



## Promoting Very Unsettled Science

BY RICHARD W. RAHN

THE CLIMATE CHANGES, BUT DIRECTION AND MAGNITUDE ARE STILL A SOURCE OF DISPUTE

If you have been to the beach at Treasure Island, Florida (adjoining St. Petersburg), you will notice something very odd. The hotels (many of which were built in the 1950s and '60s) and the seawall are very far from the water in the Gulf of Mexico — giving an extraordinarily wide beach. It was not always that way. When the hotels and seawall were built, they were set back from the high tide a normal hundred yards or so; but over the years, there was a natural but unforeseen accretion to the beach — which, having grown up in the area, I observed. (It can be seen on Google Earth.)

It is a news story when a beach erodes and beach front homes fall into the sea. What is not a news story is that the sand that left one beach for the most part ends up on another beach. The sand barrier islands that ring much of the U.S. Atlantic and Gulf coasts are in constant motion, moving up and down, in and out, and always have been. Yet people seem to be endlessly surprised when part of their beach or riverfront ends up adjoining someone else's property.

This past week, former NASA scientist, James Hansen, who was one of the first to sound the alarm of global warming back in 1988, said that sea levels might rise as much as 10 feet in the next 50 years. His reasoning was so unsupported by evidence that even much of the global

warming establishment is walking away from it. Sea levels have been slowly rising since the end of the last ice age 12,000 years ago, but over the last century the sea level rise has decelerated to less than seven inches per century, which mankind has shown it can easily adapt to. Mr. Hansen had predicted and continues to predict rapidly increasing global temperatures — which hasn't happened. In fact, there has been a 17-year pause in the temperature rise — which neither Mr. Hansen nor any of the major global warming models predicted.

Some scientists at NOAA are now claiming that the 17-year pause in temperature rises did not occur because, if you take the year 2000 (a cold year) as the starting point, there has been a small temperature rise. But if you take 1998 as the starting point (a warm year), there has been almost no measurable temperature rise, say NOAA's critics. The point is the scientists cannot agree on the length of time to show a trend. Even now, we have very imperfect measures of temperatures, let alone the quality of the measurements in decades past — so it is rather arrogant to make statements of great certainty about 100 year trends in temperature based on imperfect data from only a few decades.

More unsettling was a study by the Royal Astronomical Society published in Science Daily on July 9, which concludes that solar activity will be exceptionally diminished in the decade of 2030-40 as it was during the Maunder minimum of 1645-1715, a period of sharply lower temperatures known as the "little ice age." Lower temperatures would be far more damaging than moderate global warming, because agricultural production could be greatly reduced. Note: there are many scientists who think changes in solar output, and/or changes in cloud cover can easily swamp changes in CO2 levels in affecting the earth's temperature.

New satellite data, reported in Climate Science on July 20, shows that Arctic Sea ice has now bounced

back to levels last seen in the 1980s when modern measurements began. At the same time, southern sea ice around the Antarctic has grown to a thirty-year high from when it first began to be measured. Climate scientists admit that their models cannot account for the rise in sea ice. By the way, did not Al Gore tell us the Arctic Ocean would be free of sea ice by the summer of 2007?

Earlier this month, in testimony before the Congress, EPA Chief Administrator Gina McCarthy claimed that the agency's pending rule to limit CO2 emissions from power plants would be "enormously beneficial," even though she admitted that it would only reduce global temperature by one one-hundredth of a degree Celsius, according to the administration's own estimates. Since it is widely acknowledged that the proposed rule will cause a sharp rise in the cost of electricity, most painful to low-income Americans, I can only assume that Ms. McCarthy means "enormously beneficial" for the bureaucrats at EPA who will have to administer the rule.

F.A. Hayek (1899-1992), the great economist and philosopher, warned us about "limits to knowledge" and "fatal conceit," which is all too evident in much of the scientific establishment. What we do know is the climate and the earth's physical features have been in continuous change — but it is all too clear that there is much disagreement about both the direction and magnitude of such changes. Those who say the "science is settled" have not been reading the scientific studies.

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