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Knight Science Journalism Tracker

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« Lots of Ink: At UN, world leaders talk big on climate change hopes and dreams. El País: Farmacéuticas, investigaciones sobre cáncer, y conflictos de intereses »

NYTimes: On that plateau in global temperature and, at AP: Maybe so but the warm ocean is still melting Greenland's glacial hem.

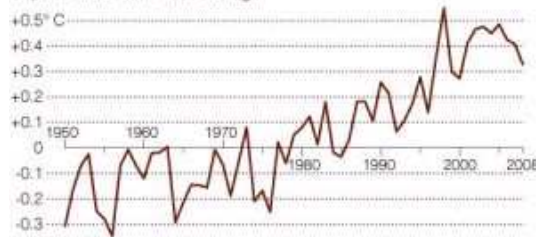
The observation that the world's hottest global temperature (or perhaps second after 2005) was 1998 has become a cause among greenhouse skeptics, who embrace evidence that perhaps global warming has stopped and may even go into a slide that proves it's all a natural, statistical glitch. That position has received little scrutiny in general media. Today the **NYTimes's Andrew C. Revkin** takes it face-on. The piece is overtly coordinated with coverage of the UN climate summit, but is sufficiently distinct to merit a separate post. His theme is that, yes, right now the overall

Earth temperature is about where it was ten years ago. But his report offers plenty of reason provided by researchers to believe the trend upward is alive and perilous.

Global Temperature Shifts

The average global temperature now is about where it was a decade ago, but scientists say global warming is still the long-term trend.

Average Global Temperature Anomaly
Departure from 1961-1990 average



Source: Hadley Center for Climate Prediction and Research

THE NEW YORK TIMES

It's largely a data story, but includes quotes from the extremes of passion – from skeptic Pat Michaels of the Cato Institute, to Joe Romm of Climate Progress who is nearly frantic with worry (and a man who takes occasional pot shots at Revkin's calibrated approach to climate news). Revkin's piece includes the plot above right. It does make it look like things are taking a recent nose dive. The Tracker offers **the busier plot** from the Goddard Institute of Space Studies in Manhattan. Its robust five year mean smoothing, laid over the general year-to-year raggedness, makes the recent excursion look like a perfectly normal wiggle on a rising baseline. The next five years will be intriguing.

Meanwhile, for contrast look at the **AP** wire at **Karl Ritter's** feature reader from on board an icebreaker in a Greenland fjord. A Woods Hole team is there measuring pulsations of tropical-waters nibbling away at the big island's glacial tongues. Is it a fluctuation, or something more? His source suspects it's the latter. The Tracker does have questions. If these are tropical waters, and since tropical waters are normally warm, doesn't that imply some sort of temporary oscillation? And if tropical water moves north, a corresponding slug of cold northern water must head south? That is, it's far more worrisome if northern regions start experiencing warmer home-grown currents, is it not?

Charlie Petit

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