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Tyler Morning Telegraph

Leave the mascots out of this debate

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Can we please leave the school mascots out of this? Bringing Santa into the climate change debate was bad enough (Greenpeace quoted Santa last year as saying, “Dear children, regrettably I bring bad tidings. . . . For some time now, melting ice here in the North Pole has made our operations and our day-to-day life intolerable and impossible and there may be no alternative but to cancel Christmas).

But now the National Wildlife Federation is appealing to kids to help keep climate change from killing off their beloved school mascots.

“Unfortunately, many of the plants and animals that inspired our favorite teams’ names and mascots are facing a losing streak,” the NWF contends. “From the Colorado State University Rams to the University of Maryland Terrapins, climate change is quickly becoming the toughest opponent to the long-term survival of wildlife. Climate change impacts like sea level rise, extreme droughts and storms, warming temperatures, and melting snowpack are altering key habitat elements that are critical to survival, putting wildlife at risk.”

The group has a prescription for the problem, of course, such as “Passing effective laws that reduce carbon pollution and other air pollutants that drive climate change and endanger the health of our communities and wildlife.”

(It’s unclear how high schoolers are supposed to do that.)

These actions will, presumably, preserve school spirit and help lead our teams to victory.

The Cato Institute gently points out the logical fallacies here.

“Even if it were true that anthropogenic climate change could be scientifically linked to changes in the location and/or health of the various school mascot species — which it almost certainly can’t — how this impacts “school spirit” is completely beyond me,” that group’s Paul Knappenberger said.

He goes on to carry the claim out to its logical conclusion.

“If the real-world situation that the mascots find themselves in is reflected in school spirit, can you imagine the level of dejection in the fan base of say the San Diego State Aztecs, the University of Southern California Trojans, the University of Calgary Dinos, or the Indiana

University-Purdue University Fort Wayne Mastodons?” he asked. “It is a wonder that a single seat is filled for home games.”

Closer to home, of course, we have some other endangered species: lumberjacks and roughnecks (Stephen F. Austin State University and White Oak High School, respectively). But those professions aren’t endangered by climate change — they’re endangered by climate change activists.

Where’s the love for these mascots?

How about the Lindale Eagles — a species that wind farms kills off with impunity (literally — there’s no penalty for such deaths)?

And as Knappenberger added, climate change itself could benefit some mascots. The NWF left some teams out of the report.

“They could have featured the Miami Hurricanes, the University of British Columbia-Okanagan Heat, the Geneva College Golden Tornadoes, the Southeastern Oklahoma Savage Storm, and, of course, the most obvious of all, the Dartmouth College Big Greens,” he said.

There are strong arguments to be made on the issue of climate change.

This isn’t one of them.