrient supply after algal bloom determines the succession of the bacterial population

By Staff Writers, Munich, Germany (SPX), May 07, 2012

http://www.terradaily.com/reports/Nutrient_supply_after_algal_bloom_determines_the_succession_of_the_bacterial_population_999.html

[SEPP Comment: Contradicting the usual explanation of algal blooms: "In the coastal zone of temperate regions a spring algal bloom is not a sign of excessive nutrient input, but most of all a consequence of the more intense solar irradiation in spring."]

Changing Sea Ice

Two Russian Studies Of The Arctic Climate

By Roger Pielke Sr, Pielke Climate Science, May 4, 2012

<http://pielkeclimatesci.wordpress.com/2012/05/04/two-russian-studies-of-the-arctic-climate/>

[SEPP Comment: Among the findings are: a strong pulse of warm Atlantic water into the Arctic and the influence of glaciers on sea levels is much lower than described in the IPCC AR4.]

Cache of historical Arctic sea ice maps discovered

Arctic Sea ice data collected by DMI 1893-1961

By Frank Lansner, WUWT, May 2, 2012

<http://wattsupwiththat.com/2012/05/02/cache-of-historical-arctic-sea-ice-maps-discovered/>

[SEPP Comment: August Arctic sea ice extent declined significantly from 1923 to 1938]

Increasing speed of Greenland glaciers gives new insight for rising sea level

By Staff Writers, Seattle WA (SPX) May 10, 2012

http://www.terradaily.com/reports/Increasing_speed_of_Greenland_glaciers_gives_new_insight_for_rising_sea_level_999.html

[SEPP Comment: The first paragraph of the article contradicts the alarmist headline!]

Agriculture Issues & Fear of Famine

G8 urged to elevate food security issues

By Staff Writers, Washington (UPI) May 8, 2012

http://www.seeddaily.com/reports/G8_urged_to_elevate_food_security_issues_999.html

[SEPP Comment: Stopping subsidies and mandates for Biofuels would be a start.]

Litigation Issues

D.C. Circuit Hears Case Challenging NRC Inaction on DOE's Yucca Application

By Staff Writers, Power News, May 10, 2012

http://www.powermag.com/POWERnews/4631.html?hq_e=el&hq_m=2441457&hq_l=4&hq_v=5e66050d0

[SEPP Comment: After the Federal government collected \$29 Billion from the utilities for a repository of spent fuel and wastes, it closed the only designated repository down.]

Cap-and-Trade and Carbon Taxes

"Replace emission trading scheme with a carbon tax"

By Karel Beckman, European Energy Review, May 10, 2012

http://www.europeanenergyreview.eu/site/pagina.php?id_mailing=274&toegang=d947bf06a885db0d477d707121934ff8&id=3691

[SEPP Comment: In the European Emission Trading System it is the politicians that determine scarcity, therefore the price of carbon dioxide emissions.]

ADB urges action on climate change

By Staff Writers. Manila, Philippines (UPI) May 7, 2012

http://www.terradaily.com/reports/ADB_urges_action_on_climate_change_999.html

[SEPP Comment: No conflict of interest here – just planning to make some money on the carbon trading market.]

Subsidies and Mandates Forever

The High Cost of Renewable Electricity Mandates

By Robert Bryce, Manhattan Institute, Feb 2012

http://www.manhattan-institute.org/html/eper_10.htm

US Leads EU in CO2 Reductions

By Walter Russell Mead, American Interest, May 6, 2012 [H/t GWPF]

<http://blogs.the-american-interest.com/wrm/2012/05/06/us-leads-eu-in-co2-reductions/>

[SEPP Comment: Without national mandates or cap and trade, but state mandates are important.]

Wind Energy Without the PTC

By Lisa Linowes, Master Resource, May 10, 2012

<http://www.masterresource.org/2012/05/wind-energy-without-ptc/#more-19951>

[SEPP Comment: PTC is the production tax credit that, for wind, is set to expire at the end of 2012.]

The sorry lessons of green-power subsidies

By Gwyn Morgan, Globe and Mail, CA, Apr 30, 2012 [H/t SPPI]

<http://www.theglobeandmail.com/report-on-business/the-sorry-lessons-of-green-power-subsidies/article2417284/>

EPA and other Regulators on the March

EPA official resigns over ‘crucify’ remark

By Ben Wolfgang, Washington Times, Apr 30 2012

<http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2012/apr/30/epa-official-resigns-over-crucify-remark/>

The EPA is earning a reputation for abuse

Editorial, Washington Post, May 3, 2012

http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/the-epa-is-earning-a-reputation-for-abuse/2012/05/03/gIQAucvzzT_story.html?hpid=z3

[SEPP Comment: The Washington Post fails to ask how common is the regulatory abuse by the EPA, particularly of the second type presented. Few have the ability to challenge the EPA in courts.]

