

Climate Change Position Statement, Dissenting View

PAGE 301

I served on the AGU panel to draft the updated position statement on climate change. We were charged by AGU to provide “an up-to-date statement [that] will assure that AGU members, the public, and policy makers have a more current point of reference for discussion of climate change science that is intrinsically relevant to national and international policy.”

In my view, this means we were tasked to report on the most important aspects of climate change. This was incompletely done in the statement, where it inaccurately, in my view, presents a view of climate change that is dominated by the emission of carbon dioxide and a few other greenhouse gases. Indeed, in my opinion, the committee, under the direction of Gerald North with the writing subgroup led by Susan Hassol, was clearly motivated to produce a statement of this one particular view. My viewpoint is that under this leadership, other views were never given an adequate opportunity to be discussed.

In my view, the committee, instead of presenting the actual state of scientific understanding on the issue of climate change, used the following approach, as summarized in *Pielke Jr.* [2007]: “The scientific enterprise is diverse enough to offer information that can be used to support a diversity of perspectives on just about any subject”

(p. 89) and “deciding a course of action and then finding information to support it is common across the political spectrum” (p. 110).

In my view, the committee leadership already had a course of action in mind even when we were appointed.

I presented to the committee what I have concluded is a more scientifically robust statement. I started from their statement and accepted what I could, as well as sought to remain close to their length.

I sought to answer the following questions, which the statement, as accepted by the committee, incompletely addresses or does not address at all.

- What is the definition of climate and climate change?
- What are the societally and environmentally important climate metrics (e.g., a global average surface temperature trend, changes in ocean and atmospheric circulation patterns over multiyear time periods, sea level rise, trends in extreme weather, etc.)?
- What are the main human and natural climate forcings?
- What is the observational evidence for climate change?
- What is the skill of the global and regional climate model projections (predictions) of changes in these metrics on multi-decadal time scales?

- What are recommended pathways forward to reduce the risk from climate, including changes in climate over time?

The viewpoint that I presented in my draft of an alternative to the adopted statement has been reported, for example, in multi-authored publications such as *Pielke Sr. et al.* [2009] and *National Research Council* [2005]. The alternative statement that I presented is available at <http://pielkeclimatesci.files.wordpress.com/2013/08/rpt-851.pdf>.

What I recommend is that the Board and Council assign a new committee that does not have such a vested position on this subject. The assignment of individuals with well-entrenched positions (no matter how sincerely held) does not, in my view, provide an opportunity for a balanced, scientifically robust presentation by the AGU community on the issue of climate change.

References

- National Research Council (2005), *Radiative Forcing of Climate Change: Expanding the Concept and Addressing Uncertainties*, 208 pp., Natl. Acad. Press, Washington, D. C.
- Pielke, R., Sr., et al. (2009), Climate change: The need to consider human forcings besides greenhouse gases, *Eos*, 90(45), 413, doi:10.1029/2009EO450008.
- Pielke, R. A., Jr. (2007), *The Honest Broker: Making Sense of Science in Policy and Politics*, Cambridge Univ. Press, Cambridge, U. K.

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