

Sell me your beach house, please!

By [Patrick Michaels](#) 4:52 PM 04/13/2011



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As the tide of red ink explodes to \$14 trillion and beyond, the political will for expensive (and futile) climate change policies will shrink rapidly.

The vacuum of policy is almost certain to be filled by climate alarmism, especially with regard to the dreaded sea level rise. It's much more compelling than whatever imagery can be cooked up (I choose my words carefully) from a rise in surface temperatures.

Temperature effects are vague and fairly easy to adapt to by a species that can survive a range between -40 and +110. The effects of rising seas are usually sudden and spectacular. Hurricane storm surges, such as the one in Mississippi in 2005's Hurricane Katrina, leave nothing standing near the shore. In that particular disaster, the water reached six miles inland in a few spots.

Despite the fact that global hurricane activity is at an all-time low since measurements began about a half-century ago, it's only a matter of time until another storm as strong as Katrina lands on some unfortunate place, and surely the rise of the seas will be conflated with climate change, a conflation aided and abetted by our political indolence.

I keep hoping that this type of rhetoric will panic people who live along the beach into selling their properties. After all, one of the aspects of "property" is that, if it disappears, it's gone. If a hurricane turns your lot into an inlet, or completely erodes it so that it is under water at high tide, you are out of luck.

I will be happy to assume this risk because the coverage of sea-level science is really out of whack. We pay an inordinate amount of attention to peer-reviewed science literature that ups the threat from the rise of the ocean and we ignore articles demonstrating that fears are misplaced. I'd say that the science on a dramatic rise is, instead, a wash.

Back in 2007, the last scientific compendium from the United Nations' Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change predicted a central estimate of 21st century sea level rise of only 15 inches, but that was quickly challenged in a few scientific papers estimating a rise of from three to six feet.

The only way this can happen is if there is a dramatic increase in the amount of ice discharged from Greenland, which is by far the biggest ice mass in our hemisphere. The UN Panel assumes this won't happen, as the total rise they estimate from loss of ice there is a mere two inches.

Research published last month by Eric Rignot from NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory added fuel to the rhetorical fires. His team looked at the change in what's called the "mass balance" of Greenland ice in recent decades. This is the amount of annual gain from snowfall minus the loss from surface melting and calving of ice into the ocean.

Twenty years ago it was positive, meaning Greenland was gaining ice. Now there's a net loss. Rignot and his colleagues extrapolated this change forward and concluded that the UN's estimate for 2100 is off by about two feet, all of which was duly noted on the green blogs and

in the trade press.

This amount is enough to significantly increase the damage caused by a major hurricane storm surge. So, please stop reading now. Panic and sell me that house.

There was another paper on Greenland ice published by my nefarious research team at the same time as Rignot's. Instead of looking at recent decades (satellite monitoring of polar ice only began in 1979), we estimated the Greenland ice melt using a remarkable 225-year record from weather stations established there by the Danish colonists. We found that about the time that the satellites started sending back data the ice melt was the lowest it had been for nearly a century. In other words, Greenland was unusually icy when Rignot et al. started their analysis.

Our simple computer model further indicated that there were several decades in the early and mid-20th century in which the ice loss was *greater* than in the last (ballyhooed) ten years. The period of major loss was before we emitted the balance of our satanic greenhouse gases.

So, about half of the observed change since 1979 is simply Greenland returning to its normal melt rate for the last 140 years or so, long before there was global warming caused by dreaded economic activity.

That type of result gets very little attention, and nor can you expect it to, as the alarm stories escalate in the absence of alarming policies, hopefully making beach houses more affordable for all.

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