The EPA Has Petroleum Processers Over A Barrel: Costly Regulations Produce Crude, Unrefined Results

By Larry Bell, Forbes, May 1, 2012

<http://www.forbes.com/sites/larrybell/2012/05/01/the-epa-has-petroleum-processers-over-a-barrel-costly-regulations-produce-crude-unrefined-results/>

Beneath the EPA push to stop Pebble Mine

By Ron Arnold, Washington Examiner, May 10, 2012

http://washingtonexaminer.com/opinion/columnists/2012/05/beneath-epa-push-stop-pebble-mine/596396?utm_source=Washington%20Examiner%20Opinion%20Digest%20-%2005/11/2012&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Washington%20Examiner:%20Opinion%20Digest

Interior floats new draft rules to regulate oil-and-gas 'fracking'

By Ben Geman, The Hill, May 4, 2012

<http://thehill.com/blogs/e2-wire/e2-wire/225473-interior-unveils-fracking-rules-amid-industry-boos>

Energy Issues – Non-US

The End of Peak Oil

By Donn Dears, Power For USA, May 8, 2012

<http://dddusmma.wordpress.com/2012/05/08/the-end-of-peak-oil/>

Peak oil revisited: the real challenges are investment and sustainability, not availability

By Noe van Hulst, European Energy Review, May 7, 2012

<http://www.europeanenergyreview.eu/site/pagina.php?id=3685>

[SEPP Comment: Sloppy definitions and sloppy analysis lead to poor policy.]

Energy Issues -- US

Data Confirm Safety Of Well Fracturing

By Kevin Fisher, American Oil & Gas Reporter, Jul 2010 [H/t Norm Kalmanovitch]

http://www.halliburton.com/public/pe/contents/Papers_and_Articles/web/A_through_P/AOGR%20Article-%20Data%20Prove%20Safety%20of%20Frac.pdf

Oil and Natural Gas – the Future or the Past?

Huge Natural Gas From Methane Hydrates Process Developed

By Staff Writers, New Energy and Fuel, May 3, 2012

<http://newenergyandfuel.com/http://newenergyandfuel.com/2012/05/03/huge-natural-gas-from-methane-hydrates-process-developed/>

Beware of federalizing 'fracking'

By Robert Bradley, Jr, May 7, 2012

http://washingtonexaminer.com/opinion/op-eds/2012/05/beware-federalizing-fracking/579491?utm_source=Washington%20Examiner%20Opinion%20Digest%20-%2005/08/2012&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Washington%20Examiner:%20Opinion%20Digest

Texas Shale 'Gusher' Shows Why Fracking Is Important

Editorial, IBD, May 8, 2012

<http://news.investors.com/article/610765/201205081849/eagle-ford-shale-in-texas-shows-importance-of-fracking.htm>

Shale Gas Explorer Says U.K. Production May Start in 2014

By Kari Lundgren, Bloomberg, May 10, 2012 [H/t GWPF]

<http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2012-05-09/shale-explorer-cuadrilla-says-u-k-production-may-start-in-2014.html>

Fracking approval creates land exploration surge

The announcement by the Environmental Agency, effectively approving the process of 'fracking' for shale gas, will give a green light to energy companies seeking suitable land for exploration.

By Staff Writers, Farming UK, May 9, 2012 [H/t GWPF]

http://www.farminguk.com/news/Fracking-approval-creates-land-exploration-surge_23467.html

Vermont Primed to Become First U.S. State to Ban Fracking

By Staff Writers, Power News, May 10, 2012

http://www.powermag.com/POWERnews/4634.html?hq_e=el&hq_m=2441457&hq_l=11&hq_v=5e660500d0

[SEPP Comment: Environmental tokenism – no reserves and no natural gas industry.]

Washington's Control of Oil and Gas

Virginia Could Be an Energy Power—If Washington Would Let It

In 2010, my state was poised to become the first on the East Coast permitted to produce oil and natural gas offshore. Then politics intervened.

By Bob McDonnell, WSJ, Apr 30, 2012

http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052702303592404577364330063107046.html?mod=ITP_opinion_0

Obama Administration Regulatory Onslaught against American Energy Production Continues

By Staff Writers, ICECAP, May 4, 2012

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

Return of King Coal?

The Human Consequences of EPA's War on Coal

By Lachlan Markay, The Foundry, May 3, 2012

<http://blog.heritage.org/2012/05/03/the-human-consequences-of-epas-war-on-coal/>

If Obama is going to kill coal, he has to hide the body

By Alec Rawls, WUWT, May 11, 2012

<http://wattsupwiththat.com/2012/05/11/if-obama-is-going-to-kill-coal-he-has-to-hide-the-body/#more-62248>

[SEPP Comment: First, the all of the above for the administration's energy plan omits coal which produces over 40% of the nation's electricity. Then, it adds "clean" coal, whatever clean means.]

Nuclear Energy and Fears

Japan to go nuclear-free for first time since 1970

By Staff Writers, Tokyo (AFP) May 4, 2012

http://www.terradaily.com/reports/Japan_to_go_nuclear-free_for_first_time_since_1970_999.html

[SEPP Comment: No discussion of energy costs.]

Alternative, Green ("Clean") Solar and Wind

Wind farms can cause climate change, finds new study

Wind farms can cause climate change, according to new research, that shows for the first time the new technology is already pushing up temperatures.

