

The Week That Was: 2013-04-13 (April 13, 2013)
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The Science and Environmental Policy Project

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Quote of the Week: *I say that's also important in giving certain types of government advice. Supposing a senator asked you for advice about whether drilling a hole should be done in his state; and you decide it would be better in some other state. If you don't publish such a result, it seems to me you're not giving scientific advice. You're being used. If your answer happens to come out in the direction the government or the politicians like, they can use it as an argument in their favor; if it comes out the other way, they don't publish it at all. That's not giving scientific advice.* Richard Feynman discussing scientific integrity, Cargo Cult Science, 1974

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Number of the Week: 1.5 cents to 5.8 cents per gallon (US)

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April Fools: April is upon us, and it is time to hold the SEPP April Fools contest. Using the following criteria, readers are requested to submit their nomination of a government official or political leader along with a sentence or two why that person should be considered:

- The nominee has advanced, or proposes to advance, significant expansion of governmental power, regulation, or control over the public or significant sections of the general economy.
- The nominee does so by declaring such measures are necessary to protect public health, welfare, or the environment.
- The nominee declares that physical science supports such measures.
- The physical science supporting the measures is flimsy at best, and possibly non-existent.

The final selection will be determined by a special SEPP panel. The name of the winner will be emblazoned with names of other winners of the great SEPP trophy – The Jackson – a lump of coal. The first winner was (former) EPA administrator Lisa Jackson. Please submit your nomination to Ken@SEPP.org.

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THIS WEEK:

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

USGCRP: In January, the U.S. Global Change Research Program (USGCRP) issued a Draft Climate Assessment Report that was laden with hyperbole and false statements. This immediately brought up the question why such a flawed report was issued? Was it tight budgets, or was it to serve the purpose of political persuasion. According to the web site, the FY 2012 budget request was \$2.6 billion – a 6.3% increase over FY 2011. So it shouldn't be the lack of money.

Patrick Michaels wrote he is submitting detailed comments. SEPP limited its comments to less than two pages. The comments identified six statements in the first 30 lines of the Executive Summary that were either trivial or false.

An example of a trivial statement was: "Climate change is already affecting the American people." The statement is trivial. Climate has been changing for hundreds of millions of years and

will continue to do so long after we are gone. It has been affecting the American people since the colonies were started and the country founded during the Little Ice Age.

An example of a false statement was: “Oceans are becoming more acidic.” False. The oceans remain alkaline with a pH above 7. Some studies claim that the pH has declined by a particular amount, but such claims are based more on speculative models than empirical investigation.

The comments point out that the report falls apart because it relies on projections from climate models. The models are failing because the surface has not warmed for 17 years (Hadley Center and Climatic Research Unit data) and the atmosphere has not warmed for a decade (UAH data). This is inconsistent with projections (predictions) from the models. Further, the 34 year satellite temperature record shows the warming is concentrated in the northern part of the Northern Hemisphere, roughly 60 degrees north latitude, with little or no warming elsewhere. There is no corresponding warming of the Antarctic, instead the Antarctic is cooling. Contrary to the models, there is no pronounced warming trend in the atmosphere above the tropics.

The comments conclude with the statement: The current document may be politically important, but it is scientifically trivial. As such, it is political propaganda that fails to meet the financial reporting standards of corporations, much less the more, hopefully, stringent standards of scientific evaluation.

If the purpose of the draft report was political persuasion, then it succeeded in some part. Former California governor Arnold Schwarzenegger used it in an article calling alarm over global warming/climate change.

All this raises questions as to the scientific integrity of the USGCSP whose motto is: Thirteen Agencies, One Vision: Empower the Nation with Global Change Science. The agencies are Agriculture, Commerce, Defense, Energy, Health & Human Services, Interior, State, Transportation, EPA, NASA, National Science Foundation, Smithsonian Institution, and AID. According to its web site in FY 2011 the USGCSP agencies contributed \$1,995,642 to the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and total US Government contributions were \$2,682,845.

Please see quote of the week, links under Questioning the Orthodoxy, Communicating Better to the Public – Make things up and <http://www.globalchange.gov/about/budget-documents>.

US Drought: US NOAA Drought Task Force issued a report on the 2012 drought in the central Great Plains. It said: “The central Great Plains drought during May-August of 2012 resulted mostly from natural variations in weather.

- Moist Gulf of Mexico air failed to stream northward in late spring as cyclone and frontal activity were shunted unusually northward.
- Summertime thunderstorms were infrequent and when they did occur produced little rainfall.
- Neither ocean states nor human-induced climate change, factors that can provide long-lead predictability, appeared to play significant roles in causing severe rainfall deficits over the major corn producing regions of central Great Plains.”

The team is to be admired for producing a frank assessment that will be severely criticized by the Climate Establishment. Please see link under Change Weather.

European Cooling: Global warming is becoming less fashionable in Northern Europe after five years of severe winters – deemed to be a thing of the past only a few short years ago. Also some climate scientists are beginning to speak out against the climate establishment. The suddenly concocted theory that summer ice melt in the Arctic causes cold, snowy winters is being strongly, publically, criticized others such as Hans von Storch and Klaus-Eckard Puls.

UK blogger Paul Homewood reports that using a Freedom of Information request, he obtained a briefing document from the British Met Office [the national center for weather and climate change forecasts] for a meeting of the Environmental Agency in September discussing why the Met Office failed to predict last year’s wet summer. The document contains frank admissions about the lack of knowledge on what causes weather changes. Such documents should be public. Please see links under Challenging the Orthodoxy, and Questioning the Orthodoxy.

The New Hockey Stick and Novel Statistical Techniques: In a series of posts Steve McIntyre doggedly investigates the core samples used in constructing the new hockey-stick used by Marcott et al, and their choice of core samples. As expected this hockey stick is going through a wood-chipper.

Perhaps even more importantly, McIntyre points out that the uncertainty calculations are strange, greater certainty in the middle of the Holocene (about 5,000 years ago) than in the last 1,000 years. This is an artifact, a human caused error introduced by the methodology used. Claiming knowledge of the uncertainty involved, with inconsistent information, is a significant problem. But the computer codes have not been published, and McIntyre cannot make an exact determination.

McIntyre expresses his impatience with editors of important journals, such as *Science* and *Nature*, publishing studies using ad hoc methodologies that have not been properly vetted in journals of applied statistics. The public and the readership of the journals are being grossly misled by such editorial decisions. As linked in last week’s TWTW, John Brignell expressed similar disdain for such editorial decisions.

Novel methodologies and statistical techniques should raise red flags. Please see links under Climategate Continued.

The Disappearing Distinct Human Fingerprint? On her blog, Joanne Nova suggests the so-called distinct, human fingerprint of global warming, a hot spot in the atmosphere over the tropics, may not be appearing in the Fifth Assessment Report (AR5) of the IPCC. The fingerprint appears in the models but cannot be found in nature – the reasons why are not clear. If she correct, then the fingerprint will be going the way of Mr. Mann’s hockey-stick. One time considered by the alarmists as the most compelling argument of human cause of global warming, then quietly ignored. These issues should not be covered-up, but fully and frankly discussed. Please see Suppressing Scientific Inquiry.

Temperature and Greenhouse Effect: On his blog, Roy Spencer has two posts that may be of interest for those who question the concept that increasing atmospheric carbon dioxide increases the greenhouse effect. He explains the issues in terms of heat flow – such as slowing down the loss of temperature from a cooling body. Please see links under Seeking a Common Ground.

CCS: A researcher for the Congressional Research Service suggests that the major US demonstration project for Carbon Capture and Storage (CCS) may not be able to attract the private investors necessary to continue development. The project was started in 2003 under the Bush Administration, discontinued in 2008, and then restarted under the Obama Administration in 2010.

The report contains several sentences that highlight a mindset all too common in Washington. “Regulations, tax credits, or policies such as carbon taxation or cap-and-trade that increase the price of electricity from conventional power plants may be necessary to make CCS technology competitive enough for private sector investment.”

Washington must drive up the cost of electricity from more affordable sources to justify its grand schemes. Please see link under Carbon Schemes.

