

December 2009 #09-36

## Summary

We are told that the earth is the hottest it has been in thousands of years and humans are to blame. But what if the science behind climate change was exaggerated? What if temperature records have been manipulated or cherry-picked? What if climate scientists are unsure about past temperature history? It appears that this is the case.

Word Count 1077

*“An email from Dr. Phil Jones stated, ‘I’ve just completed Mike’s Nature **trick** of adding in the real temps to each series for the last 20 years (ie [sic] from 1981 onwards) and from 1961 for Keith’s to **hide the decline.**”*

## Climate Change Alarmists in Hot Water

By Todd Wynn

News media and politicians around the country continue to preach that climate change is the greatest threat to humanity. We are told that climate change, if left “untreated,” will cause floods, droughts, heat waves, stronger storms and a catastrophic rise in sea level. We are told that the earth is the hottest it has been in thousands of years and humans are to blame. But what if the science behind climate change was exaggerated? What if temperature records have been manipulated or cherry-picked? What if climate scientists are unsure about past temperature history? It appears that this is the case.

On November 17, 2009, an archive of materials consisting of more than 1,000 emails and 3,000 documents that included raw data and computer code was leaked from the Climate Research Unit (CRU) at the University of East Anglia. The CRU is known as the leading research group on climate change and has considerable influence on the reports by the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). In turn, the IPCC is regarded as the authority on climate change science. The current federal administration has used and continues to use the highly political executive summary of the IPCC reports as a tool to push climate policies such as cap-and-trade, EPA regulation of carbon dioxide and an international climate treaty.

The emails and documents show that CRU researchers, and many others connected with CRU, purposefully hid and deleted data to avoid freedom of information requests, manipulated data to exaggerate global warming and worked to keep opposing views from being published in respected climate journals and IPCC reports. Dr. Phil Jones, director of the CRU, has confirmed that the emails and data are genuine.

Even alarmists are taking note of this scandal. As of December 1, Dr. Phil Jones has stepped down as the director of the Climate Research Unit. Michael Mann, a leading climate researcher who developed the controversial hockey stick graph, is being investigated by the Pennsylvania State University for any involvement in manipulating and/or deleting information and data. Even Dr. Rajendra Pachauri, chairman of the UN’s Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has announced that there will be an investigation on the release of the CRU emails and data.

Some of the most important findings in the string of emails and documents reveal that climate scientists manipulated data in order to downplay the medieval warming period and overemphasize the current warming trend. Temperature history is one of the most significant issues in the global warming debate. If current warming is not out of the norm and temperatures have been at least as high in the past, then alarmist fears are unwarranted and drastic action is inexcusable.

Since accurate temperature recording didn’t begin until satellite readings in 1979, attempts to depict the earth’s temperature history rely on a handful of proxy data and on methods such as dendroclimatology (the science of determining past climates from trees). Although this data is questionable and there probably will never be an accurate temperature history of the planet, some climate scientists have asserted that the current warming trend is unprecedented and due to human activity. Yet, the CRU emails reveal that climate



scientists are unsure of the proxy data, unable to account for the lack of warming in the past ten years, and may have manipulated data to come to politically preferred conclusions. (Bold has been added for emphasis.)

An email from Dr. Phil Jones stated, "I've just completed Mike's Nature **trick** of adding in the real temps to each series for the last 20 years (ie [sic] from 1981 onwards) and from 1961 for Keith's to **hide the decline.**"

The "hide the decline" statement is referencing a statistical technique that replaces the tree ring data after 1960 with modern thermometer-based temperature readings which emphasize an increase in global temperatures. The tree ring data after 1960 revealed a significant cooling trend that did not match up with thermometer data and was replaced to "hide the decline." However, if the tree ring data is not accurately reflecting temperatures after 1960, then it probably shouldn't be used as a proxy for past temperature, either. This is a crucial point, since the majority of the IPCC claims rely on tree ring data.

An email from Michael Mann stated, "...it would **be nice to try to 'contain' the putative 'MWP'** [medieval warming period], even if we don't yet have a hemispheric mean reconstruction available that far back...."

The existence of a medieval warming period certainly would shake the human caused global warming theory. If temperatures during this time period were as high as or higher than current temperatures without the growth of human emitted greenhouse gases, then alarmist fears are not justified.

Despite the proclaimed "consensus," the CRU emails disclose major uncertainties with temperature history and modeling.

An email from a leading author of the IPCC, Edward Cook, stated, "I got a paper to review...that claims that the method of reconstruction that we use in dendroclimatology (reverse regression) is wrong, biased, lousy, horrible, etc...**If published as is, this paper could really do some damage.**"

Another email reflects the uncertainty with the current global temperatures. Leading IPCC author Kevin Trenberth states, "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....Our observing system is inadequate.**"

Despite damning evidence that rocks the alarmist climate change theory, the United States continues to move forward with regulating human emitted greenhouse gases. As cap-and-trade legislation is temporarily stalled in the Senate, the Environmental Protection Agency has decided to declare that carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases are a danger to humanity, a precursor to regulating every aspect of American life.

Unfortunately, the global warming ideology is too embedded into environmental organizations, renewable energy companies and governments alike to be reversed by proof of climate research "modification." As alarmists declare that the world will burn if we do not drastically alter our standard of living, information in the leaked emails and documents will continue to shed light on how climate scientists have steered the debate towards sensational stories of exaggerated doom in order to land lucrative research grants. Perhaps only the onset of an ice age will turn the tide on the global warming issue. Until then, hold onto your personal freedoms, as many would like to take them away under the speculative rationale that more government control over our daily lives will save the planet from destruction.

---

Todd Wynn is the climate change and energy policy analyst at Cascade Policy Institute, Oregon's free market public policy research center.

Cascade Policy Institute is a tax-exempt educational organization as defined under IRS code 501 (c)(3). Nothing appearing in this Cascade Commentary is to be construed as necessarily representing the views of Cascade or its donors. The views expressed herein are the author's own.

***"Despite damning evidence that rocks the alarmist climate change theory, the United States continues to move forward with regulating human emitted greenhouse gases."***

Attention editors  
and producers

Cascade Commentaries are provided for reprint in newspapers and other publications, with credit given to author(s) and Cascade. Contact Cascade to arrange print or broadcast interviews on this commentary topic.

Please contact:

Cascade Policy Institute  
4850 SW Scholls Ferry Rd.  
Suite 103  
Portland, Oregon 97225

Phone: (503) 242-0900  
Fax: (503) 242-3822

[www.cascadepolicy.org](http://www.cascadepolicy.org)  
[info@cascadepolicy.org](mailto:info@cascadepolicy.org)