By Louise Gray, Telegraph, UK, Apr 29, 2012 [H/t James Syster]

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/earth/earthnews/9234715/Wind-farms-can-cause-climate-change-finds-new-study.html>

[SEPP Comment: Reporters missing the point.]

Significance And Correction Of Misinterpretation By The Media Of The Zhou Et Al 2012 Paper "Impacts Wind Farms On Land Surface Temperature"

By Roger Pielke Sr, Pielke Climate Science, May 1, 2012

<http://pielkeclimatesci.wordpress.com/2012/05/01/significance-and-correction-of-misinterpretation-by-the-media-of-the-zhou-et-al-2012-paper-impacts-wind-farms-on-land-surface-temperature/>

[SEPP Comment: Clearing up misunderstandings concerning the study on wind farms. See link immediately above.]

Use of Public and Private Dollars for Scaling Up Clean Energy Needs a Reality Check, Say Scholars

By Staff Writers, Science Daily, May 1, 2012 [H/t Anne Debeil]

http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2012/05/120501162706.htm?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+sciencedaily%2Ftop_news%2Ftop_environment+%28ScienceDaily%3A+Top+News+--+Top+Environment%29

[SEPP Comment: A call for more clean energy with smarter and more focused policies. But the article fails to address two major hurdles. One, solar and wind need reliable back-up. Two, except for pumped hydro, there is no commercial scale storage of electricity.]

Report: Solar Power's Incentivization Is Similar to That of Other Energy Sources

By Staff Writers, Power News, May 10, 2012

http://www.powermag.com/POWERnews/4635.html?hq_e=el&hq_m=2441457&hq_l=13&hq_v=5e660500d0

[SEPP Comment: The oil industry and the coal utility industry started without subsidies or mandates. It was only after high income taxes, and the industries proved to be valuable, did the subsidies come. The solar utility industry has yet to prove itself as valuable.]

China to supply solar power to Japan?

By Staff Writers, Beijing (UPI), May 9, 2012

http://www.solardaily.com/reports/China_to_supply_solar_power_to_Japan_999.html

[SEPP Comment: The article states: "More than 90 percent of solar panel products made in China are intended for export." The statement supports the contention that the heavy investment by China into solar was for export, not domestic consumption. China will continue to lead in the domestic production of electricity from coal, hydro and nuclear. So much for claims of a race with China for 21st century technology.]

Carbon Schemes

Norway boasts world's largest carbon dioxide capture lab

By Staff Writers, Oslo (AFP), May 7, 2012

http://www.energy-daily.com/reports/Norway_boasts_worlds_largest_carbon_dioxide_capture_lab_999.html

Growth of Carbon Capture and Storage Stalled in 2011

By Staff Writers, Washington DC (SPX) May 10, 2012

http://www.energy-daily.com/reports/Growth_of_Carbon_Capture_and_Storage_Stalled_in_2011_999.html

[SEPP Comment: The number of CCS operating facilities has not increased since 2009. The economic viability of the technology has yet to be demonstrated. It can be a viable way of extracting more oil or gas from existing reservoirs, but stand alone projects are another matter. Without major technological breakthroughs, it is doubtful it CCS would be viable except for punitive regulation of carbon dioxide emissions.]

Duke Power Plant Boondoggle to Cost Customers Plenty

By Paul Chesser, NLPC, May 8, 2012

<http://nlpc.org/stories/2012/05/08/duke-power-plant-boondoggle-cost-customers-plenty>

[SEPP Comment: Among other issues, this public utility, subject to state and Federal controls, guarantees a loan to a political party.]

Review of Recent Scientific Articles by NIPCC

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

The "Rescue and Mining" of Previously Neglected New Zealand Sea Level Data

Reference: Hannah, J. and Bell, R.G. 2012. Regional sea level trends in New Zealand. *Journal of Geophysical Research* 117: 10.1029/2011JC007591.

<http://www.nipccreport.org/articles/2012/may/1may2012a1.html>

[SEPP Comment: From the newly derived trends: 1.7+/-0.1 mm/yr (6.7 in / cy).

Arctic vs. Global Air Temperature Change

Reference: Chylek, P., Folland, C.K., Lesins, G., Dubey, M.K. and Wang, M. 2009. Arctic air temperature change amplification and the Atlantic Multidecadal Oscillation. *Geophysical Research Letters* 36: 10.1029/2009GL038777.

<http://www.nipccreport.org/articles/2012/may/2may2012a4.html>

[SEPP Comment: According to the findings both global warming and cooling trends are amplified in the Arctic. The warming period of 1910-40 and the cooling period of 1940-70 were amplified to a greater extent than the current warming period.]

The Greening of Canada's Herschel Island: A Fine Example of the Biological Awakening of the Circumpolar Arctic

Reference: Myers-Smith, I.H., Hik, D.S., Kennedy, C., Cooley, D., Johnstone, J.F., Kenney, A.J. and Krebs, C.J. 2011. Expansion of canopy-forming willows over the twentieth century on Herschel Island, Yukon Territory, Canada. *Ambio* 40: 610-623

<http://www.nipccreport.org/articles/2012/may/8may2012a1.html>

Stormy Periods Over the Northwestern Mediterranean Sea

Reference: Sabatier, P., Dezileau, L., Colin, C., Briquieu, L., Bouchette, F., Martinez, P., Siani, G., Raynal, O. and Von Grafenstein, U. 2012. 7000 years of paleostorm activity in the NW Mediterranean Sea in response to Holocene climate events. *Quaternary Research* 77: 1-11.

