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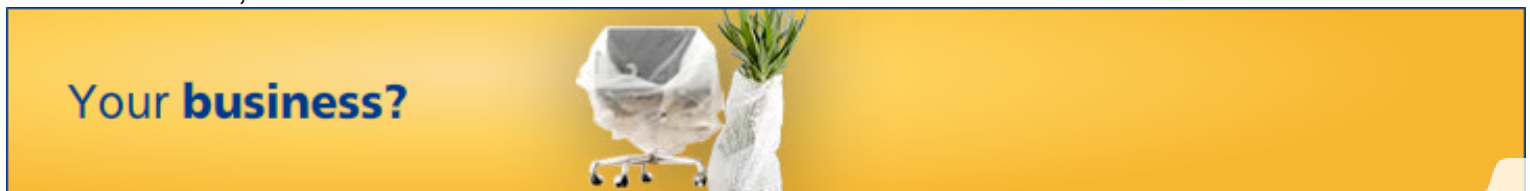
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The Wrath of Global Warming

Last week the Republicans in the House of Representatives decided to eliminate a global warming committee created by Democrats. Apparently some politicians continue to deny that human beings are leaving an indelible footprint around the globe.

Vicious hate-mailers which frequent my inbox on the subject of global warming seem also to be in denial, yet a recent survey published in July 2010 in *The Proceedings of National Academy of Sciences* found that of 1,372 scientists involved in climate research 97 to 98 percent

supported anthropogenic (or human-induced) climate change (ACC).

Twenty-four climate models including Japan's Earth Simulator super-computer predict that if a carbon-cap is not firmly in place by 2020 Earth's temperature will rise by at least 5.5 degrees F and perhaps as high as 10 degrees F by the end of this century.

And while the delegates for 193 nations meet at the U.N. climate summit in Cancun and argue for who pays for what; this year (2010) will go down as a record year for the amount of coal burned in one year on our planet. It will easily exceed 6.25 billion tons and China's galloping economy will have contributed at 54 percent of the global emissions.

Each of their coal-fired power plants is consuming 2.2 billion gallons of fresh water and worldwide burning coal is adding as much as 7,500 tons of mercury vapor -- a potent neurotoxin -- to our stratosphere. It's winding up in our food chain and drinking water here in America.

Let's take a look at what Earth's ecosystems are telling scientists about rising temperatures, acidifying oceans, droughts, intense rainfalls, dying forests and melting ice caps.

Rising temperatures have significantly impacted Hawaii. Surface temperatures are rising, rainfall and stream flow has generally declined, rain intensity has increased, sea level and sea surface temperatures have increased, and the ocean is acidifying.

Around the world jellyfish populations are on the rise as the oceans acidify. Shellfish, on the other hand, like mussels, shrimp, or lobsters are at risk since they will find it considerably more difficult to build their protective shells.

Oceans are naturally alkaline and had a pH level of about 8.2 in 1750. Since the Industrial Revolution, the acidity has increased by 30 percent. Earth's oceans absorb about 25 percent of the global CO₂ emissions. In this process, CO₂ is converted into carbonic acid. Rising CO₂ levels are unequivocally causing the oceans to become more acidic.

Canada experienced its warmest and driest winter on record. Abnormally dry conditions in British Columbia combined with higher temperatures resulted in poor snow conditions for some events at the Winter Olympics in Vancouver/Whistler. Winter temperatures on average across the nation were 8 degrees F above normal. Springtime temperatures were also 5 degrees F above average.

Canada experienced the largest spring Arctic sea ice retreat ever recorded as well as registering the largest missing summer sea ice. To experience the warmest winter and spring, back to back, is extraordinary. The year 2010 will go on record as the hottest year ever recorded in Canada.

In Moscow the July mean temperatures were almost 10 degrees F above normal; and the heat wave that gripped the nation killed in excess of 11,000 people in Moscow alone.

Japan and China had their hottest summers ever recorded.

Extreme heat affected northern Africa and the Arabian Peninsula during the summer of 2010 with temperatures of 126 degrees F measured in Jeddah (Saudi Arabia) and 123 degrees F at Doha (Qatar).

After 13 years of being parched the drought in Australia (except for the southwest) broke. Rainfall arrived, farmers rejoiced, grain crops grew and then the rain kept on falling.

A bumper grain crop of 45 tons was predicted. It was the wettest September since the inception of record keeping in the 1850s in Australia. So far at least 15 tons of grain have rotted on the fields. Global grain prices, already at a two-year high after a drought in Russia, have soared again due to persistent rainfall ruining Australian crops and fueling fears of a global shortage.

October was the driest month in Mexico since 1941. November was the driest month in Israel since 1950 and it just suffered the worst-ever forest fire incinerating about 13,000 acres or 60 percent of the Carmel forest, killing 42 people and destroying over 250 homes.

Droughts have been relentless in the Amazon. In 2005 the northwest jungle experienced a one in 100 year drought. In concert with an intense storm 620 miles long by 124 miles wide at least 500 million trees were killed.

Usually the Amazon can absorb about 2 billion tons of CO₂ a year. In 2005 the massive die-off of trees released 3 billion tons of CO₂ into the atmosphere, therefore an additional 5 billion tons of heat-trapping gases accumulated that year - more than the combined annual emissions of Europe and Japan.

In 2009 extreme flooding occurred in the Amazon jungle.

This year the drought in the northwest Amazon is forecasted to be more lethal than that of 2005. The mighty Negro River -- a tributary of the Amazon River -- is at its lowest since records began in 1902. Over 60,000 people are now without food and fresh water.

Almost 900 miles southwest of the Negro River over 36,600 fires are alight in the forest over four times the number burning at this time last year.

Unless we reduce our global greenhouse gases around the globe researchers from Carnegie Institution for Sciences predict rising temperatures will alter rainfall in the Amazon by at least 37 percent; many plants and animals now living there with either move but more likely die. Let me remind you that the Amazon accounts for about a fifth of Earth's annual oxygen output.

Droughts, wild fires and a plague of indigenous bark beetles have leveled the western forests of the United States. Instead of Arizona, Idaho, Colorado and Wyoming forests absorbing CO₂ they too are now emitters of CO₂.

In the last 60 years the northwestern Antarctic Peninsula has warmed faster than perhaps any place on Earth. Winter temperatures have soared by 11 degrees F, and 90 percent of the 244 glaciers are in retreat. The ice-dependant Antarctica krill which feeds millions sea birds and marine mammals has declined in some cases by as much as 80 percent.

The natural world is in a tailspin from the speed of rising temperatures; there is *no* debate about human-induced global warming amongst field scientists working in marine or terrestrial ecosystems. Global warming is a citizen's issue therefore we all are required to lend a helping hand -- the time is now.

Dr Reese Halter is a Science Communicator: Voice for Ecology, conservation biologist at Cal Lutheran and author of Wild Weather - The Truth Behind Global Warming. Contact him through www.DrReese.com

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