

Climate Change is Not Our Fault, So Let's Just Deal With It, says California Professor

Donna Rachel Edmunds, Breitbart, 10-29-2014

Climate change is happening – but not because of human activity, Daniel Botkin, professor Emeritus in the Department of Ecology, Evolution, and Marine Biology at University of California Santa Barbara has said. Moreover, the focus on man-made global warming is detracting attention from *real* environmental disasters to nature's detriment, he has argued.

Writing on the National Parks Traveler, a website dedicated to America's national parks, Botkin challenges the conclusions reached by the Union of Concerned Scientists in their paper National Landmarks at Risk, How Rising Seas, Floods, and Wildfires Are Threatening the United States' Most Cherished Historic Sites, not least because they've taken the standard reports from the IPCC and others, "treating them as accurate and true," and then used those results to look at the possible outcome for various national parks.

"The point of the report, its opening theme and its major conclusion, is that these historic places are in trouble and it's our fault, we have been the bad guys interfering with nature and therefore damaging places we value," Botkin says, before methodically knocking down each assertion as demonstrably false.

Climate models linking human CO₂ output to rising temperatures are unreliable, he writes. "Conclusion: our addition of carbon dioxide to the atmosphere does not appear to be increasing Earth's temperature. Whatever is happening to Earth's climate does not seem to be our fault."

However, he does acknowledge that climate change is happening. Taking sea level as an example, he says: "the sea level has been rising since the end of the last Ice Age, starting about 14,000 years ago as the continental and mountain glaciers have melted and sea water has expanded with the overall warming. The average rate has been about a foot or two a century".

The question he poses is: what to do about it? Rather than spending time arguing over the causes of climate change, Botkin advocates simply rolling up our sleeves and dealing with the outcome, harking back to Frederick Law Olmstead, who in the mid 1800s, created the Back Bay Fens on Boston's shoreline as a way to manage both ocean floods, deal with waste water for the city, and create a recreational area for city dwellers.

"Confronted with the combined problems of ocean surges and flooding from river runoff inland, Olmsted did not waste his time complaining about whether or not people have caused the problem. He just set out and solved it."

However, he saves his most damning criticism for the UCS's treatment of wildfire frequency. The report claims two national park sites are at particular risk of damage from increasingly frequent wildfires, despite the fact that the evidence shows no increase.

“Furthermore”, he writes, “it is well-established that most major wildfires that occur these days are from the failure to allow much more frequent, and therefore light fires, to burn. The 20th century policy dominated by Smokey Bear — “only you can prevent forest fires” — and the belief, ill-founded, that all forest and grassland fires are bad and must be prevented — have had a damaging effect.”

‘Damaging’ is an understatement – in fact, the policy caused the extinction of Kirtland’s warbler, a bird which nests in young jack pines, which only regenerate after a fire.

The conclusion that Botkin reaches is that, ultimately, “global warming has become the sole focus of so much environmental discussion that it risks eclipsing much more pressing and demonstrable environmental problems. The major damage that we as a species are doing here and now to the environment is not getting the attention it deserves.”