<http://www.nipccreport.org/articles/2012/may/8may2012a4.html>

Health, Energy, and Climate

Global Warming Policies Might Be bad For Your Health

Policies to reduce global warming may be doing more harm than good to public health in both developing and industrialised countries. This is the conclusion of a new report published today by the Global Warming Policy Foundation.

By Indur Goklany and Paul Reiter, GWPF, May 2, 2012

<http://thewpff.org/press-releases/5602-new-report-global-warming-policies-might-be-bad-for-your-health.html>

[SEPP Comment: Summary of the report, the full report is available on the web site.]

Pseudo-evidence is not science: Manipulating statistics

By Staff Writers, ACSH, May 7, 2012

http://www.acsh.org/factsfears/newsID.3599/news_detail.asp

Environmental Industry

War Over Natural Gas About to Escalate

Sierra Club launches 'Beyond Gas' campaign.

By Amy Harder, National Journal, May 3, 2012

<http://www.nationaljournal.com/energy-report/war-over-natural-gas-about-to-escalate-20120503>

[SEPP Comment: The beginning the next phase of a concentrated campaign to ban energy use, including electricity.]

The Sierra Club Opposes ‘Clean Energy’

Greens have a new way to strangle energy production: regulating carbon.

By Robert Bryce, National Review, May 8, 2012

<http://www.nationalreview.com/articles/299295/sierra-club-opposes-clean-energy-robert-bryce#>

Environmental groups collecting millions from federal agencies they sue, studies show

By Joshua Rhett Miller, Fox News, May 8, 2012 [H/t GWPF]

<http://www.foxnews.com/politics/2012/05/08/environmental-groups-paid-millions-by-federal-agencies-sue-studies-show/?test=latestnews>

How climate change has got Worldwide Fund for Nature bamboozled

WWF has travelled too far from its original aim, to protect endangered species.

By Christopher Booker, Telegraph, UK, May 5, 2012 [H/t Anne Debeil]

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/earth/environment/climatechange/9246853/How-climate-change-has-got-Worldwide-Fund-for-Nature-bamboozled.html>

Other Scientific News

ESA declares end of mission for Envisat

By Staff Writers, Paris, France (ESA) May 11, 2012

http://www.spacedaily.com/reports/ESA_declares_end_of_mission_for_Envisat_999.html

Mars: climate change faster than thought

By Lubos Motl, Reference Frame, May 10, 2012

<http://motls.blogspot.com/2012/05/mars-climate-change-faster-than-thought.html#more>

No hiding this decline – NAS/NRC report: ‘U.S. system of environmental satellites is at risk of collapse.’

By Anthony Watts, WUWT, May 3, 2012

<http://wattsupwiththat.com/2012/05/03/no-hiding-this-decline-nasnrc-report-u-s-system-of-environmental-satellites-is-at-risk-of-collapse/>

Self-reported asthma rising while death rates decline...what gives?

By Staff Writers, ACSH, May 3, 2012

http://www.acsh.org/factsfears/newsID.3593/news_detail.asp

60 percent reduction in acidity of Delaware rain

By Teresa Messmore, Newark DE (SPX), May 11, 2012

http://www.terradaaily.com/reports/60_percent_reduction_in_acidity_of_Delaware_rain_999.html

[SEPP Comment: Interesting to see if the measurements at one location are reproduced at other locations.]

Other News that May Be of Interest

Beijing to get rid of 1,200 polluting enterprises

By Staff Writers, Beijing (AFP), May 9, 2012

http://www.terradaaily.com/reports/Beijing_to_get_rid_of_1200_polluting_enterprises_999.html

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BELOW THE BOTTOM LINE:

'Super moon' bad news for Tuvalu

By Michael Field, Stuff, NZ, May 4, 2012

<http://www.stuff.co.nz/science/6858916/Super-moon-bad-news-for-Tuvalu>

[SEPP Comment: The islands did not drown. Perhaps King Canute held back the tides after all.]

Dinosaur Farts May Have Warmed Prehistoric Earth

Jennifer Welsh, LiveScience, May 7, 2012 [H/t Warren Wetmore]

<http://www.livescience.com/20125-dinosaur-farts-climate.html>

Hall Of Fame Broadcaster Blames 'Climatic Changes' For Increase In Home Runs

By Staff Writer, CBS, May 1, 2012 [H/t Timothy Wise]

<http://stlouis.cbslocal.com/2012/05/01/hall-of-fame-broadcaster-blames-climatic-changes-for-increase-in-home-runs/>

[SEPP Comment: It is not better conditioning, or drugs; it's global warming!]

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ARTICLES:

1. The 'Crucify Them' Presidency

Al Armendariz, the EPA official who resigned in disgrace this week, was no outlier among the Obama administration's regulators.