Climate and the Grape: When the Roman Legions marched into Northern Europe; they carried with them what was probably their favorite plant – *Vitis vinifera*. Thought by many to be first cultivated about 4000 to 5000 years ago in the trans-Caucasus (Georgia – Armenia), and then throughout the Mediterranean; *vinifera* is the family of grape vines that gives rise to the great wines of the world. There are thousands of varieties growing in a multitude of climates. During the middle Ages it was cultivated as far north as Yorkshire in England and in higher latitudes and elevations than now in Germany. It must be protected from freezing of the roots and the Little Ice Age wiped out many vineyards. In recent years, technology advancements have allowed for grafting *vinifera* onto root stock from Canada, lessening the possibility damage from freezing.

Over the past few centuries in Europe, *vinifera* cultivation has withstood many threats, largely from pests and diseases brought from America. Now it faces a new one – climate scientists armed with never verified and validated computer models claiming that global warming/climate change will destroy viticulture in many of the important parts of the world. To put it mildly, this threat seems illusionary. But, there is one caveat, high quality well-structured red wines require cool evenings.

As a side note, some traditional producers are finding that sugars at harvest are increasing, resulting in a higher alcohol content, probably from enhanced carbon dioxide. And, China once produced fine wines, winning a gold medal at the 1915 San Francisco World’s Fair. Please see link under Agriculture Issues & Fear of Famine.

Number of the Week: 1.5 to 5.8 cents (US) for a gallon of gasoline in Venezuela, depending upon exchange rate and grade, according to a report in the Wall Street Journal. Last week’s TWTW linked to an article by Connie Hedegaard, the EU Commissioner for Climate Action, who argued that western nations should support investments (subsidies) in renewable energy and end subsidies to fossil fuels. As pointed out, the subsidies in fossil fuels occur in developing nations,

with the big 5 being Iran, Saudi Arabia, Russia, India and China. Number 6 on the list is Egypt, and number 7 is Venezuela.

A forceful question to ask those who argue that fossil fuel subsidies justifies subsidizing wind and solar would be: Why should we subsidize expensive and unreliable wind and solar, when gasoline in Venezuela costs only pennies a gallon? Please see Article # 1 and

<http://www.instituteforenergyresearch.org/2011/11/23/iea-review-shows-many-developing-countries-subsidize-fossil-fuel-consumption-creating-artificially-lower-prices/>

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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. Almost-Free Gas Comes at a High Cost

By Angel Gonzalez, WSJ, Apr 12, 2013

http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424127887324000704578386771059515346.html?mod=W_SJ_Energy_2_4_Right

2. The EPA Needs a New Broom. Will It Get One?

Obama's pick to head the agency must agree to a cease-fire in its war on fossil fuels.

By John Barrasso, WSJ, Apr 10, 2013

http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424127887324050304578410754266079438.html?mod=IT_P_opinion_0

3. Shale Threatens Russia's Economy

By James Marson, WSJ, Apr 10, 2013

<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424127887323741004578414582783570350.html>

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NEWS YOU CAN USE:

Climategate Continued

Marcott’s Dimple: A Centering Artifact

By Steve McIntyre, Climate Audit, Apr 7, 2013

<http://climateaudit.org/2013/04/07/marcotts-dimple-a-centering-artifact/>

The Impact of TN05-17

By Steve McIntyre, Climate Audit, Apr 10, 2013

<http://climateaudit.org/2013/04/10/the-impact-of-tn05-17/>

More from the Junior Birdmen

By Steve McIntyre, Climate Audit, Apr 11, 2013

<http://climateaudit.org/2013/04/11/more-from-the-junior-birdmen/>

[SEPP Comment: Reusing data that the original researchers stated was contaminated by human activity and omitting the warning in the original research. The magazine Nature seems to be unfazed by such omissions.]

Suppressing Scientific Inquiry

Rebuttal to the attack on Dr. Don Easterbrook

By David Demming, Posted by Anthony Watts, WUWT, Apr 8, 2013
<http://wattsupwiththat.com/2013/04/08/rebuttal-to-the-attack-on-dr-don-easterbrook/>

IPCC plays hot-spot hidey games in AR5 — denies 28 million weather balloons work properly

By Jo Nova, Her Blog, Apr 4, 2013
<http://joannenova.com.au/2013/04/ipcc-plays-hot-spot-hidey-games-in-ar5-denies-28-million-weather-balloons-work-properly/>

Challenging the Orthodoxy

More on Trenberth's Missing Heat

By Roy Spencer, His Blog, Apr 8, 2013
<http://www.drroyspencer.com/2013/04/more-on-trenberths-missing-heat/>

Link to paper: Distinctive climate signals in reanalysis of global ocean heat content

By Balmaseda, Trenberth, and Kallen, GRL, DOI: 10.1002/grl.50382
<http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/grl.50382/abstract>

Tibetan Temperature Reconstruction Shows Medieval Warm Period Was Warmer Than Today!

By P. Gosselin, No Tricks Zone, Apr 13, 2013
<http://notrickszone.com/2013/04/13/tibetan-temperature-reconstruction-shows-medieval-warm-period-was-warmer-than-today/>

Link to paper: By YuXin He, et al. Chinese Science Bulletin, Mar 2013
<http://link.springer.com/article/10.1007%2Fs11434-012-5619-8#page-1>

Climate Models Got The NAO All Wrong – Climate Science Now Plagued By Contradictory Explanations

Northern hemisphere winters in the big picture
By Juraj Vanovcan (Slovakia), Posted by P. Gosselin, No Tricks Zone, Apr 11, 2013
<http://notrickszone.com/2013/04/11/climate-models-got-the-nao-all-wrong-climate-science-now-plagued-by-contradictory-explanations/>

Russian Academy Of Sciences Experts Warn Of Imminent Cold Period: “Global Warming Is A Marketing Trick”

By P. Gosselin, No Tricks Zone, Apr 11, 2013
<http://notrickszone.com/2013/04/11/russian-academy-of-sciences-experts-warn-of-imminent-cold-period-global-warming-is-a-marketing-trick/>

Global Warming Causes Cold Winters – A Research Error

By Uilli Kulke, Die Welt, Trans. By Philipp Mueller, GWPF, Apr 10, 2013
<http://www.thegwpf.org/global-warming-cold-winters-researchers-error/>

Hans von Storch: “Fact That The Explanation Came Afterwards...Is Just More Reason For Doubt”

By P. Gosselin, No Tricks Zone, Apr 12, 2013
<http://notrickszone.com/2013/04/12/hans-von-storch-fact-that-the-explanation-came-afterwards-is-just-more-reason-for-doubt/>

Defending the Orthodoxy

Global Warming Over Land Is Real: CU-Boulder, NOAA Study

By Just The Facts, WUWT, Apr 13, 2013

<http://wattsupwiththat.com/2013/04/13/global-warming-over-land-is-real-cu-boulder-noaa-study/>

Link to the paper: Independent Confirmation of Global Land Warming without the Use of Station Temperatures

By Compo, et al, GRL, Apr 2, 2013

<http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/grl.50425/pdf>

[SEPP Comment: The abstract starts with: “Confidence in estimates of anthropogenic climate change is limited by known issues with air temperature observations from land stations.”

Temperature measurements do not establish cause. It remains to be seen how robust new method used really is.]

U.S. admiral: Global-warming threat dwarfs N. Korea

Pacific fleet commander doubles down on claim

By Taylor Rose, WND, Apr 8, 2013 [H/t ICECAP]

<http://www.wnd.com/2013/04/u-s-admiral-global-warming-threat-dwarfs-n-korea/#lsECfED0RifyTpqZ.99>

[SEPP Comment: The Admiral’s major concern is sea level rise.]

Renewable Energy Won't Stop Climate Change

By Staff Writers, Sacramento CA (SPX), Apr 12, 2013

http://www.energy-daily.com/reports/Renewable_Energy_Wont_Stop_Climate_Change_999.html

[SEPP Comment: According to the visiting scholar at Berkeley, the solution is fewer people. Does he volunteer?]

