



March 17, 2009

How About Those Climate Computer Models?

Global warming proponents often use the results of high tech climate computer models to further their agenda. Since the cost of global warming laws and regulations will be borne by anyone who uses energy, it's fair to ask, how accurate are the results of these computer models? While short term models are routinely used to predict day to day weather changes, predicting the actual climate years in advance presents a more substantial challenge. The biggest obstacle is verification. We won't know if that 50 year forecast is correct until 2059.

Over the last couple of decades, the more than 20 climate computer models developed by climate researchers have consistently predicted a continuation of rising carbon dioxide levels and warmer temperatures. These predictions run decades into the future. A report issued by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change predicts that by 2100 the western, southern and eastern portions of North America will warm by 3.6 to 5.4 degrees Fahrenheit. Another study conducted by a researcher at the Royal Netherlands Meteorological Institute predicts that by 2100, heat wave temperatures in Chicago would reach 115 degrees.

Ten years ago these models were producing the same forecasts they are today: warming, warming and more warming. And yet over the last decade global temperatures have been basically flat. A recent study led by Dr. Anastasios Tsonis at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee found that global temperatures have leveled off since 2001.

The problem with using computer models to predict the weather is that no model is comprehensive enough to simulate every square inch of the atmosphere. Over time this leads to small errors, which increase the farther into the future the models are run.

In reality, atmospheric computer models are not very accurate beyond a few days. Currently, the National Weather Service issues forecasts for seven days. Beyond that timeframe, their forecasts are only for very general temperature and precipitation trends. These extended forecasts are not much better than chance when predicting a month or more in advance. In fact, their models did not predict last winter's severe cold and snow across the United States.

The global warming proponent's climate computer models can't even take previous data to reconstruct today's climate. A study reported in the Royal Meteorological Society's International Journal of Climatology in December of 2007 concluded "...that projections of future climate based on these models should be viewed with much caution." The study's lead author, Dr. David H. Douglass from the University of Rochester, also stated, "The usual discussion is whether the climate model forecasts of Earth's climate 100 years or so into the future are realistic. Here we have something more fundamental: Can the models accurately explain the climate from the recent past? It seems that the answer is no."

In an even more recent study in Science Daily that was favorable to climate computer models, the article mentions that the climate model authors note that they have no way to say exactly how reliable those projections are. That's not exactly a confidence builder in the long range forecasts.

Although global warming advocates continue to rely on climate computer models to issue very specific forecasts for decades into the future, it would be a costly mistake to develop public policy for the next century based on the results of these climate computer models. Climate computer models have not been able to predict weather for any significant period of time into the future.

While we all know the joke about the weatherman always being wrong, the fact is that meteorology has advanced significantly in the last several decades. On the other hand, anyone making plans based on a global warming proponent's 100 year forecast might be left out in the cold. Pack an umbrella, because your 2109 picnic lunch just might get rained out after all...

Stay tuned for next week's report.

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