By Kimberly Strassel, WSJ, May 3, 2012

http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052702304746604577382492416602720.html?mod=ITP_opinion_0

Al "Crucify Them" Armendariz resigned from the Environmental Protection Agency this week, for the mistake of telling it like it is. All he leaves behind is an entire administration of Al Armendarizes.

EPA chief Lisa Jackson was quick to assure the public that her regional administrator—who was caught on video describing his desire to "crucify" oil and gas companies—was not "representative of the agency." Mr. Armendariz's views, she said, "don't reflect any policy that we have, and they don't reflect our actions over the past two years." At least she didn't say it under oath.

The Armendariz story matters precisely because he is the model Obama regulator. Hamstrung by both public opinion and Congress, President Obama has turned to these types to enact his broader agenda.

The regional EPA administrator was no rogue appointee. Rather, "there are Armendarizes all throughout this administration" says Oklahoma Sen. Jim Inhofe, who first drew attention to the "crucify" video. They were chosen for a purpose.

Consider the broader tale of Mr. Armendariz, lost in the wake of the sensational video. Prior to being appointed by President Obama in late 2009 to serve as EPA's point man for south-central states, Mr. Armendariz was at Texas's Southern Methodist University. His then-résumé showed a scant three years of private-sector experience, with far more time devoted to his work as an adviser to the militant fringe of the environmental community.

Mr. Armendariz's expertise—take note—was working with groups like the Environmental Defense Fund and "Downwinders at Risk" against hydraulic fracturing. Among his achievements: a cameo appearance in "Gasland," the anti-drilling propaganda film, as well as authoring a 2009 study making the wild claim that gas drilling was the cause of more air pollution in Dallas than even cars.

In other words, he was a perfect general for Mr. Obama's war against natural gas. The White House is hostile to fossil fuels, yet it has been unable to get Congress or the public to act. So it has unleashed the EPA to crack down on those industries.

The bonanza in natural gas has nonetheless been tricky for the feds, since hydraulic fracturing regulation is technically left to the states. The agency's solution has been to invent enforcement actions out of existing federal law to harass drillers.

Mr. Armendariz was on the front lines. By early 2010, the EPA boss was already making his "crucify them" comments at a public-meeting-cum-activist-rally in Dish, Texas. At this gathering, Mr. Armendariz also bragged that one of his "really special moments" had been getting the overall chief of EPA enforcement, Cynthia Giles, to watch "Gasland." He lamented that he did not have a "Way of Life Act" that he could enforce—to deal with the "truck traffic," "noise," "water use" and "waste pits" associated with natural-gas drilling. Though he reminds the crowd that the laws he can use, like the Clean Water Act, aren't exactly "toothless."

As he proved. Within a year of arrival, Mr. Armendariz had found his first target: Fort Worth-based gas driller Range Resources. While Texas regulators had found no evidence that Range had polluted local water wells, Mr. Armendariz in December 2010 publicly bypassed them and issued an emergency order giving Range 48 hours to begin supplying water to residents and to clean up.

Emails show that Mr. Armendariz was communicating with his activists on the day of the action. "We're about to make a lot of news," he crowed in an email, advising them: "Time to Tivo Channel 8."

As it happens, "Channel 8" had the news before an aide for Mr. Armendariz had bothered to notify the state. One of Mr. Armendariz's email buddies (who included members of the Environmental Defense Fund and Public Citizen) wrote back: "Yee haw! Hats off to the new Sheriff and his deputies!" When a Texas official told Mr. Armendariz that he felt the action was "premature," the EPA appointee forwarded the email to his staff with this word: "Stunning."

Or not. Fifteen months later—after Texas regulators unanimously concluded that Range was not the cause of natural gas in local wells, after Range had sued, and after EPA was unable to find any evidence of wrongdoing—the agency withdrew its order. Turns out Mr. Armendariz had nothing more against Range than his, and his activists', disdain for fossil fuels.

His actions are no aberration. This is the "Crucify Them" presidency. Mr. Obama couldn't get a card check law passed, so his National Labor Relations Board's union lawyers sue Boeing for locating in a right-to-work state. He couldn't outlaw offshore drilling, so Interior activists continue a permitorium in the Gulf. He can't make ObamaCare work, so Health Department officials threaten to exclude insurers from exchanges if they raise premiums. He couldn't outright kill nuclear energy, so his top nuclear regulator has shut down the Yucca Mountain waste repository to strangle industry growth.

Mr. Armendariz apologized for his "words," though you might wonder why. He was picked to do a job—to "crucify" industry—and he did it. His real mistake was admitting it

2. Analytical Trend Troubles Scientists

By Gautam Naik, WSJ, May 4, 2012 [H/t ACSH]

<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052702303916904577377841427001840.html>

"...both were so-called observational studies, in which scientists often use fast computers, statistical software and large medical data sets to analyze information collected previously by others. From there, they look for correlations, such as whether a drug may trigger a worrisome side effect."

In 2010, two research teams separately analyzed data from the same U.K. patient database to see if widely prescribed osteoporosis drugs increased the risk of esophageal cancer. They came to surprisingly different conclusions.

'You can troll the data, slicing and dicing it any way you want,' says S. Stanley Young, of the National Institute of Statistical Sciences.

