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Thomas Fuller

SF Environmental Policy Examiner

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Global warming in perspective: today's Google news results

May 15, 8:38 AM

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Update: Pat Michaels, co-founder of Greenpeace and now a fellow at the Cato Institute, brought to my attention an error in calculating CO2 emissions. I address that at the end of this article.

If you happen to go to Google right now (the results change constantly) and search for "global warming", the top 2 news results will be:

[Global Warming Biggest Health Threat of 21st Century](#), Experts Say - 9 hours ago
 "The vast majority of experts, 95 percent, maybe even 99 percent, agree that global warming is taking place," said Kirby Donnelly, head of environmental and ...
[Pouring cold water on global warming](#) - Belfast Telegraph

But you probably already knew that, right? If you're reading commentary on global warming at Examiner.com, you undoubtedly already know there's a debate. I would like to explore the possibility that both articles are correct. Pay attention, please.

Terri Jackson's skeptic piece for the Belfast Telegraph begins: "There is now irrefutable scientific evidence that far from global warming the earth has now entered a period of global cooling which will last at least for the next two decades." It goes on to talk about short term warming and cooling cycles. We have recently finished a warming cycle and are starting a cooling cycle. Temperatures have plateaued and may have even dropped a little.

Regular readers of this space will know that I am skeptical of some of the grander claims by global warming alarmists--that the sea level will rise by 20 feet, or that temperatures will rise by more than 7 degrees Celsius this century. But regular readers will also remember that I believe that the greenhouse effect is a valid description of how our atmosphere works, that CO2 is a greenhouse gas, and that CO2 contributes to global warming. I do not think a catastrophe is coming. I absolutely do think that global warming is a serious issue that needs to be monitored and, if possible, to be addressed. I also think that President Obama's energy plan does address the short term needs--putting a price on carbon, getting more efficient, investing in research and development on alternative methods of generating, distributing and storing energy.

The article reports on the conference sponsored by the Heartland Institute, which hosted 800 mostly skeptical scientists and journalists. The article goes on to state, "Recently the global temperature increased from 1918 to 1940, decreased from 1940 to 1976, increased again from 1976 to 1998 and has been decreasing ever since.

However throughout this time CO2 has been added to the atmosphere in increasing amounts. This point was brought out by at the New York conference by Vaclav Klaus the rotating President of the EU and President of the Czech Republic. If CO2 emissions cause temperature rises than why is it that every 27 years the earth climate switches to a cooling mode with decreasing temperature?"

And this is the point we have to watch. [Last week](#) I introduced a graph that showed that CO2 levels have been as high as 6,000 parts per million and asked why we should believe that doubling from 275 ppm to 550 ppm concentrations of CO2 should trouble us? I answered my own question saying that basically we should not. I still believe that. But...

As noted in the article, our emissions of CO2 are increasing. They are increasing at a rate of 3% per year. If that continues...

...[the rule of 72 comes into play](#). If CO2 increases at 3% per year, they will double every 23 years. Concentrations are now at about 385 parts per million. Now, we don't know how long future CO2 emissions will linger in the atmosphere. We don't even know if later emissions will be as absorbing of heat as current emissions. However, if you can remember that this is *hypothetical*, imagine a scenario where concentrations track emissions closely. They would double four times this century, reaching 6,000 parts per million by 2001. Remember, emissions don't equal concentrations, and it's

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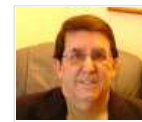
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