New paper shows natural climate cycles can change the pace of atmospheric warming

By Roz Pidcock and Freya Roberts, Carbon Brief, Apr 11, 2013

<http://www.carbonbrief.org/blog/2013/04/natural-climate-cycles-can-change-the-pace-of-atmospheric-warming>

[SEPP Comment: The certainty of the IPCC reports that it captured all natural causes is becoming less certain. Will the models be changed, including their projections?]

Questioning the Orthodoxy

Met Office’s Private Briefing Document For The Environment Agency

By Paul Homewood, Not a Lot of People Know That, Apr 8, 2013 [H/t GWPF]

<http://notalotofpeopleknowthat.wordpress.com/2013/04/08/met-offices-private-briefing-document-for-the-environment-agency/>

Countdown To Climate Change: It's Only 297 Years Away!

By Patrick Michaels, Forbes, Apr 1, 2013 [H/t NCPA]

<http://www.forbes.com/sites/patrickmichaels/2013/04/01/countdown-to-climate-change-its-only-297-years-away/>

Meteorologist Joe Bastardi: The Whole CO2 “Argument Is Tiresome And Absurd... Warmists Living In A Fantasy World”

By P. Gosselin, No Tricks Zone, Apr 7, 2013

<http://notrickszone.com/2013/04/07/meteorologist-joe-bastardi-the-whole-co2-argument-is-tiresome-and-absurd-warmists-living-in-a-fantasy-world/>

More Direct Words From Hans von Storch: Climate Science's "Almost Medieval Political Understanding"

By P. Gosselin, No Tricks Zone, Apr 10, 2013

<http://notrickszone.com/2013/04/10/more-harsh-words-from-hans-von-storch-climate-sciences-almost-medieval-political-understanding/>

"Potsdam, We Have A Problem!"...As Observed Reality Diverges From Models, Europe's Major Media Grow Skeptical

Doubts over climate science are snowballing among the elite media in Europe.

By P. Gosselin, No Tricks Zone, Apr 8, 2013

<http://notrickszone.com/2013/04/08/potsdam-we-have-a-problem-as-observed-reality-diverges-from-models-europes-media-grows-skeptical/>

Potsdam and the scientific method

By Andrew Montford, Bishop Hill, Apr 13, 2013

<http://bishophill.squarespace.com/blog/2013/4/13/potsdam-and-the-scientific-method.html>

Not Yet Time to Declare Victory over Climate Anti-Capitalists

By Peter Wilson, American Thinker, Apr 10, 2013

http://www.americanthinker.com/2013/04/not_yet_time_to_declare_victory_over_climate_anti-capitalists.html

[SEPP Comment: A necessary caution, this may be the end of the beginning, but not the beginning of the end. The US Appeals Court will continue to avoid separating empirical science from the bureaucratic science produced by government agencies.]

Climate queries? Ask a paleontologist

By Des Moore, Quadrant, Apr 10, 2013

<http://www.quadrant.org.au/blogs/doomed-planet/2013/04/climate-queries-ask-a-paleontologist>

Thatcher & Global Warming: From Alarmist to Skeptic

By Robert Bradley Jr, Master Resource, Apr 11, 2013

<http://www.masterresource.org/2013/04/thatcher-alarmist-to-skeptic/>

'The Age of Global Warming', by Rupert Darwall - review

By Christopher Booker, The Spectator, Apr 13, 2013

<http://www.spectator.co.uk/books/8883981/the-greatest-scare-story/>

A believer's faith falters

By Barry Brill, Quadrant, Apr 8, 2013

<http://www.quadrant.org.au/blogs/doomed-planet/2013/04/a-believer-s-faith-falters>

[SEPP Comment: More on the recent article in the Economist beginning to question global warming.]

Climate changing for global warming reporters

By Lawrence Solomon, Financial Post, Apr 12, 2013

<http://opinion.financialpost.com/2013/04/12/lawrence-solomon-media-consensus-on-global-warming-cracking/>

Briggs on statistics

By Andrew Montford, Bishop Hill, Apr 6, 2013

<http://bishophill.squarespace.com/blog/2013/4/6/briggs-on-statistics.html>

[SEPP Comment: A one hour video showing how over-application of statistical techniques can produce ridiculous results, yet the papers still published.]

Questioning European Green

Germany's Green Freeze Sends Shock Waves,

By Pilita Clark, Financial Times, GWPF Summary, Apr 8, 2013

<http://www.thegwpf.org/germanys-green-freeze-sends-shock-waves/>

Recycled policy

By Andrew Montford, Bishop Hill, Apr 6, 2013

<http://bishophill.squarespace.com/blog/2013/4/6/recycled-policy.html>

...we live in a country in which the mere fact that a policy results in insanity is insufficient grounds for its being dumped.

Questioning Green Elsewhere

Ontario's Green Energy Act causing energy prices to soar; plan now 10 times costlier than alternative that would have yielded the same environmental benefits

Press Release by Kenneth Green & Ross McKitrick, Fraser Institute, Apr 11, 2013

<http://www.fraserinstitute.org/research-news/news/display.aspx?id=19538>

Link to the Report: Environmental and Economic Consequences of Ontario's Green Energy Act

By Ross McKitrick, Fraser Institute, Apr 11, 2013

<http://www.fraserinstitute.org/research-news/display.aspx?id=19537>

[SEPP Comment: Same environmental benefits can be achieved with conventional pollution control at one-tenth the cost.]

Air pollution arguments in favour of wind turbines are full of holes

By Ross McKitrick, Letter in Owen Sound Sun-Times, Apr 10, 2013

<http://www.rossmckitrick.com/uploads/4/8/0/8/4808045/osst-letter.pdf>

[SEPP Comment: Cites a 2010 study on which he was a co-author. The study was based on examination of all hospital admission records in major Canadian cities for all lung-related illnesses, including asthma, from 1974 to 1994. After controlling for income and smoking, the study found no correlation between air pollution and lung disease. The EPA and their allies ignore such studies.]

Relentless Liars: The Great Green Edifice is Crumbling

By Alan Caruba, Warning Signs, Apr 11, 2013

<http://factsnotfantasy.blogspot.com/2013/04/relentless-liars-great-green-edifice-is.html>

[SEPP Comment: The greens will have us believe fuel is pollution.]

Expanding the Orthodoxy

Better living through chemistry climate science?

Posted by Anthony Watts, WUWT, Apr 8, 2013

<http://wattsupwiththat.com/2013/04/08/better-living-through-chemistry-climate-science/>

[SEPP Comment: Program to indoctrinate others on a misunderstanding of a science not fully understood.]

U.S. Moves Toward Teaching Climate Change; Britain Does the Opposite

By Christopher Schueze, International Herald Tribune, Apr 8, 2013

<http://rendezvous.blogs.nytimes.com/2013/04/08/u-s-moves-toward-teaching-climate-change-britain-does-the-opposite/>

New Guidelines Call for Broad Changes in Science Education

By Justin Gillis, NYT, Apr 9, 2013

http://www.nytimes.com/2013/04/10/science/panel-calls-for-broad-changes-in-science-education.html?nl=todaysheadlines&emc=edit_th_20130410&r=1&

Nike, Starbucks: Betting against climate scientists is ‘false hope’

By Ben Geman, The Hill, Apr 10, 2013

<http://thehill.com/blogs/e2-wire/e2-wire/292907-nike-starbucks-betting-against-climate-scientists-is-false-hope>

Planetary Boundaries as Millenarian Prophecies:

By Steve Rayner, Roger Pielke Jr's Blog, Apr 9, 2-13

<http://rogerpielkejr.blogspot.com/2013/04/planetary-boundaries-as-millenarian.html>

[SEPP Comment: More rhetoric of the Anthropocene, replacing prophets of old predicting a grim future if we do not mend our ways with new prophets of a grim future.]

Seeking a Common Ground

What Determines Temperature?

