Overlooked Issues in the Climate Change Debate

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1. Past climate is a useful guide to the future - Assessing past climate conditions provides a very effective analysis tool to assess societal and environmental vulnerability to future climate, regardless of the extent the future climate is altered by human activity. Our current and future vulnerability, however, will be different than in the past, even if climate were not to change, because society and the environment change as well. Decision makers need assessments of how climate vulnerability has changed.

2. Climate prediction is complex with many uncertainties. The AASC recognizes climate prediction is an extremely difficult undertaking. For time scales of a decade or more, understanding the empirical accuracy of such predictions - called “verification” - is simply impossible, since we have to wait a decade or longer to assess the accuracy of the forecasts.

Available at: http://ccc.atmos.colostate.edu/policystatement.php
Views of Climate Change Science
Climate change including regional impacts can be skillfully predicted by knowledge of the concentration of well-mixed greenhouse gases.

Surface temperatures are the most appropriate metric to assess “global warming.”

The global average temperature provides a useful assessment of climate.

The surface temperature data has been adequately homogenized in the regional scale using adjustments such as time of observations, instrument changes, and urbanizations.

Arctic sea-ice cover and Northern Hemisphere snow cover are continuously diminishing in areal coverage.
The atmospheric hydrological cycle is accelerating.
The earth’s atmosphere is warmer today than it was in 1979 when accurate global satellite coverage became available.
The GCM models have skillfully predicted the evolution of the earth’s atmospheric temperature since 1979.
We understand climate change and can introduce policies to prevent our “dangerous intervention in the climate system.”
The IPCC and U.S. National Assessment document a clear scientific understanding of the human disturbance of the climate system.
Now the Pentagon Tells Bush: Climate Change Will Destroy Us

Secret report warns of rioting and nuclear war; Britain will be 'Siberian' in less than 20 years; Threat to the world is greater than terrorism.

Mark Townsend and Paul Harris in New York
Sunday February 22, 2004
The Observer

Climate change over the next 20 years could result in a global catastrophe costing millions of lives in wars and natural disasters....

http://observer.guardian.co.uk/international/story/0,6903,1153513,00.html
The Lack of Spatial Representativeness of Surface Temperature


Maximum-minimum temperature sensor (MMTS) installation near Lindon, Colorado.
MMTS installation near John Martin Reservoir, Colorado.
Map of study region, showing all surveyed COOP sites. The USHCN sites are indicated by stars. The following photos are for HCN sites.
Photographs of the temperature sensor exposure characteristics of the NWS COOP station at Eads, CO. Panel a) shows the temperature sensor, while panels b)-e) illustrate the exposures viewed from the temperature sensor looking N, E, S, and W, respectively.
Photographs of the temperature sensor exposure characteristics of the NWS COOP station at Holly, CO. Panel a) shows the temperature sensor, while panels b)-e) illustrate the exposures viewed from the temperature sensor looking N, E, S, and W, respectively.
Photographs of the temperature sensor exposure characteristics for the NWS COOP station near Rocky Ford, Colorado. Panel a) shows the temperature sensor, while panels b)-e) illustrate the exposures viewed from the temperature sensor looking N, E, S, and W, respectively. (CRS-Cotton Region Shelter)
Photographs of the temperature sensor exposure characteristics of the NWS COOP station at Trinidad, CO. Panel a) shows the temperature sensor, while panels b)-e) illustrate the exposures viewed from the sensor looking N, E, S, and W, respectively.
Photographs of the temperature sensor exposure characteristics of the NWS COOP station at Cheyenne Wells, CO. Panel a) shows the temperature sensor, while panels b)-e) illustrate the exposures viewed from the sensor looking N, E, S, and W, respectively.
Photographs of the temperature sensor exposure characteristics of the NWS COOP station at Lamar, CO. Panel a) shows the temperature sensor, while panels b)-e) illustrate the exposures viewed from the sensor looking N, E, S, and W, respectively.
Photographs of the temperature sensor exposure characteristics of the NWS COOP station at Wray, CO. Panel a) shows the temperature sensor, while panels b)-e) illustrate the exposures viewed from the sensor looking N, E, S, and W, respectively.
Photographs of the temperature sensor exposure characteristics of the NWS COOP station at Las Animas, CO. Panel a) shows the temperature sensor, while panels b)-e) illustrate the exposures viewed from the sensor looking N, E, S, and W, respectively.
Fort Morgan site showing images of the cardinal directions from the sensor (from Hanamean et al. 2003)
GCM Models Have Not Yet Succeeded In Skillfully Predicting 1980-2000 Global Climate


TROPOSPHERIC OBSERVATIONS: GLOBAL TEMPERATURE ANOMALY

- UAH MSU (Lower Troposphere Avg.) 0.06°C/decade; p<0.05
- RSS MSU (Lower Troposphere Avg.) 0.13°C/decade; p<0.01
- NCEP REANALYSIS (1000-500mb avg.) 0.10°C/decade; p<0.04
- RAWINSonde (850-500mb Avg.) -0.01°C/decade; p>0.05
- CRU SURFACE 0.17°C/decade; p<0.001


T ANOMALY (°C)

Source: Courtesy of Thomas N. Chase, University of Colorado, Boulder.

