



Written by [Alex Newman](#) on August 21, 2017

Ridiculing Climate Predictions, Scientist Offers Bet to EPA

Betting that their predictions on supposed [“climate change”-related wildfires](#) over the coming years are wrong, a scientist and leading expert in the field is offering top officials at the Environmental Protection Agency a simple wager. If their fire forecasts from 2017 to 2020 are all wrong, Professor David South wins \$1,000. But if their predictions for even one year turn out to be accurate or exceeded, South will send the EPA scientists a check for \$1,000. So far, though, not a single EPA scientist or official has even responded to the offer, much less put their own money on the line in support of their forecasts.



Dr. South, an award-winning emeritus professor of forestry at Auburn University, is well-known for his expertise in the area of wildfires. In fact, in 2014, he testified before the U.S. Senate, blasting those who blame human emissions of CO2 for forest fires. But even he admits he does not know what, exactly, will happen in terms of acreage burned in the years ahead. He is also very suspicious of the man-made global-warming alarmists and their predictions — and for good reason.

For years, Professor South has been making, or at least offering to make, \$1,000 bets with people who pretend to know what they are talking about. His thinking is that people who truly believe what they are saying should be happy to put their money where their mouths are, so to speak. During his Senate testimony, for example, South offered senators a wager on whether sea levels would truly rise at the rate predicted by man-made global-warming theorists. There were no takers. He also [made headlines](#) when he offered a \$1,000 bet on sea levels to globalist billionaire Michael Bloomberg, a climate alarmist better known for his fanatical advocacy on behalf of civilian disarmament.

Now, South is challenging the mighty EPA to put its money where its mouth is. In an open letter addressed to U.S. EPA Director of Strategy at Remedy Plan Allison Crimmins, South asked if she was willing to bet \$1,000 on the EPA’s predictions about the extent of wildfires in the contiguous United States by the year 2020. “Dear Director Crimmins,” South wrote. “I enjoy making \$1,000 bets with folks who think they can predict the future. For example, I made a bet with Dr. Julian Simon on the future price of sawlogs and he sent me a \$1,000 check. I won a similar bet with Dr. Zagros Madjd-Sadjadi on the price of oil (and he sent me a check for \$1,242).”

There is a serious reason for proposing the wager, though. “Although I do not claim to know what the future will bring, I do like to see how confident others are in their beliefs and computer models,” South continued. “For example, when I testified about wildfires to a subcommittee of the U.S. Senate, I offered a \$1,000 bet on the rate of sea level rise in Charleston, SC. As I expected, none of the Senators were willing to bet the rise will equal or exceed 7 millimeters per year during the year 2024.” His offer to bet Bloomberg was about sea levels in New York City.

In particular, South pointed to an EPA report entitled [“Climate Change in the United States: Benefits of](#)