By Roy Spencer, His Blog, Apr 9, 2013

<http://www.drroyspencer.com/2013/04/what-determines-temperature/>

Direct Evidence of Earth's Greenhouse Effect

By Roy Spencer, His Blog, Apr 10, 2013

<http://www.drroyspencer.com/2013/04/direct-evidence-of-earths-greenhouse-effect/>

Climate Predictions as Double-Edged Sword

By Roger Pielke Jr, His Blog, Apr 8, 2013

<http://rogerpielkejr.blogspot.com/2013/04/climate-predictions-as-double-edged.html>

[SEPP Comment: Pointing out that he and his father cautioned the climate establishment about putting too much emphasis on short term predictions from climate models.]

1st International Workshop on Econometric Applications in Climatology

Chair Ross McKittrick, University of Guelph, Guelph Canada, Jun 5 -7

<http://econapps-in-climatology.webs.com/>

The Holocene: Scientists meet to discuss reconstructing the climate of the past

By Roz Pidcock, Carbon Brief, Apr 8, 2013

<http://www.carbonbrief.org/blog/2013/04/the-holocene-scientists-meet-to-discuss-reconstructing-the-climate-of-the-past>

While the holocene is generally considered quite a stable period in earth's history, there are some interesting events permeating the temperature record.

[SEPP Comment: The Holocene may have been stable compared with an ice age; but there has been significant warming and cooling as compared with the 20th century.]

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

Wealth and Well-Being

By Roger Pielke Jr, His Blog, Apr 12, 2013

<http://rogerpielkejr.blogspot.com/2013/04/wealth-and-well-being.html>

[SEPP Comment: Debunking another attempt to develop a new index that avoids the importance of economic wealth in well being of the society.]

Transatlantic flights 'to get more turbulent'

By Jonathan Amos, BBC, Apr 8, 2013

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-22063340>

Link to letter: Intensification of winter transatlantic aviation turbulence in response to climate change

By Paul Williams & Manoj Joshi, Nature Climate Change, Apr 8, 2013

<http://www.nature.com/nclimate/journal/vaop/ncurrent/full/nclimate1866.html>

[SEPP Comment: Human caused global warming will strengthen the jet stream? Why would a reduction in temperature difference between the Arctic and the tropics intensify the jet stream?]

New PR claim from Columbia extrapolates globally from a handful of weather stations

By Anthony Watts, WUWT, Apr 11, 2013

<http://wattsupwiththat.com/2013/04/11/new-paper-from-columbia-extrapolates-globally-from-a-handfull-of-weather-stations/>

Recent summer heat waves unprecedented, study says

By John Roach, NBC News, Apr 10, 2013

<http://science.nbcnews.com/news/2013/04/10/17690016-recent-summer-heat-waves-unprecedented-study-says?lite>

[SEPP Comment: It's warmer now than during the Little Ice Age. Unprecedented?]

Communicating Better to the Public – Make things up.

Schwarzenegger: California's silent disaster

The National Climate Assessment presents a sobering vision of the world that awaits us if we don't act.

By Arnold Schwarzenegger, LA Times, April 8, 2013

<http://www.latimes.com/news/opinion/commentary/la-oe-0408-schwarzenegger-climate-report-20130408,0,6026654.story>

Changing Weather

Climate change did not cause 2012 US drought, says government report

Scientists blame Central Great Plains drought on failure of Gulf jet stream but critics say study was too narrow

By Suzanne Goldenberg, Guardian, UK, Apr 11, 2013 [H/t GWPF]

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/environment/2013/apr/12/climate-change-not-2012-drought>

Link to report: An Interpretation of the Origins of the 2012 Central Great Plains Drought

By Staff Writers, NOAA Drought Task Force, No Date

<http://www.drought.gov/drought/content/drought-task-force-report-page>

Global Insured Catastrophe Losses from Aon Benfield

By Roger Pielke Jr, His Blog, Apr 8, 2013

<http://rogerpielkejr.blogspot.com/2013/04/global-insured-catastrophe-losses-from.html>

[SEPP Comment: Further evidence that weather related losses are not increasing.]

English Winters Back To Normal–Julia Blames Global Warming!

By Paul Homewood, WUWT, Apr 12, 2013

<http://wattsupwiththat.com/2013/04/12/english-winters-back-to-normal-julia-blames-global-warming/>

5,000 lives believed to have been lost due to bitter March

By Tariq Tahir, Metro, UK, Apr 4, 2013 [H/t GWPF]

<http://metro.co.uk/2013/04/04/5000-lives-believed-to-have-been-lost-due-to-bitter-march-3584311/>

Changing Climate

Medieval Warm Period in Antarctica (and World Wide.)

By Geoff Brown, NCTCS, Apr 12, 2013

<http://theclimatescepticsparty.blogspot.com.au/2013/04/medieval-warm-period-in-antarctica-and.html>

Link to paper: Evidence of a Medieval Warm Period in Antarctica

By SPPI & CO2 Science, Apr 3, 2013

http://scienceandpublicpolicy.org/images/stories/papers/originals/medieval_warm_period.pdf

Changing Seas

Remote reefs can be tougher than they look

By Staff Writers, Townsville, Queensland (SPX), Apr 11, 2013

http://www.terraily.com/reports/Remote_reefs_can_be_tougher_than_they_look_999.html

Link to paper: Recovery of an isolated coral reef system following severe disturbance

By James Gilmour, et al, Science, Apr 5, 2013

<http://www.sciencemag.org/content/340/6128/69.abstract>

[SEPP Comment: The bleaching event occurred during the big El Nino year of 1998.]

Changing Cryosphere – Land / Sea Ice

Historic Variations in Arctic sea ice. Part II: 1920-1950

By Tony Brown, Climate Etc, Apr 10, 2013

<http://judithcurry.com/2013/04/10/historic-variations-in-arctic-sea-ice-part-ii-1920-1950/#more-11455>

[SEPP Comment: A long essay using contemporary journals, etc, suggesting that the Arctic sea ice extent during the period was considerably less than what the IPCC assumes.]

Arctic warming

By Andrew Montford, Bishop Hill, Apr 7, 2013

<http://bishophill.squarespace.com/blog/2013/4/7/arctic-warming.html>

NOAA: Arctic summers to be nearly ice-free earlier than predicted

By Zack Colman, The Hill, Apr 12, 2013

<http://thehill.com/blogs/e2-wire/e2-wire/293661-noaa-arctic-summers-to-be-nearly-ice-free-earlier-than-predicted>

Link to paper: When will the summer arctic be nearly sea ice free?

By James Overland and Muyin Wang, GRL, DOI: 10.1002/grl.50316

<http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/grl.50316/abstract>

[SEPP Comment: As early as 2020 – by extrapolating from the last 7 years? The other methods are just as questionable.]

Agriculture Issues & Fear of Famine

Vineyards in China? Climate change morphs the wine industry

By Shoshana Davis, CBS News, Apr 9, 2013

http://www.cbsnews.com/8301-205_162-57578619/vineyards-in-china-climate-change-morphs-the-wine-industry/

Link to paper: Climate change, wine, and conservation

By Hannah et al, PNAS, Approved Feb 19, 2013

http://www.conservation.org/Documents/CI_PNAS_Climate-Change-Wine-Production-Conservation_Lee-Hannah_March-2013.pdf

Crop yields and dumb farmers

By Andrew Montford, Bishop Hill, Apr 11, 2013

<http://www.bishop-hill.net/blog/2013/4/11/crop-yields-and-dumb-farmers.html>

Link to paper: Evidence for a climate signal in trends of global crop yield variability over the past 50 years

By TM Osborne and TR Wheller, Environ. Res. Lett., Apr 4, 2013

http://iopscience.iop.org/1748-9326/8/2/024001/pdf/1748-9326_8_2_024001.pdf

Review of Recent Scientific Articles by NIPCC

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

Intense Tropical Cyclones of the Northern Indian Ocean

Reference: Hoarau, K., Bernard, J. and Chalonge, L. 2012. Intense tropical cyclone activities in the northern Indian Ocean. *International Journal of Climatology* 32: 1935-1945.