http://blue.atmos.colostate.edu/publications/pdf/R-246.pdf
http://www.atmo.arizona.edu/gifs/500mb_t.gif
Reanalysis monthly-averaged area enclosed by indicated isotherm during the period 1950-1998 north of 60°N.
(a) -40°C isotherm, (b) -42°C isotherm, and (c) -44°C isotherm.
The Global Spatial Redistribution of Energy by Human-Caused Landscape Change


http://blue.atmos.colostate.edu/publications/pdf/R-258.pdf
Examples of land-use change from (a) 1700, (b) 1900, (c) 1970, and (d) 1990. The human-disturbed landscape includes intensive cropland (red) and marginal cropland used for grazing (pink). Other landscape includes tropical evergreen forest and deciduous forest (dark green), savannah (light green), grassland and steppe (yellow), open shrubland (maroon), temperate deciduous forest (blue), temperate needleleaf evergreen forest (light yellow) and hot desert (orange). Note the expansion of cropland and grazed land between 1700 and 1900. (Reproduced with permission from Klein Goldewijk 2001.)
The ten-year average absolute-value change in surface latent turbulent heat flux in W m$^{-2}$ worldwide as a result of the land-use changes for (a) January, and (b) July. (Adapted from Chase et al. 2000.)
The Adoption of a More Appropriate Metric to Monitor “Global Warming (or Cooling)”


Estimate of actual climate system heat change from the early 1950s-1995 is 0.3 Watts per meter squared (Pielke 2003) based on ocean heat storage changes (Levitus et al. 2000). Figure from Houghton et al. Eds., 2001: Summary for Policymakers: http://www.ipcc.ch
Climate as an Initial Value Problem


http://blue.atmos.colostate.edu/publications/pdf/R-225.pdf
Figure 6. Schematic of different classes of prediction. The size of the box labeled ‘U’ represents the range of future climates, while the box labeled ‘A’ indicates the relative subset of possible future climates that are estimated using the different classes of prediction. (Adapted from Pielke Sr., 2002)
* Note that more appropriately, it is weather change and variability.
Regional Land-Use Change Effects on Climate in the Winter

http://blue.atmos.colostate.edu/publications/pdf/R-277.pdf

http://blue.atmos.colostate.edu/publications/pdf/R-281.pdf
Fig. 2. Outer and inner grid configurations for RAMS domain centered on south Florida.
Fig. 1. Number of citrus trees per county and principle areas of winter fresh vegetable production. Figure adapted from Florida Agriculture Facts Directory 2002.
Fig. 2. Observations of minimum temperature from the National Weather Service Cooperative Observer Network on the morning of January 19, 1997.
Fig. 3. U.S. Geological Survey land cover classes for pre-1900s natural conditions (left) and 1993 land use patterns.
Fig. 7. Time series of 2 meter temperature for a model grid point located just south of Lake Okeechobee for the pre-1900s land cover scenario (filled circles) and the 1993 land cover scenario (open circles).
Regional Land-Use Change Effects on Climate in the Summer


http://blue.atmos.colostate.edu/publications/pdf/R-272.pdf
FIG. 25. Regional average time series of accumulated convective rainfall (cm) from 1924 to 2000, with corresponding trend based on linear regression of all July-August amounts. The vertical bars overlain on the raw time series indicate the value of the standard error of the July-August regional mean.
Max and Min Temp Trends

FIG. 26. Same as in Figure 25, except for daily (a) maximum and (b) minimum shelter-level temperature (°C)
1989

FIG. 5. Same as in Figure 4, except for July-August 1989.
FIG. 13. Two-month average of the daily maximum shelter-level temperature from the model simulations of July-August 1989 with pre-1900s land cover (top), 1993 land use (middle), and the difference field for the two (bottom panel; 1993 minus pre-1900s case).
Arctic Sea Ice and Northern Hemispheric Snow-Cover Changes


http://blue.atmos.colostate.edu/publications/pdf/R-256.pdf

Fig. 1 (left). Observed decrease of NH sea ice extent during the past 25 years. Fig. 2 (right). Observed and modeled variations of annual averages of NH sea ice extent. Observed data for 1901–98 are from Chapman and Walsh (13). Observed data for 1978–98 are from Parkinson et al. (16). The modeled sea ice extents are from the GFDL and Hadley Centre climate model runs forced by observed CO₂ and aerosols. Modeled data for ~250 years are smoothed by polynomials of degree 10 to estimate nonlinear trends caused by a change of external radiative forcing.
Northern Hemisphere Sea Ice Area

Data provided by NSIDC: NASA SMMR and SSMI

http://zubov.atmos.uiuc.edu/CT/
Current Northern Hemisphere Sea Ice Area
recent 365 days shown

http://zubov.atmos.uiuc.edu/CT/
Actual and insolation-weighted values with Arctic sea ice and snow (60-90°N) included together.
Antarctic annual averaged sea-ice extent, 1980-2002, for the cases of no weighting and average daily solar weighting. Plotted are the values minus the 23-year mean, with that quantity divided by the mean.
CONCLUSION

The earth’s climate system and human disturbance of the climate system is more complicated and multi-dimensional than commonly assumed. This may make skillful prediction of the future climate impossible!

There is a new direction emerging....

Colorado Climate Magazine

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http://ccc.atmos.colostate.edu/magazine.php
The Pielke Research Group

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- click on “Drought”
- then click on “Presentations”