



Written by [Warren Mass](#) on February 25, 2016

Leading Authority on Sea Levels Disputes Study Asserting Sea Level Rise Is Fastest in 27 Centuries

A newly released study led by Bob Kopp, a climate scientist at Rutgers University and nine colleagues from several U.S. and global universities claims: "The 20th century rise [in sea levels] was extremely likely faster than during any of the 27 previous centuries."



However, the findings of the study were immediately challenged by Dr. Nils-Axel Morner, the former head of the paleogeophysics and geodynamics department at Stockholm University and a leading world authority on sea levels and coastal erosion.

"The PNAS paper is another sad contribution to the demagogic anti-science campaign for AGW. It is at odds with observational facts and ethical principles," Morner wrote to the Climate Depot news service. "The paper is full of very bad violations of observational facts," Morner continued. For instance, the Kopp paper says that the tide gauges at Christmas Island, Kiribati, show increases, yet as Morner notes, while showing the tide gauge record from that island for the past 40 years, "How can anyone find a rapidly rising trend in this tide gauge record? It is flat or rather slowly falling — but in no way rising." He added that nowhere are there records of true "acceleration."

The disputed study, "Temperature-driven global sea-level variability in the Common Era," was published on February 22 in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences (PNAS).

An article about the study in the *Washington Post* noted:

Unsurprisingly, the study blames the anomalous 20th-century rise on global warming — and not just that. It also calculates that, had humans not been warming the planet, there's very little chance that seas would have risen so much during the century, finding that instead of a 14 centimeter rise, we would have seen somewhere between a 3 centimeter fall and a 7 centimeter rise.

Climate Depot called attention to statements about the sea-level study made by another climate expert, Judith Curry, Ph.D., who was profiled in a recent article posted by *The New American*, "[Meet the Climate Realists](#)." (Curry is the former chair of the School of Earth and Atmospheric Sciences at the Georgia Institute of Technology.) Curry wrote on her blog on February 23:

So, what to make of all this?

Sea level rise is the main "danger" from human caused climate change (any increase in extreme weather events is hypothesized rather demonstrated using historical data, with possible exception of heat waves in a few regions).

At a presentation that I made earlier this year to CEOs of small electric cooperatives, one participant was surprised by what I had to say about sea level rise — he hadn't realized that there



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had been sea level rise prior to 1950. I.e., like “climate change”, all sea level rise has been sold as caused by humans.

Sea level has overall been rising for thousands of years; however, as the Kopp et al. paper points out, there have been century scale periods of lowering sea level in the recent millennia. It is not clear from my cursory reading as to whether meaningful decadal and multi-decadal variations in sea level can be discerned from their data.

The key issue is whether the sea level rise during the past 50 years reflect an acceleration in sea level rise. The IPCC figure 3.14 suggests that there is no acceleration, given the large rates of sea level rise in the first half of the 20th century. *Until we have an understanding of variations in decadal and multi-decadal sea level rise, we can't make a convincing argument as to acceleration.* [Emphasis added.]

Some names in the ongoing debate between those climate scientists who dispute that naturally cyclical environmental phenomena such as climate change, global warming, and changes in sea levels are caused by human activity (i.e., anthropogenic) and those who maintain that human activity is responsible tend to keep popping up. We found that Pennsylvania State University professor Michael Mann of discredited hockey-stick graph fame recently tweeted that Curry is “#AntiScience.” (Mann’s “hockey stick” graph warning of pending global warming eco-catastrophe was found by a congressional investigation to be [fraudulent](#).)

Mann and his “hockey stick” graph were referred to in the *Post*’s article about the Kopp, et al. sea-level report, which noted:

The new work is particularly significant because, in effect, the sea level analysis produces a so-called “hockey stick” graph — showing a long and relatively flat sea level “handle” for thousands of years, followed by a “blade” that turns sharply upwards in very recent times.