<http://www.nipccreport.org/articles/2013/apr/9apr2013a1.html>

Biases in the Output of Global and Regional Circulation Models

Reference: Ehret, U., Zehe, E., Wulfmeyer, V., Warrach-Sagi, K. and Liebert, J. 2012. "Should we apply bias correction to global and regional climate model data?" *Hydrology and Earth System Sciences* 16: 3391-3404.

<http://www.nipccreport.org/articles/2013/apr/9apr2013a3.html>

...bias correction "hides rather than reduces uncertainty," which they suggest may lead to avoidable prejudging of end users and decision makers.

Coral Decline on Australia's Great Barrier Reef

Reference: De'ath, G., Fabricius, K.E., Sweatman, H. and Puotinen, M. 2012. The 27-year decline of coral cover on the Great Barrier Reef and its causes. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences USA* 109: 17,995-17,999.

<http://www.nipccreport.org/articles/2013/apr/9apr2013a4.html>

Terrestrial Ecosystems of Northern Canada in a State of Flux

Reference: Henry, G.H.R., Harper, K.A., Chen, W., Deslippe, J.R., Grant, R.F., Lafleur, P.M., Levesque, E., Siciliano, S.D. and Simard, S.W. 2012. Effects of observed and experimental climate change on terrestrial ecosystems in northern Canada: results from the Canadian IPY program. *Climatic Change* 115: 207-234.

<http://www.nipccreport.org/articles/2013/apr/10apr2013a2.html>

The Political Games Continue

Hansen finally 'Muzzled' by Obama?

By Chris Horner, CEI, WUWT, Apr 8, 2013

<http://wattsupwiththat.com/2013/04/08/hansen-finally-muzzled-by-obama/>

[SEPP Comment: A different take on Hansen's retirement.]

Inhofe on climate 'hoax': Don't forget Soros, MoveOn.org

By Ben Geman, The Hill, Apr 11, 2013

<http://thehill.com/blogs/e2-wire/e2-wire/293297-sens-inhofe-and-sanders-agree-on-global-warming-sort-of>

Cap-and-Trade and Carbon Taxes

Why We Support a Revenue-Neutral Carbon Tax

Coupled with the elimination of costly energy subsidies, it would encourage competition.

By George Shultz and Gary Becker, WSJ, Apr 7, 2013

http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424127887323611604578396401965799658.html?mod=IT_P_opinion_0

[SEPP Comment: Of course, it will be revenue neutral – after Washington takes a piece.]

Forget the need for a U.S. carbon tax – the economy has put a big dent in gasoline use and driving

By Anotho Watts, WUWT, Apr 9, 2013

<http://wattsupwiththat.com/2013/04/09/forget-the-need-for-a-u-s-carbon-tax-the-economy-has-put-a-big-dent-in-gasoline-use-and-driving/>

Why are carbon markets failing?

For years we have put our faith in the market to incentivise cleaner technology, and for years the carbon market has been riddled with corruption. It's time to try something else

By Steffen Böhm, Guardian Sustainable Business, Apr 12, 2013

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/sustainable-business/blog/why-are-carbon-markets-failing>

[SEPP Comment: Inventive ways to create carbon credits out of thin air.]

IMF's Carbon Tax Shenanigans: Part II

By Marlow Lewis, Master Resource, Apr 10, 2013

<http://www.masterresource.org/2013/04/imf-carbon-tax-ii/#more-25110>

Greenhouse gas rules will be enacted soon, says Obama aide

By Zack Colman, The Hill, Apr 8, 2013

<http://thehill.com/blogs/e2-wire/e2-wire/292377-obama-aide-final-power-plant-emissions-rules-coming-soon>

All You Need to Know About RECs (Renewable Energy Certificates)

By John Droz, Jr, Master Resource, Apr 12, 2013

<http://www.masterresource.org/2013/04/recs-prime/#more-25079>

[SEPP Comment: Better called a shell-game.]

Subsidies and Mandates Forever

States show folly of energy mandates

By Grover Norquist and Patrick Gleason, Politico, Apr 2, 2013

<http://www.politico.com/story/2013/04/states-show-folly-of-energy-mandates-89515.html>

EPA and other Regulators on the March

Phony email account used by recently-resigned EPA administrator was NOT standard practice and broke federal law, researcher responds to Sen. Barbara Boxer

By David Martosko, Daily Mail, UK, Apr 11, 2013

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2307730/Phony-email-account-used-recently-resigned-EPA-administrator-NOT-standard-practice-broke-federal-law-researcher-responds-Sen-Barbara-Boxer.html?ito=feeds-newsxml>

Obama's EPA Nominee McCarthy Is A Case Of Green Government Run Amok

By Bill Wilson, IBD, Apr 10, 2013

<http://news.investors.com/ibd-editorials-viewpoint/041013-651396-obama-epa-nominee-a-case-of-green-government-gone-wild.htm?p=full>

FERC Order 1000: Cost Socialization for 'Green' Energy (NRDC, AWEA Rejoice)

By Travis Fisher, Master Resource, Apr 8, 2013

<http://www.masterresource.org/2013/04/ferc-order-1000/>

[SEPP Comment: Redefining the priorities in distribution of electricity by putting the interests of politicians and bureaucrats (so called public policy) over interests of the consumers (the public).]

Environmental judge, jury & policeman

By Eric Heyl, Pittsburg Tribune-Review, Apr 6, 2013 [H/t Cooler Heads]

<http://triblive.com/opinion/qanda/3761883-74/epa-environmental-gallon#axzz2QFkTcEem>

Energy Issues – Non-US

Gas Starts Flowing from Israel's Levant Basin, What Now?

By Jen Alic, Washington DC (SPX), Apr 09, 2013

http://www.energy-daily.com/reports/Gas_Starts_Flowing_from_Israels_Levant_Basin_What_Now_999.html
[SEPP Comment: Innovation in extracting oil and natural gas is changing the geopolitical world.]

The fuel of the future

Environmental lunacy in Europe

Editorial, The Economist, Apr 6, 2013 [H/t Anne Debeil]

http://www.economist.com/news/business/21575771-environmental-lunacy-europe-fuel-future?fsrc=scn%2Ftw_ec%2Fthe_fuel_of_the_future

[SEPP Comment: Back to the future: in the US coal replaced wood as the principal source of energy in the 1880s.]

China's Claims to South China Sea

By Donn Dears, Power for USA, Apr 9, 2013

<http://dddusmma.wordpress.com/2013/04/09/chinas-claims-to-south-china-sea/>

Energy Issues -- US

North Dakota Builds A Refinery, First In The U.S. Since '76

Editorial, IBD, Apr 11, 2013

<http://news.investors.com/ibd-editorials/041113-651604-dakota-prairie-refinery-open-in-2014.htm>

Four charts that show the U.S. spends too little on energy research

By Brad Plumer, Washington Post, Apr 9, 2013

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/wonkblog/wp/2013/04/09/three-charts-that-show-the-u-s-spends-too-little-on-energy-research/>

[SEPP Comment: Missing from the count: most if not all the spending from the stimulus bill and subsidies for bio, wind, and solar energy!]

Washington's Control of Energy

ConocoPhillips, citing 'regulatory uncertainty,' delays Arctic drilling

By Ben Geman, The Hill, Apr 10, 2013

<http://thehill.com/blogs/e2-wire/e2-wire/293019-conocophillips-citing-regulatory-uncertainty-delays-arctic-drilling->

New emissions standards would fuel shift from coal to natural gas

By Staff Writers, Durham NC (SPX), Apr 09, 2013

http://www.energy-daily.com/reports/New_emissions_standards_would_fuel_shift_from_coal_to_natural_gas_999.html

Killing Keystone Seen as Risking More Oil Spills by Rail

By Rebecca Penty & Jim Efstathiou Jr, Bloomberg, Apr 9, 2013

<http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2013-04-08/killing-keystone-seen-as-risking-more-oil-spills-by-rail.html>

Oil and Natural Gas – the Future or the Past?