One study, published in the Journal of the American Medical Association, found no increase in patients' cancer risk. The second study, which ran three weeks later in the British Medical Journal, found the risk for developing cancer to be low, but doubled. Which conclusion was correct?

It is hard to tell, and the answer may be inconclusive. The main reason: Each analysis applied a different methodology and neither was based on original, proprietary data. Instead, both were so-called observational studies, in which scientists often use fast computers, statistical software and large medical data sets to analyze information collected previously by others. From there, they look for correlations, such as whether a drug may trigger a worrisome side effect.

The Food and Drug Administration says it is reviewing the conflicting U.K. data on the class of osteoporosis treatments known as oral bisphosphonates. The outcome matters given that millions take the drugs world-wide. If a substantial cancer risk is proven, it will force doctors to reconsider how they prescribe such drugs.

Merck & Co. says its Fosamax—one of the most popular drugs in the class—has been prescribed 190 million times since first being approved in 1995. Michael Rosenblatt, chief medical officer at the company, says that clinical trial data and more recent reports based on patient use "do not suggest an association between [the drug] and esophageal cancer."

While the gold standard of medical research is the randomly controlled experimental study, scientists have recently rushed to pursue observational studies, which are much easier, cheaper and quicker to do. Costs for a typical controlled trial can stretch high into the millions; observational studies can be performed for tens of thousands of dollars.

In an observational study there is no human intervention. Researchers simply observe what is happening during the course of events, or they analyze previously gathered data and draw conclusions. In an experimental study, such as a drug trial, investigators prompt some sort of change—by giving a drug to half the participants, say—and then make inferences.

But observational studies, researchers say, are especially prone to methodological and statistical biases that can render the results unreliable. Their findings are much less replicable than those drawn from controlled research. Worse, few of the flawed findings are spotted—or corrected—in the published literature.

"You can troll the data, slicing and dicing it any way you want," says S. Stanley Young of the U.S. National Institute of Statistical Sciences. Consequently, "a great deal of irresponsible reporting of results is going on."

Despite such concerns among researchers, observational studies have never been more popular.

Nearly 80,000 observational studies were published in the period 1990-2000 across all scientific fields, according to an analysis performed for The Wall Street Journal by Thomson Reuters. In the following period, 2001-2011, the number of studies more than tripled to 263,557, based on a search of Thomson

Reuters Web of Science, an index of 11,600 peer-reviewed journals world-wide. The analysis likely doesn't capture every observational study in the literature, but it does indicate a pattern of growth over time.

A vast array of claims made in medicine, public health and nutrition are based on observational studies, as are those about the environment, climate change and psychology.

The numbers are expected to increase as more databases become available and generate more studies. One massive undertaking, for example, is the National Children's Study. Conducted by the National Institutes of Health, it will collect data on thousands of American children, all the way from birth to age 21, and assess how genetic and environmental factors may influence health outcomes.

A hot area of medical research that highlights some of the problems with observational studies is the search for biomarkers. Biomarkers are naturally occurring molecules or genes associated with a disease or health condition. In the past two decades, more than 200,000 papers have been published on 10 cardiac biomarkers alone. The presence or absence of the biomarkers in a patient's blood, some theorized, could indicate a higher or lower risk for heart disease—the biggest killer in the Western world.

Yet these biomarkers "are either completely worthless or there are only very small effects" in predicting heart disease, says John Ioannidis of Stanford University, who extensively analyzed two decades' worth of biomarker research and published his findings in *Circulation Research* journal in March. Many of the studies, he found, were undermined by statistical biases, and many of the biomarkers showed very little predictive ability of heart disease.

His conclusion is widely upheld by other scientists: Just because two events are statistically associated in a study, it doesn't mean that one necessarily sets off the other. What is merely suggestive can be mistaken as causal.

That partly explains why observational studies in general can be replicated only 20% of the time, versus 80% for large, well-designed randomly controlled trials, says Dr. Ioannidis. Dr. Young, meanwhile, pegs the replication rate for observational data at an even lower 5% to 10%.

Whatever the figure, it suggests that a lot more of these studies are getting published. Those papers can often trigger pointless follow-on research and affect real-world practices.

The problems aren't entirely new. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, a raft of observational studies consistently suggested that hormone-replacement therapy, or HRT, could protect postmenopausal women against heart disease. Tens of thousands of women were given the drugs on that basis.

It was a bad call. Many of the studies were eventually undermined because women who used the drugs were healthier than those who didn't, and thus had lower rates of heart disease anyway. Later controlled trials suggested that not only did HRT fail to protect against heart disease, but it might have increased the risk.

Observational studies do have many valuable uses. They can offer early clues about what might be triggering a disease or health outcome. For example, it was data from observational trials that flagged the increased risk of heart attacks posed by the arthritis drug Vioxx. And it was observational data that helped researchers establish the link between smoking and lung cancer.

Jan Vandenbroucke, a professor of clinical epidemiology at Leiden University in the Netherlands, dismisses some of the drawbacks of observational studies, saying they tend to be overblown. He notes that even controlled trials can yield spurious or conflicting results.