The discovery of such patterns itself has a long history, going back to a 1998 study by climate researcher Michael Mann of Penn State University and two colleagues — who found a “hockey stick” graph for the planet’s temperature, rather than for its sea level. Since then the “hockey stick,” in its various incarnations, has come in for voluminous criticism from skeptics and doubters of human-caused climate change — even as multiple scientists have continued to affirm the conclusion that the last 100 years or so are way out of whack with what the planet has seen in the past thousand or more.

Though the *Post* may assert that “multiple scientists” “affirm” that we are presently undergoing “human-caused climate change,” there are also multiple scientists who just as adamantly insist just the opposite. Several of these scientists were profiled in the aforementioned article in *The New American*, “[Meet the Climate Realists](#).” We have mentioned Judith Curry, whose research has earned her appointments to and awards from the American Meteorological Society, the American Geophysical Union, NASA, NOAA, and the National Science Foundation.

When the 2009 “Climategate” e-mail scandal revealed that correspondence between UN researchers suggested fraudulent reporting of data to favor their political agenda (and also discredited Mann’s “hockey stick” graph), Curry said she “saw it as a threat to the IPCC [the UN’s Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change] and all of climate science, largely because of this trust issue.”

Curry told David Rose of *The Spectator*: “I started saying that scientists should be more accountable, and I began to engage with skeptic bloggers. I thought that would calm the waters. Instead, I was



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tossed out of the tribe.”

Being “tossed out of the tribe,” noted Van Jensen in the *Georgia Tech Alumni Magazine*, meant: “Curry lost her place in the IPCC clique.” Suddenly, “her opinions were called ‘unconstructive,’ full of ‘factual misstatements,’ and ‘completely at odds’ with her previous position on global warming.”

Another climate expert profiled in the article was Richard S. Lindzen, Ph.D., an emeritus professor of meteorology at MIT, whose credentials are too numerous to list here, but who is a distinguished senior fellow at the Cato Institute and has served as consultant to NASA and was lead author of the IPCC’s Third Assessment Report on climate change in 2001.

Lindzen stated his opinion of anthropogenic global warming at a November climate summit hosted by the Texas Public Policy Foundation quite bluntly: “It’s just nonsense. Demonization of CO2 is irrational at best, and even modest warming is mostly beneficial.”

His protestations against the climate-change alarmists has made Lindzen the target of attacks, including a baseless “investigation” and smear campaign launched by U.S. Representative Raul Grijalva (D-Ariz.) Such retribution against climate-change “deniers” is more common than most people realize.

Many articles in *The New American* over the years have described and quoted from respected scientists who have gone against the establishment by countering the climate change, global warming alarmists. As far back as 2008, the U.S. Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works announced a 231-page U.S. Senate Minority Report containing statements from over 650 dissenting scientists challenging man-made global-warming claims made by the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and former Vice President Al Gore.

More recently, in 2014, a group of climate scientists and researchers from a variety of disciplines and many nations converged on Las Vegas, Nevada, for Heartland Institute’s [9th International Conference on Climate Change](#). Among the respected experts who spoke were:

- Dr. Roy Spencer, principal research scientist at the University of Alabama in Huntsville and Team Leader on NASA’s Aqua satellite;
- Lord Christopher Monckton, chief policy advisor to the Science and Public Policy Institute;
- Dr. Patrick Moore, a founding member of Greenpeace, former president of Greenpeace Canada, and former director of Greenpeace International;
- John Coleman, veteran meteorologist and founder of The Weather Channel;
- Dr. Sonja Boehmer-Christiansen of the University of Hull, England, and a former expert reviewer for the UN’s Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC);
- And the previously mentioned Dr. Nils-Axel Morner, who has just challenged the finding of the new report on rising sea levels.

The debate will continue. As for why the political and academic establishments are so intent on proving that climate change is caused by human activity, the explanation is quite simple: If global warming and rising seas are caused by humans, as they assert, then the way to stop these climatic events is to restrict human activity. And there is nothing that the architects of national and international big government love better than to have the power to control human activity.



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