Innovation in Oil and Natural Gas Production Assures Future Supplies

By Staff Writers, NCPA, Apr 9, 2013

http://www.ncpa.org/sub/dpd/index.php?Article_ID=23040&utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=DPD

Link to report: NEW TECHNOLOGY FOR OLD FUELS: Innovation in Oil and Natural Gas Production Assures Future Supplies

By Robert Bryce, Manhattan Institute, April 2013

http://www.manhattan-institute.org/html/eper_12.htm#.UWQk8VfotFb

Natural soil bacteria pump new life into exhausted oil wells

By Staff Writers, New Orleans LA (SPX), Apr 12, 2013

http://www.energy-daily.com/reports/Natural_soil_bacteria_pump_new_life_into_exhausted_oil_wells_999.html

Do We Have Enough Natural Gas?

By Donn Dears, Power for USA, Apr 12, 2013

<http://dddusmma.wordpress.com/2013/04/12/do-we-have-enough-natural-gas/>

BP: Back to Petroleum and Beyond Puff-power

By Marita Noon, Our Money.net, Apr 7, 2013

<http://www.ourmoney.net/guest-columns/marita/bp-back-to-petroleum-and-beyond-puff-power/>

Benefits of hydraulic fracking

By Kevin Hassett, & Aparna Mathur, Oxford Energy Forum, Apr 4, 2013

<http://www.aei.org/article/economics/benefits-of-hydraulic-fracking/>

Return of King Coal?

Pacific export terminals: The raging war on coal

By Steve Goreham, Washington Times, Apr 10, 2013

<http://communities.washingtontimes.com/neighborhood/climatism-watching-climate-science/2013/apr/10/pacific-export-terminals-raging-war-coal/>

Nuclear Energy and Fears

Life-saving case for nuclear

By Staff Writers, WNN, Apr 3, 2013

http://www.world-nuclear-news.org/EE_Life_saving_case_for_nuclear_0304131.html

Link to paper: Prevented Mortality and Greenhouse Gas Emissions from Historical and Projected Nuclear Power

By Pushker Kharecha and James Hansen, Environmental Science & Technology, Mar 15, 2013

<http://pubs.acs.org/doi/abs/10.1021/es3051197>

[SEPP Comment: James Hansen promoting nuclear as an alternative to coal.]

Alternative, Green (“Clean”) Solar and Wind

The ‘scoop’ on wind

Editorial, Boston Herald, Apr 7, 2013 [H/t Timothy Wise]

http://bostonherald.com/news_opinion/opinion/editorials/2013/04/the_scoop_on_wind

Alternative, Green (“Clean”) Energy -- Other

Ethanol industry seeks toned-down renewable fuel goals

By Ben Goad, The Hill, Apr 8, 2013

<http://thehill.com/blogs/regwatch/energyenvironment/292355-ethanol-industry-seeks-toned-down-renewable-fuel-goals>

Alternative, Green (“Clean”) Vehicles

The Electric Car Is Dead All Over Again

By Alex Davies, Business Insider, Apr 8, 2013

<http://www.businessinsider.com/whats-holding-affordable-electric-cars-back-2013-4>

[SEPP Comment: The cheap, powerful battery technology is just around the corner, as it has been for over 100 years.]

The Electric Car’s Short Circuit

By Bjørn Lomborg, Project Syndicate, Apr 11, 2013

<http://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/the-false-promise-of-electric-cars-by-bj-rn-lomborg>

Beware the wrong kind of Leafs on the road

While David Cameron and the BBC promote battery-charged electric cars, do they realise how dotty and ineffective they are?

By Christopher Booker, Telegraph, UK, Apr 6, 2013

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/motoring/green-motoring/9974943/Beware-the-wrong-kind-of-Leafs-on-the-road.html>

Carbon Schemes

Report: Federal ‘clean coal’ power project faces uncertain future

By Ben Geman, The Hill, Apr 12, 2013

<http://thehill.com/blogs/e2-wire/e2-wire/293655-report-federal-clean-coal-power-project-faces-uncertain-future>

Link to the report: FutureGen: A Brief History and Issues for Congress

By Peter Folger, CRS, Apr 3, 2013

<http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/misc/R43028.pdf>

Health, Energy, and Climate

TSCA “reform”: Looking for toxics in all the wrong places

By Staff Writers, ACSH, Apr 11, 2013

<http://www.acsh.org/tsca-reform-looking-for-toxics-in-all-the-wrong-places/>

Oh Mann!

Clearly distinguished

By Jean S. Climate Audit, Apr 7, 2013

<http://climateaudit.org/2013/04/07/clearly-distinguished/>

[SEPP Comment: Using the cover of Mr. Mann’s book to refute his claim: No researchers in this field have ever, to our knowledge, “grafted the thermometer record onto” any reconstruction.]

Environmental Industry

Judges Call Eco Activists ‘Pirates’

By Donna Laframboise, NFC, Apr 8, 2013

<http://nofrackingconsensus.com/2013/04/08/judges-call-eco-activists-pirates/>

Greenpeace 'polar bears' protest Arctic oil drilling

By Staff Writers, Oslo (AFP), April 10, 2013

http://www.energy-daily.com/reports/Greenpeace_polar_bears_protest_Arctic_oil_drilling_999.html

RSPB makes a killing... from windfarm giants behind turbines accused of destroying rare birds

The charity is making hundreds of thousands of pounds from wind power
But millions of birds, including at risk species, are killed by turbines each year
By James Dellingle, Daily Mail, Apr 6, 2013 [H/t GWPF]

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2305197/RSPB-makes-killing--windfarm-giants-turbines-accused-destroying-rare-birds.html>

[SEPP Comment: From the RSPB web site: “We’re saving threatened birds and wildlife across the UK and overseas. With your support, we are creating a world richer in nature.”]

Other Scientific News

New chart shows the entire topography of the Antarctic seafloor in detail

By Staff Writers, Bremerhaven, Germany (SPX), Apr 12, 2013

http://www.terraily.com/reports/New_chart_shows_the_entire_topography_of_the_Antarctic_seafloor_in_detail_999.html

Link to paper, The International Bathymetric Chart of the Southern Ocean (IBCSO) Version 1.0 – A new bathymetric compilation covering circum-Antarctic waters†

By Arnt, et al, GRL, Online Mar 27, 2013

<http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/grl.50413/abstract>

NASA's Asteroid Initiative Benefits From Rich History

By Staff Writers, Washington DC (SPX), Apr 11, 2013

http://www.spacedaily.com/reports/NASAs_Asteroid_Initiative_Benefits_From_Rich_History_999.html

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BELOW THE BOTTOM LINE:

Crabs, supersized by carbon pollution, may upset Chesapeake’s balance

By Derryl Fears, Washington Post, Apr 7, 2013

http://www.washingtonpost.com/national/health-science/2013/04/07/a0c29f48-972f-11e2-b68f-dc5c4b47e519_story.html?hpid=z2

[SEPP Comment: Crabs benefit from carbon pollution? For years the claim was that global warming will destroy the crab industry. According to testimony by a NOAA climate scientist, increased carbon dioxide will destroy the shells of crabs, lobsters, etc.]

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ARTICLES:

1. Almost-Free Gas Comes at a High Cost

By Angel Gonzalez, WSJ, Apr 12, 2013

http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424127887324000704578386771059515346.html?mod=WSJ_Energy_2_4_Right

CARACAS, Venezuela—In this dilapidated tropical capital, most prices go up monthly, and essentials like milk and flour are hard to find. But one item is ubiquitous, and practically free: gasoline.

Premium gasoline in Venezuela costs 5.8 U.S. cents a gallon, using the official exchange rate. At an informal currency exchange rate that prevails for most transactions, it is even cheaper: 1.5 cents a gallon.

Octavio Fernández fills his Nissan Sentra taxi for less than half the cost of a marroncito, or tiny cup of coffee. Sometimes he leaves more in tips to pump attendants than he pays for fuel. "It's the only cheap thing we have here," the 77-year-old immigrant from Spain says.

Under 14 years of rule by the late President Hugo Chávez, Venezuela kept gasoline prices frozen even as rising government spending spurred robust overall inflation. Gasoline went from being cheap to seeming almost free.

