

Climate Science: Roger Pielke Sr.

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[Comment On The Post “Enemies Caught In Action!” On The Blackboard Protecting The IPCC Turf – There Are No Independent Climate Assessments Of The IPCC WG1 Report Funded And Sanctioned By The NSF, NASA Or The NRC – A Repost Of And Comment On A January 13 2009 post](#)

November 24, 2009...7:00 am

Beware Savivors! By Demetris Koutsoyiannis

Guest weblog by [Demetris Koutsoyiannis](http://www.itia.ntua.gr/dk/) (<http://www.itia.ntua.gr/dk/>)

Hydrological engineering is my scientific field and it is closely related to climate. In the last decade, I have been concerned about the state of research in climate and its detrimental influence on hydrology. Also, I should note up front that I try to be a skeptic; for a Greek, this is a positive quality (skeptic is etymologized from skepsis = thought). In recent years, I have tried to publish a few papers related to climate. Some of them were initially rejected, but eventually published elsewhere—usually in journals without a specific focus on climate. From the experience I gained through the review process of the rejected papers, I became more confident about the analyses I’d performed and the significance of the results I’d presented. I have not been surprised, therefore, to see that these once-rejected papers have become the most cited among my papers.

Due to my skeptical inclination, I’ve had the feeling that my colleagues had serious doubts about my perspective. The common dogma is that “climate change is real” and its consequences are catastrophic, so why oppose those ideas and the people who arduously work to save the planet, and us, from catastrophes? I found it difficult to explain my convictions in a compelling manner. However, the explanation is actually simple and was formulated by my co-authors Alberto Montanari, Harry Lins, Tim Cohn, and myself in a recent paper criticizing the IPCC position on freshwater: “*A common argument in favour of the political orientation of the IPCC is that its aims are good for humanity and the natural environment and that reducing emissions of greenhouse gases will be beneficial for the planet, regardless of the ultimate validity of the IPCC model predictions. However, we believe that science is a process for the pursuit of truth and that fidelity to this system should not be affected by other aims. History shows that such distractions can be detrimental to science.*” (This paper can be found at <http://dx.doi.org/10.1623/hysj.54.2.394> and a comment about it, as well as the IPCC authors’ reply, has been published on this weblog at <http://pielkeclimatesci.wordpress.com/2009/04/01/a-new-commentreply-on-the-subject-climate-hydrology-and-freshwater-towards-an-interactive-incorporation-of-hydrological-experience-into-climate-research/>).

Having had several negative experiences in my (rather indirect) interaction with mainstream “scientists” involved in “climate change” and “climate change impacts” (I put all these quotation marks because I believe that the latter terms are not scientific), I must say that what I’ve been reading in the recently hacked and released confidential files from the CRU (aka “Climategate” documents) is not a surprise to me. Rather, and sadly, it verifies what I had suspected about some in the climate establishment. I wonder if they take pride in seeing their own words—now in a public forum:

“I tried hard to balance the needs of the science and the IPCC , which were not always the same.”
(<http://www.anelegantchaos.org/cru/emails.php?eid=794>).

“I can’t see either of these papers being in the next IPCC report. Kevin and I will keep them out somehow – even if we have to redefine what the peer-review literature is !” (<http://www.anelegantchaos.org/cru/emails.php?eid=419>).

“I’ve just completed Mike’s Nature trick of adding in the real temps to each series for the last 20 years (ie from 1981 onwards) amd from 1961 for Keith’s to hide the decline.” (<http://www.anelegantchaos.org/cru/emails.php?eid=154>).

“The fact is that we can’t account for the lack of warming at the moment and it is a travesty that we can’t. The CERES data published in the August BAMS 09 supplement on 2008 shows there should be even more warming; but the data are surely wrong.” (<http://www.anelegantchaos.org/cru/emails.php?eid=1048>).

“If anything, I would like to see the climate change happen, so the science could be proved right, regardless of the consequences.” (<http://www.anelegantchaos.org/cru/emails.php?eid=544>)

“The skeptics appear to have staged a ‘coup’ at ‘Climate Research’ ... Perhaps we should encourage our colleagues in the climate research community to no longer submit to, or cite papers in, this journal.” (<http://www.anelegantchaos.org/cru/emails.php?eid=295>).

“It’s one thing to lose ‘Climate Research’. We can’t afford to lose GRL [Geophysical Research Letters]”
(<http://www.anelegantchaos.org/cru/emails.php?eid=484>).

I do not know how the majority of research scientists feel when reading these and similar quotations from those few people who—objectively—they'd viewed as the leaders in the “climate change” enterprise, and whose results and directions they were consistently following. Will they continue to recognize them as saviors? Saviors who wish “the climate change happen... regardless of the consequences”? Moreover, how do the journal editors feel when they learn that the editorial process that they oversaw had been so effectively influenced by these few dominant people? I had my own experience with GRL: a paper co-authored by Alberto Montanari was rejected by the then (2006) editor (although it was eventually published in another AGU journal, Water Resources Research). This interesting story is described at <http://www.itia.ntua.gr/en/docinfo/781/>, where I have posted the entire prehistory. By the way, I continue to follow the same practice of posting the prehistory for all my initially rejected papers (<http://www.itia.ntua.gr/en/documents/?tags=rejected>). I very much like transparency.

This brings me to the last point I wish to make: secrecy versus transparency. One interesting lesson from this story is that secrecy is corruptible—and corruptive. The CRU people and their collaborators who wrote all these documents felt, no doubt, safe behind their secrecy. They must have felt that this secrecy was their best weapon: to censor differing opinions, to develop “trick” procedures, to “balance” the needs of IPCC, and even to “redefine” peer review.

Unfortunately, current scientific ethics are based largely on the assumption of secrecy—as in the anonymity of reviews. Apparently, as the CRU story highlights, secrecy is not safe. By analogy, how can one be sure that the archive containing the reviews of a journal (with reviewer names) will never be hacked and its contents released on the internet? Of course, there are also lots of other ways that secrecy gets (self-)destroyed. For example, it is often easy to find out who the anonymous reviewers of a paper are.

So, I hope that, as this story continues to unfold, it gives us pause to consider how secrecy and anonymity are non-productive and destructive practices in science. Indeed, through such consideration, we may come to realize that *transparency* forces us to be more productive and progressive in pursuing the truth—particularly in science.

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