

Researchers call White House Climate report 'pseudoscience'

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May 7, 2014

The White House issued its third National Climate Assessment (NCA) yesterday to much fanfare and an avalanche of positive press. But two climate researchers, scientists Patrick Michaels and Paul Knappenberger of the libertarian Cato Institute, called out the administration for relying on faulty data and non-scientist input.

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“It clearly believes that virtually everything in our society is tremendously dependent on the surface temperature, and, because of that, we are headed towards certain and inescapable destruction, unless we take its advice and decarbonize our economy, pronto,” Michaels and Knappenberger added.

The NCA says that the U.S. average temperature has risen between 1.3 degrees Fahrenheit to 1.9 degrees Fahrenheit since 1895, with most of that increase occurring since 1980. This temperature rise, the report argues, has been linked to increased extreme weather, like hurricanes and droughts, as well as ecosystem imbalance across the country.

The NCA warns that the average temperature could increase another 4 degrees Fahrenheit in the coming decades, causing more extreme weather, sea level rises and deaths. The NCA suggests a slew of regulatory solutions from cap-and-trade to green energy subsidies to mitigate global warming.

“It is to provide cover for a massive regulatory intrusion, and concomitant enormous costs in resources and individual liberty,” Michaels and Knappenberger wrote. “History tells us that when scientists willingly endorse sweeping governmental agendas fueled by dodgy science, bad things soon happen.”

Michaels’ and Knappenberger’s 75-page critique of the NCA points out the many weak points and flaws present in the government’s analysis of the impact of global warming. For example, the NCA relies on not only peer-reviewed scientific literature, but also non-peer reviewed work from environmental activist groups — which the government did not disclose.

The libertarian Cato scholars point to environmental and political advocacy groups cited in just the NCA’s chapter on water resources. The groups include the Union of Concerned Scientists (who are not actual scientists), the Southwest Climate Alliance and the Water Climate Utility Alliance.

Michaels and Knappenberger also pointed out that the measure of climate sensitivity used by the report is 40 percent higher than what more recent scientific literature points to. Climate sensitivity is the measure of how

much warming would occur if carbon dioxide levels in the atmosphere were doubled. The current literature puts that number at about 1.5 degrees Celsius, but the government used estimates from the United Nations' 2007 climate report putting climate sensitivity at 2 degrees Celsius to 3.3 degrees Celsius.

The report is at odds with some of the UN's conclusions in its most recent studies. For example, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report notes that there has been no increase in the severity of storms in decades. There was also no mention in the NCA of the 15 year pause in rising temps, nor why the increase in CO2 levels in the atmosphere has not led to an increase in temperatures as all models say it should.

This is the game the White House has been playing - they ignore current data and conclusions in favor of their overarching narrative of imminent disaster. It's dishonest and good on Cato for calling them out on it.