"Science is about exploring the data...it has a duty to find new explanations," he says. "Randomized controlled trials aren't intended to find any explanations."

In the case of most observational studies, investigators plumb existing databases, looking for associations between different variables—thus generating an observation or a "discovery."

That technique can yield confusing results. Between 1995 and 2008, the FDA received reports of 23 people, most of them women, who were diagnosed with esophageal cancer after taking an oral bisphosphonate. Similar reports came in from Europe and Japan.

The use of bisphosphonates has soared in recent years. In the U.K., about 10% of women over the age of 70 take the drugs, so even a small increase in cancer risk would indicate many new cancer cases.

At Queen's University in Belfast, cancer epidemiologist Liam Murray and his colleagues decided to assess the tumor risk of bisphosphonates. They embarked on an observational study using a computerized database containing anonymized patient records for about six million people in the U.K.—one of the largest such databases anywhere.

At roughly the same time, a separate group led by Jane Green of the University of Oxford, began a similar examination of the same U.K. database. The teams were unaware of each other's projects.

The Murray team found that the increase in esophageal or gastric cancer risk was 7% higher in those who took the drug versus those who didn't, leading to the conclusion the use of the drugs "was not significantly associated" with either cancer.

The Green paper in *BMJ* found the esophageal cancer risk was 30% higher for those on the drugs, and that the risk of esophageal cancer increased when the drugs were prescribed 10 or more times, or for longer than five years.

In other words: in the normal U.S. and European population, one out of every 1,000 people aged 60 to 69 will get the cancer. But for those who take Fosamax and other related drugs, the incidence rises to two in every 1,000.

There could be several reasons why the studies arrived at different conclusions, including varying methodologies. The Murray study first identified users of the drugs, matched them to random people of the same sex and age in the population, and then tracked them until some developed cancer.

The Green team identified the cancer cases first and then assessed which drugs they had been given in the past.

"We were looking forward, they were looking backward," says Christopher Cardwell, a medical statistician and co-author of the Murray paper in *JAMA*.

The opposing impressions provoked Daniel Solomon, a rheumatologist at Brigham and Women's Hospital, to co-author a long opinion piece in the journal *Nature Reviews* in June. "Each of these methods introduces potential for different types of biases," says Dr. Solomon. "But what we can say is that both studies rule out a large increase in risk. We have learned at least that from the papers."

Dr. Young of the National Institute of Statistical Sciences takes a more skeptical view. He notes that because the Green study reports on three different variables at once, it introduces errors due to the classic problem of "multiple testing."

Dr. Green acknowledges that her team didn't adjust for multiple testing. She also notes that because information about the patients isn't consistent, "this database may not be the ideal place to look."

So is the conclusion in the Murray paper the correct one?

Not necessarily. The authors of that study acknowledge that their work has less statistical power than the Green paper, and that "poorly measured or unmeasured causes of bias may have masked an association" between the drugs and cancer.

There is another question. Each study only followed patients over five years or less. What if esophageal cancer develops over a longer period, say, 10 years? In that case, the design of both studies would be invalid.

"It's not that one paper is right and the other is wrong," says Dr. Young. "There is enough wrong with both papers that we can't be sure."

3. Gouged by the Wind

Renewable fuel mandates are raising electricity prices in the states.

Editorial, WSJ, May 4, 2012 [H/t Timothy Wise]

http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052702303592404577364244006391420.html?mod=googlenews_wsj

Politicians keep promising to reduce energy prices, but they keep ignoring one easy step: repeal renewal energy standards. Twenty-nine states have these rules requiring local utilities to purchase between 20% and 33% of their electric power from renewable sources. They were enacted over the past decade when lawmakers bought into the fad about cheap "clean energy." Their real effect has been to force utilities to pay above-market prices for electricity, which means higher electric bills for consumers.

No state has learned that lesson the hard way more than Minnesota. In 2007 the legislature mandated that utilities ramp up their renewables to 12% this year and 25% by 2025.

The Minnesota Rural Electric Association, which represents about 50 small utilities serving about 650,000 rural residents, reports that its members lost more than \$70 million in 2011 because of the high cost of wind power. "Right now we're paying for wind power we don't need, we can't use and can't sell," says association executive director Mark Glaess.

Utilities absorb some of the cost, but Mr. Glaess estimates that annual residential utility bills are between \$50 and \$100 higher per household due to the renewable mandate. That may be nothing to a \$10,000 donor to the Sierra Club, but tell that to family of four living on \$25,000 a year in Fergus Falls.

The costs will rise as the mandates tighten. An analysis by the Freedom Foundation of Minnesota found that Green River Energy utility had \$22 million in losses in 2010, \$35 million in 2011, and this year it is projecting another \$35 million loss. A 2011 study by the Beacon Hill Institute, a think tank focusing on state policies, found that from 2016-25 the Minnesota mandate will raise electric costs for businesses and households by \$15 billion. By 2025 the average family will pay \$265 a year in higher utility bills.

