

NATIONAL REVIEW

A Top Climate Scientist Blows the Whistle on Shoddy Climate Science

The NOAA 'corrected' data they didn't like and — surprise — didn't archive the evidence.

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A former top scientist with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) has stepped forward to expose the malfeasance behind a key climate report issued just before the United Nations' Climate Change Conference in 2015. The whistleblower, Dr. John Bates, led NOAA's climate-data records program for ten years and reveals stunning allegations in a lengthy Daily Mail exposé posted February 4. His main charge is that the federal government's top agency in charge of climate science published a flawed but widely accepted study that was meant to disprove the hiatus in global warming. Bates accuses the study's lead author, NOAA official Tom Karl, of using unverified data sets, ignoring mandatory agency procedures, and failing to archive evidence — all in a “blatant attempt to intensify the impact” of the paper in advance of the conference.

The study, “Possible Artifacts of Data Biases in the Recent Global Surface Warming Hiatus,” was published in *Science* magazine in June 2015, just a few months before world leaders gathered in Paris to hammer out a costly global pact on climate-change mitigation. It refuted evidence from other climate-research groups that showed a major slowdown in rising global temperatures from 1998 to 2012; the slowdown was a sticky little fact that threatened to undermine the very *raison d'être* of the conference. Climate activists were sweating over the acknowledgement by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) in 2013 that “the rate of warming over the past 15 years . . . is smaller than the rate calculated since 1951.” The IPCC walked back its own predictions from 2007 that short-term temperature would rise between 1 and 3 degrees Celsius. The IPCC in 2013 “concluded that the global surface temperature ‘has shown a much smaller increasing linear trend over the past 15 years [1998 to

2012] than over the past 30 to 60 years' and the rise in global temperatures was 'estimated to be around one-third to one-half of the trend over 1951–2012.'”

So Karl, the former head of the NOAA office that produces climate data, worked with a team of scientists to challenge the IPCC findings and prove that the hiatus did not exist. He claimed to have developed a way to raise sea-temperature readings that had been collected by buoys: He would adjust them by using higher temperature readings of sea water collected by ships. “In regards to sea surface temperature, scientists have shown that across the board, data collected from buoys are cooler than ship-based data,” said one of the study’s co-authors. It was therefore necessary, the NOAA scientists held, to “correct the difference between ship and buoy measurements, and we are using this in our trend analysis.”

Now get ready to be shocked. This dubious methodology concluded that the warming trend for 2000 to 2014 was exactly the same as it was for 1950 to 1999: “There is no discernable (statistical or otherwise) decrease in the rate of warming between the second half of the 20th century and the first 15 years of the 21st century.” The study then concluded that the IPCC’s statement about a slower rise in global temperature “is no longer valid.” (It takes a lot of chutzpah to out-climate the international climateers.)

The study was cheered by climate activists and their media sympathizers around the world, but Bates says the study had major problems. “They had good data from buoys,” he told the Daily Mail. “And they threw it out and ‘corrected’ it by using the bad data from ships [a natural warming source]. You never change good data to agree with the bad, but that’s what they did so as to make it look as if the sea was warmer.” Bates also said the study ignored satellite data.

And in the most Obama-esque move, Bates said that the computer used to process the data “suffered a complete failure” and that none of the data had been archived or made available as required by NOAA rules, which means that Karl’s paper cannot be replicated or independently verified. According to Bates, the NOAA is drafting a new version of the report that will reverse the flaws in Karl’s report. For now, Science magazine is standing by its publication of Karl’s study, claiming it underwent “rigorous peer review” and dismissing as “baseless and without merit” any notion that the study was rushed to coincide with the Paris conference. (The Cato Institute has knocked Science for its biased global warming coverage, but that’s a story for another day.)

In a separate post on the blog Climate Etc., Bates laments that government scientists routinely fail to save their work: “The most critical issue in archival of climate data is actually scientists who are unwilling to formally archive and document their data.” Bates notes that the very scientists who have failed to save data are now suddenly concerned that the Trump administration might destroy climate data.

Bates is not fighting this fight alone. Representative Lamar Smith, chairman of the House Science, Space, and Technology Committee, has been asking NOAA for all communications related to Karl’s report, but the agency has refused to cooperate. In October 2015, Smith’s committee issued subpoenas for the documents; NOAA released some technical papers but not the requested correspondence, arguing that taxpayer-paid scientists don’t have to disclose their emails with other taxpayer-paid scientists about a taxpayer-paid study.

In a statement Sunday, Smith applauded Bates's courage for speaking out: "Dr. Bates' revelations and NOAA's obstruction certainly lend credence to what I've been saying all along — that the Karl study used flawed data, was rushed to publication in an effort to support the president's climate change agenda, and ignored NOAA's own standards for scientific study."

With a sympathetic administration in power, Smith should now be able to get to the bottom of how the Karl study was conducted and who else helped move it along. And despite the personal attacks on his character and credibility, Bates's actions could have long-lasting repercussions, not the least of which could be to encourage others to speak out about what's been going on at federal scientific agencies. It's long overdue.