September 23, 2009, 4:00 a.m.

# The Dog Ate Global Warming

Interpreting climate data can be hard enough. What if some key data have been fiddled?

By Patrick J. Michaels

Imagine if there were no reliable records of global surface temperature. Raucous policy debates such as cap-and-trade would have no scientific basis, Al Gore would at this point be little more than a historical footnote, and President Obama would not be spending this U.N. session talking up a (likely unattainable) international climate deal in Copenhagen in December.

Steel yourself for the new reality, because the data needed to verify the gloom-and-doom warming forecasts have disappeared.

Or so it seems. Apparently, they were either lost or purged from some discarded computer. Only a very few people know what really happened, and they aren't talking much. And what little they are saying makes no sense.

In the early 1980s, with funding from the U.S. Department of Energy, scientists at the United Kingdom's University of East Anglia established the Climate Research Unit (CRU) to produce the world's first comprehensive history of surface temperature. It's known in the trade as the "Jones and Wigley" record for its authors, Phil Jones and Tom Wigley, and it served as the primary reference standard for the U.N. Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) until 2007. It was this record that prompted the IPCC to claim a "discernible human influence on global climate."

Putting together such a record isn't at all easy. Weather stations weren't really designed to monitor global climate. Long-standing ones were usually established at points of commerce, which tend to grow into cities that induce spurious warming trends in their records. Trees grow up around thermometers and lower the afternoon temperature. Further, as documented by the University of Colorado's Roger Pielke Sr., many of the stations themselves are placed in locations, such as in parking lots or near heat vents, where artificially high temperatures are bound to be recorded.

So the weather data that go into the historical climate records that are required to verify models of global warming aren't the original records at all. Jones and Wigley, however, weren't specific about what was done to which station in order to produce their record, which, according to the IPCC, showed a warming of 0.6° +/– 0.2°C in the 20th century.

Now begins the fun. Warwick Hughes, an Australian scientist, wondered where that "+/–" came from, so he politely wrote Phil Jones in early 2005, asking for the original data. Jones's response to a fellow scientist attempting to replicate his work was, "We have 25 years or so invested in the work. Why should I make the data available to you, when your aim is to try and find something wrong with it?"

Reread that statement, for it is breathtaking in its anti-scientific thrust. In fact, the entire purpose of replication is to "try and find something wrong." The ultimate objective of science is to do things so well that, indeed, nothing is wrong.

Then the story changed. In June 2009, Georgia Tech's Peter Webster told Canadian researcher Stephen McIntyre that he had requested raw data, and Jones freely gave it to him. So McIntyre promptly filed a Freedom of Information Act request for the same data. Despite having been invited by the National Academy of Sciences to present his analyses of millennial temperatures, McIntyre was told that he couldn't have the data because he wasn't an "academic." So his colleague Ross McKitrick, an economist at the University of Guelph, asked for the data. He was turned down, too.

Faced with a growing number of such requests, Jones refused them all, saying that there were "confidentiality" agreements regarding the data between CRU and nations that supplied the data. McIntyre's blog readers then requested those agreements, country by country, but only a handful turned out to exist, mainly from Third World countries and written in very vague language.

It's worth noting that McKitrick and I had published papers demonstrating that the quality of land-based records is so poor that the warming trend estimated since 1979 (the first year for which we could compare those records to independent data from satellites) may have been overestimated by 50 percent. Webster, who received the CRU data, published studies linking changes in hurricane patterns to warming (while others have found otherwise).

Enter the dog that ate global warming.

Roger Pielke Jr., an esteemed professor of environmental studies at the University of Colorado, then requested the raw data from Jones. Jones responded:

> Since the 1980s, we have merged the data we have received into existing series or begun new ones, so it is impossible to say if all stations within a particular country or if all of an individual record should be freely available. Data storage availability in the 1980s meant that we were not able to keep the multiple sources for some sites, only the station series after adjustment for homogeneity issues. We, therefore, do not hold the original raw data but only the value-added (i.e., quality controlled and homogenized) data.

The statement about "data storage" is balderdash. They got the records from somewhere. The files went onto a computer. All of the original data could easily fit on the 9-inch tape drives common in the mid-1980s. I had all of the world's surface barometric pressure data on one such tape in 1979.

If we are to believe Jones's note to the younger Pielke, CRU adjusted the original data and then lost or destroyed them over twenty years ago. The letter to Warwick Hughes may have been an outright lie. After all, Peter Webster received some of the data this year. So the question remains: What was destroyed or lost, when was it destroyed or lost, and why?

All of this is much more than an academic spat. It now appears likely that the U.S. Senate will drop cap-and-trade climate legislation from its docket this fall — whereupon the Obama Environmental Protection Agency is going to step in and issue regulations on carbon-dioxide emissions. Unlike a law, which can't be challenged on a scientific basis, a regulation can. If there are no data, there's no science. U.S. taxpayers deserve to know the answer to the question posed above.

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Climate of Extremes: Global Warming Science They Don't Want You to Know.

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