The subsidy is emblematic of Mr. Chávez's economic policy of populism. Through policies that included virtually giving away gasoline and diesel fuel, he made himself enormously popular but damaged long-term prospects for Venezuela's economy and set it up for troubled times in years to come.

Now Venezuela is about to elect a new president. Economic distortions caused by giveaway gas loom large among the crises the winner of an election on Sunday will face.

The fuel subsidy helps explain why Venezuela finds itself in an unusual situation: A major oil exporter that is chronically short of cash. Venezuela's budget deficit reached 12% of gross domestic product last year, according to Moody's Investors Service, worse than in troubled euro-zone economies. A lack of dollars on the street—because the government hoards them—has led to shortages of imported goods, even as price controls discourage Venezuelans from producing many items locally.

The cash crunch means state oil giant Petróleos de Venezuela SA invests too little to fully develop its potential. Crude-oil output is down by a quarter from 1998, the year before Mr. Chávez came to power.

At the same time, Venezuelans' use of gasoline and other refined products rose 65% in 2011 from 1998, according to the U.S. Energy Information Administration. Compared with next-door Colombia, where market prices prevail, Venezuelans used nearly seven times as much gasoline per capita.

That plus Venezuela's crumbling refinery network leaves the country with the largest crude oil reserves in the world needing to import gasoline.

Its energy subsidies, the International Energy Agency calculates, cost Venezuela \$27 billion in 2011, a figure that reflects cash left on the table by not selling fuel at market prices. That was equivalent to 8.6% of gross domestic product. Government spending on health was 3.25% of GDP that year, and on education, 5.1%.

The gasoline subsidy limits spending on basic services like infrastructure repair and crime control, says Michael Shifter, president of The Inter-American Dialogue, a Washington think tank. To him, the policy "is completely contrary to state building projects, which is what Venezuela desperately needs."

That doesn't mean it is likely to change. Many ordinary Venezuelans see cheap fuel, which has been government policy in one form or another since long before the Chávez years, as their fair share of their country's prodigious oil wealth.

It is a rare perk amid surging inflation, shortages of some goods and one of the world's worst crime levels.

Though some government officials are critical of the policy, neither of the candidates in the election to succeed Mr. Chávez—acting president Nicolás Maduro and opponent Henrique Capriles—is talking about tampering with the fuel giveaway.

"It's become the third rail of Venezuelan politics," said Russ Dallen, a partner at Caracas Capital Markets, an investment bank.

Officials at PDVSA, the state oil company and entity that manages the subsidy, didn't respond to requests for comment.

Venezuela isn't alone in its gasoline populism. Many developing countries have adopted such policies, in an effort to improve living conditions, boost energy-intensive domestic industry or simply keep a restive populace happy.

The IEA estimates that governments world-wide spent \$523 billion on fossil-fuel subsidies in 2011, led by oil-rich Middle Eastern countries like Saudi Arabia and including developing giants China and India.

The International Monetary Fund came up with a similar figure, \$481 billion, in a recent report. The figures are based on the gap between market and subsidized prices.

The subsidies have their positive side. They have helped give poor populations in some developing countries more access to energy.

In Yemen, such subsidies reduced the poverty level by eight percentage points during the 2005-2006 period, said a 2010 joint report by groups including the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. The subsidies leave money in the pockets of consumers that they otherwise wouldn't have to spend.

Critics of fuel subsidies say the biggest beneficiary is the car-owning middle class and the low prices encourage wasteful use.

Subsidies are a hot topic at climate gatherings. An OECD study calculated that if fossil-fuel subsidies were eliminated, greenhouse-gas emissions could drop 10% by 2050.

In Venezuela, some of the fuel largess leaks across borders. Regular gasoline in next-door Colombia costs about \$4.70 a gallon, more than 100 times the Venezuelan price at official currency exchange rates, and more than 400 times under the widely prevailing informal exchange rate.

The result: Every day at the Venezuelan border town of San Antonio del Táchira, thousands of cars, buses and motorcycles freshly loaded with gasoline head to the bridge over the Táchira River into Colombia, spending hours in traffic jams to get across.

Once in Colombia, they have their fuel siphoned off by freelancers known as pimpineros—from the word for gas can—who pay them about \$2 a gallon and resell the gasoline or diesel fuel to Colombians for a few cents more.

Many of the cars crossing the bridge are big 1970s and early-1980s models like Ford LTDs and Chevrolet Caprices. For a car carrying 20 gallons, it is a quick \$40 profit.

In Cúcuta, a bustling Colombian city of 630,000 near the border, the sale of contraband fuel is part of society's fabric, employing thousands. A pimpinero who goes by the nickname Camuro makes about \$25 a day trading fuel, enough to feed his family. "We depend a lot on [Venezuela]," he said.

Venezuela cracked down on smuggling two years ago, limiting cars in the border state to about 11 gallons of fuel every two days, through bar-coded windshield stickers readable by gas stations.

This has worked to some degree. Fuel purchases in Táchira state are down. Pimpineros say many smuggling vehicles that used to do several trips a day are down to one or two.

But curbing smuggling is one thing. A reluctance to tackle the gasoline subsidy itself runs deep in Venezuela's political class. Although one past president, Rafael Caldera, engineered a successful increase in fuel prices in 1996, politicians remember an uproar that another such effort caused a few years earlier.

In 1989, after a period of low crude-oil prices caused a government budget crisis, then-President Carlos Andrés Pérez slashed gasoline subsidies—prompting bus-fare increases that ignited days of rioting. He called in the army, which restored calm, but at a cost of hundreds of lives.

The incident, known as El Caracazo, deeply affected morale among army soldiers who had to shoot at fellow citizens. It helped propel Mr. Chávez, then a young army officer, to stage a failed coup against Mr. Pérez three years later. Years of instability ensued, at the end of which Mr. Chávez became president.

In recent years, Venezuelan officials seem to have adopted a passive-aggressive stance toward the subsidy. Finance Minister Jorge Giordani has publicly spoken against it. "Here the giveaway must stop, and people have to pay," Mr. Giordani said on state television late last year. Still, an official with the ministry said there are no plans to eliminate the subsidy.

Mr. Chávez himself once spoke critically of it. "One day, we have to adjust those prices. We're practically giving away gasoline," he said in his TV show "Alo Presidente" in 2009. But he, too, never moved change it.

To cover the revenue gap the subsidy leaves, Venezuela has taken on more and more debt. Despite its oil bounty, its total liabilities catapulted to more than \$167 billion at the end of 2012 from \$28 billion since Mr. Chávez took power, according to data from the central bank and the Ministry of Planning and Finance. The figure includes foreign debt and internal debt and a liability for delivering oil to China that Beijing paid for in advance.

If oil prices remain about where they are now and Venezuela doesn't make major adjustments, the government could hit a financial brick wall in about two years, says Asdrúbal Oliveros, a Caracas-based economist with Ecoanalítica, a consulting firm. Stagnant oil production, inflation and a drain in foreign reserves could cripple the state's ability to function, he says.

In February, while the cancer-stricken Mr. Chávez convalesced in Cuba, the government devalued Venezuela's currency, the bolivar fuerte, by 32%. That shored up the government's finances by making the dollars it earned from oil exports worth more locally. The move also made government debt in the local currency easier to pay.

But it left ordinary Venezuelans poorer. Many products they use are imported, and the official devaluation makes them more expensive.

In addition, the government is allotting fewer dollars as it needs them to service debt—making black-market dollars more expensive for desperate importers.

That feeds Venezuela's inflation, which rages despite price controls on basic products such as milk and flour. These controlled prices also see frequent adjustments to avoid shortages. Moody's expects Venezuelan inflation of 28% this year.

The cash crunch has created headaches for PDVSA, which, if it could charge more for fuel burned in Venezuela, would have more cash to invest in such things as maintaining refineries. A deadly blast at its giant Amuay refinery in September has stalled part of the complex ever since.

A Venezuelan economist, Orlando Ochoa, estimates that Venezuela spent \$7.2 billion in 2012 to import fuel. The U.S. Energy Information Administration says that American exports of gasoline and other refined products to Venezuela totaled 197,000 barrels a day during December.