And what are consumers getting in return? The environmental benefit is almost zero since no state can do much to alter the global volume of carbon emissions. The renewable mandate was also sold as a way to gain "green jobs" and, as the Environmental Protection Agency puts it, "stimulate market and technology development" in states. But the mandate fails that test too, because Minnesota imports much of its wind power from North Dakota.

A 2012 study by the Manhattan Institute compares states with renewable mandates to those that allow utilities to purchase the cheapest electricity available. The states with mandates paid 31.9% more for electricity than states without them. According to the U.S. Energy Information Administration, residents of North Dakota, a state without a mandate, pay 7.63 cents per kilowatt hour for electricity. Neighboring Minnesota pays 10.76 cents.

Minnesota's politicians could bring relief to rural residents, because the 2007 law stipulates that the rules can be eased if economic conditions aren't favorable. But no one wants to take on the not-so-jolly giant green lobby. The state's Division of Natural Resources is in denial, arguing that "compliance is generally cost effective for the utilities" subject to the mandate.

With natural gas prices not far from \$2 per million BTU, the competitiveness of wind power is highly suspect. If Congress allows a tax subsidy for renewables to expire this year, as it should for the sake of taxpayers, even the wind lobby in Washington admits that many turbine farms will be bankrupt.

The renewable mandate "is a regressive tax," concludes Mr. Glaess. "It's one reason our customers are having a hard time paying their electric bills." And to think this policy is supported by people who claim to want a fairer tax system.

4. Virginia Could Be an Energy Power—If Washington Would Let It

In 2010, my state was poised to become the first on the East Coast permitted to produce oil and natural gas offshore. Then politics intervened.

By Bob McDonnell, WSJ, Apr 30, 2012

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When President Obama endorsed an "all of the above" energy strategy in this year's State of the Union address, he gave the impression that he was finally adopting an aggressive policy. Unfortunately, the president's words are worlds apart from his actions—especially when it comes to developing our nation's abundant offshore oil and natural gas resources.

To see that disconnect in action, look at the Commonwealth of Virginia. In 2010, Virginia was poised to become the first state on the East Coast permitted to produce oil and natural gas offshore. In 2007, the federal government had designated certain offshore areas as available for oil and gas leases, raising the prospect of thousands of new jobs and significant new revenues for the state and local governments.

However, our opportunity was extinguished and the lease sale canceled after November, when the Obama administration abruptly dropped Virginia from the government's latest leasing plan, with little explanation and even less regard for the strong bipartisan and public support for the offshore initiative. At a moment when we should be looking for every opportunity to safely produce more domestic energy, the Obama administration unilaterally declared a seven-year timeout.

Three months later, the president announced federal approval of leasing plans for wind-power development off the coast of Virginia. This was a welcome development; we are strong supporters of doing all we can to maximize our offshore wind opportunities in the Commonwealth. Taken together,

however, the two decisions reflect a discordant approach to energy policy. There is no reason, other than political calculation, that we couldn't have been home to the East Coast's first offshore oil and natural gas development as well.

Virginia is not alone in playing witness to the president's apparent disdain for domestic oil and natural gas production. The administration's perpetual slow-walk approach is especially noticeable in the Gulf of Mexico and off Alaska's coast.

In the Gulf, delays in permitting have resulted in dramatically reduced investments. The Energy Information Administration projects that Gulf production will decrease by over 200,000 barrels per day in 2012 compared with levels before the president assumed office. Some studies, including one published last year by the energy research firm IHS CERA, have indicated that closing this gap could provide between 110,000 to 230,000 jobs across a multitude of sectors.

Meanwhile, in Alaska's Beaufort and Chukchi Seas, Shell, for instance, has been forced to spend \$4 billion over five years on plan-development costs and other expenses of dealing with repeated permitting delays. These were not the result of deficiencies in proposed operational plans. They were caused by challenges and legal actions by environmental groups to delay or invalidate the proposed permits—actions that the current administration could review but did little to oppose.

It shouldn't take a herculean effort to approve a project that the host state strongly supports and that could generate 55,000 new jobs per year for 50 years, along with \$145 billion in new payroll and \$193 billion in additional government revenues over the same period.

If an "all of the above" energy strategy—one that includes offshore oil and natural gas development—is what the administration seeks, there is an organization willing to work with the president. The Outer Continental Shelf Governors Coalition is comprised of the governors of seven coastal states, including Virginia, Texas and Alaska.

In a letter to the president last month, the coalition outlined a number of steps that can be taken immediately to incorporate offshore energy production into a comprehensive national energy policy. They include increasing the speed and predictability of permitting and expanding access to new reserves. The president can implement all of these recommendations with the stroke of a pen. To date, he has not acknowledged our outreach.

During my term as governor, we have focused on making Virginia the energy capital of the East Coast. In just two years our state has taken aggressive actions to harness the power of offshore wind and promote greater utilization of solar energy. Had the president not stopped Virginia's offshore oil and gas efforts, a portion of the revenue from those efforts would have gone—under a law passed during my term of office—to renewable energy research.

We remain committed to developing Virginia's offshore oil and gas. Energy is the lifeblood of our nation's economic growth. More energy means more jobs and we need to use all of our domestic energy resources.

Mr. McDonnell is governor of Virginia and chairman of the Republican Governors Association.

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