PDVSA has said that it imports only gasoline additives, not the fuel itself. It didn't make an official available for an interview.

The company sometimes struggles to pay contractors on time. International oil-service companies have reported delays.

In the run-up to Sunday's election, Mr. Maduro, the interim president, has taken a broad lead over Mr. Capriles, polls show. If he wins, Mr. Maduro will have to balance the need to tackle growing economic strains with burnishing his revolutionary credentials with Chavismo, the late president's political movement.

On the flip side, a victory by Mr. Capriles would make it difficult for him to touch the subsidy without angering millions of Chavistas, who would likely be openly hostile to his new government. "We have no plans to raise gasoline prices," Mr. Capriles's campaign director, Carlos Ocariz, says.

Ordinary Venezuelans might be more ready to accept changes in the subsidy than leaders give them credit for, some analysts say, pointing to President Caldera's changes in 1996.

Carlos César Ávila, owner of a chain of upscale bakeries called Franca, said he would rather pay more for gasoline than struggle with shortages and distortions resulting from the government's financial woes. For example, he said, it is hard to find imported auto parts. He is still waiting for parts for a truck that was damaged in December.

With gasoline, "it is evident for everybody that the price is absurd," said Francisco Rodríguez, an economist for Bank of AmericaMerrill Lynch, who thinks the government will raise fuel prices somewhat later this year or next year.

But Oil Minister Rafael Ramírez, while criticizing overconsumption of gasoline, has repeatedly denied any plans to increase its price. In February, he said that gasoline in Venezuela will remain "not only cheap, but a gift."

2. The EPA Needs a New Broom. Will It Get One?

Obama's pick to head the agency must agree to a cease-fire in its war on fossil fuels.

By John Barrasso, WSJ, Apr 10, 2013

http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424127887324050304578410754266079438.html?mod=IT_P_opinion_0

After last week's abysmal jobs report, the Obama administration will have to act quickly to prevent even more Americans from dropping out of the workforce. One place to start is at the heavy-handed Environmental Protection Agency.

During President Obama's first term, EPA policies shut down factories, discouraged energy exploration, buried job creators under red tape, and deliberately hid information from the public. Mr. Obama's nominee to head the EPA during his second term, Gina McCarthy, has her confirmation hearing in the Senate on Thursday—and she will need to explain if she will change the agency's dismal record.

As head of the EPA's office on air quality since 2009, Ms. McCarthy has been a leader in the administration's war on fossil fuels. Regulations promulgated under her direction have been

designed to shut down power plants that convert coal into electricity. According to an estimate by Unions for Jobs and the Environment, the EPA's air-quality rules could close 433 coal-fired electric plants, putting 251,000 Americans out of work.

This zealotry is contrary to the president's pledge to support an "all of the above" approach to energy policy. An all-of-the-above approach includes wind and solar as a supplement to, but not a substitute for, fossil fuels.

If Ms. McCarthy continues the EPA's policy of favoring expensive fuel sources and demonizing affordable ones, her leadership will only make our economy worse.

Many EPA regulations chase microscopic benefits at maximum cost. Over the past four years, the EPA has issued more than 1,800 new rules, with far-reaching economic consequences. Using the agency's own estimates, researchers at the Heritage Foundation report that the EPA's 20 "major rules" alone will cost \$45 billion annually.

There's more to come. The EPA has proposed dropping the acceptable amount of ozone in the air from the 75 parts per billion allowed today to 60 or 70 parts per billion. The agency concedes that the rule would have a minimal effect on Americans' health but says it would cost as much as \$90 billion a year. A study by the Manufacturers Alliance for Productivity and Innovation estimated it would eliminate up to 7.3 million jobs in a wide variety of industries, including refining.

In advance of the 2012 election, Mr. Obama delayed this costly, unpopular ozone proposal. In her testimony on Thursday, Ms. McCarthy needs to make it clear that this proposed rule is permanently shelved.

The EPA has also failed to level with the American public. The previous administrator, Lisa Jackson, tried to hide behind-the-scenes dealings by using an alias email account named after her dog, "Richard Windsor." The alias email account meant that its contents would not be disclosed by a Freedom of Information Act request.

Chris Horner of the Competitive Enterprise Institute discovered the existence of this alias email account while researching a book. He has a lawsuit against the EPA but the agency has been slow to release the emails from Ms. Jackson's account, and explain exactly what business was conducted using them. Ms. McCarthy must address questions about whether she too used an email alias to conduct official business.

The EPA must also release to the public and the Congress all of the relevant scientific backup information used for agency decisions. Any proposed regulation that will hurt the economy needs to be supported by solid scientific evidence.

Meanwhile, the agency has gathered personal information about tens of thousands of livestock farmers and the location of their operations, which it then disclosed to environmental groups including EarthJustice and the Natural Resources Defense Council after these groups filed a Freedom of Information Act request.

Instead of relying on the EPA to ensure family farmers comply with environmental laws, some of these organizations attempt to conduct their own investigations, harassing law-abiding citizens in the process. Farmers are justifiably concerned as to how environmental extremists might use their personal cellphone numbers, email addresses and exact farm locations.

The confirmation hearing for Ms. McCarthy provides an opportunity for the Obama administration to demonstrate that it understands how EPA decisions affect American families and the economy—and that the agency will operate in a transparent fashion. But if Ms. McCarthy decides to stay the course, there is no way I can support her leadership.

Dr. Barrasso is a Republican senator from Wyoming.

3. Shale Threatens Russia's Economy

By James Marson, WSJ, Apr 10, 2013

<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424127887323741004578414582783570350.html>

MOSCOW—Russia's oil exports could plunge in the coming decades as the U.S. ramps up output of shale oil, a group of government-linked experts said, in an unusually frank admission that the North American energy boom poses a threat to Russia's hydrocarbon-fueled economy.

Russia, the world's largest energy producer, is already seeing its natural-gas exports shrink, partly as a result of the U.S. shale-gas boom. Government officials have raised concerns in recent months that dwindling gas exports are holding back economic growth and costing the government billions of dollars in lost revenue.

Wednesday's report by the Russian Academy of Sciences' Energy Research Institute said the increasing output of shale oil, particularly in the U.S., could also threaten Russia's crude-oil exports.

If the "shale breakthrough" expands, it could reduce Russia's forecast exports by as much as 50 million tons a year by 2040, the report said. Russia last year exported 240 million tons of oil.

That, in turn, could cause the energy industry's share of Russia's gross domestic product to fall from over one-quarter in 2010 to just over 15% by 2040, it said. About half of Russia's federal budget comes from oil and gas.

A spokeswoman for the Energy Ministry had no immediate comment on the report. Russia's largest oil company, OAO Rosneft, also had no immediate comment.

Russian officials have berated gas monopoly OAO Gazprom in recent months for reacting slowly to changes in the global market brought about by soaring shale-gas production in the U.S.

Gazprom saw exports to its most lucrative market, Europe, drop nearly 10% last year, as power generators switched to cheap coal that was pushed out of the U.S. by even-cheaper shale gas.

U.S. crude production surged to its highest daily level for two decades in November, as new drilling techniques unlocked vast amounts of oil from underground shale-rock formations.

The International Energy Agency in November forecast the U.S. would surpass Saudi Arabia and Russia as the world's largest oil producer in 2020.

"Given the United States' geopolitical significance, it will effectively turn into the most influential player on the global hydrocarbon market," the report from the Russian Academy of Sciences said.

There are, however, threats to the continued expansion of the shale-oil boom, the report noted. Recoverable resources could prove to be smaller than expected, while recovery technology might advance more slowly, it said. In that case, Russia's exports could increase, it said.

In a television interview this month, Gazprom Chief Executive Alexei Miller said the U.S. wasn't a competitor and called shale gas "a bubble that will soon burst."

Russia is taking steps to boost its oil production as output at Soviet-era fields decline.

State-controlled energy companies Gazprom and Rosneft have joined with foreign companies, including Exxon Mobil Corp. and Royal Dutch Shell PLC, to develop offshore reserves on the Arctic shelf and potential shale oil formations in Siberia.

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