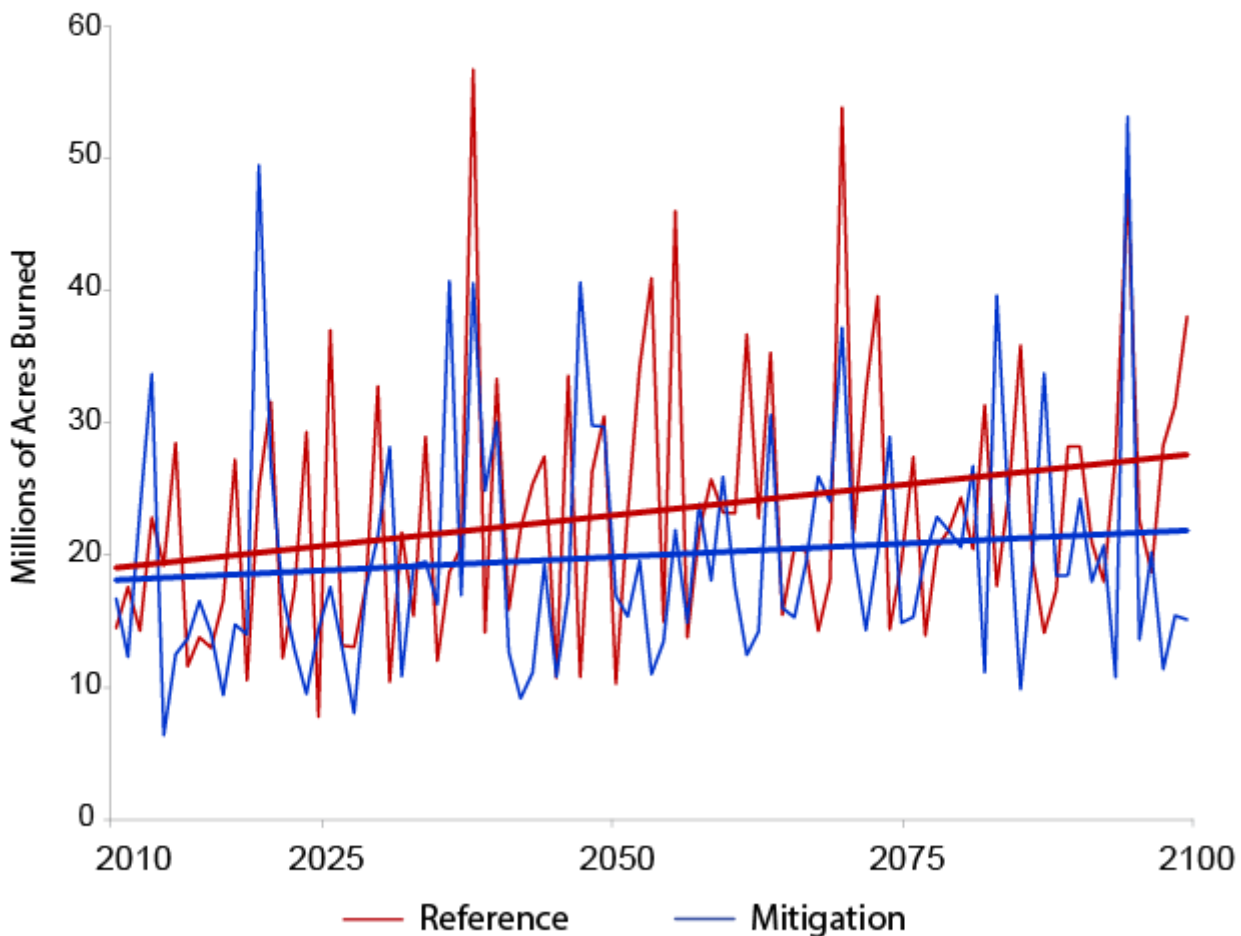
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[Global Action.](#)” In the 2015 report, which explores the purported “significant benefits to the U.S. of global action on climate change,” EPA officials predict wildfires would be worse without a global “climate” regime. According to the report, without reducing emissions of greenhouse gases — CO2 released by humans makes up a fraction of one percent of all such gases in the atmosphere — so-called “climate change” is “projected to dramatically increase the area burned by wildfires across most of the contiguous U.S.”

On page 73 of the EPA report, the bureaucracy features a graph showing the amount of acreage it estimates will be burned for the rest of the century. One line is the “reference,” which is how much the EPA estimates will burn if the U.S. government does not submit to UN economic and political controls under the guise of fighting “climate change.” The other line, “mitigation,” is the estimated number of acres that will burn if Americans submit to the UN’s “climate” schemes. All of the estimates come from hypothetical models.

Figure 2. Estimated Acres Burned with and without Global GHG Mitigation

Estimated acres burned by wildfire in the contiguous U.S. over the course of the 21st century under the Reference and Mitigation scenarios using the IGSM-CAM climate model, with trends shown in bold. The large inter-annual variability reflects simulated periods of fuel accumulation followed by seasons of large wildfire activity.



For more information, visit EPA’s “Climate Change in the United States: Benefits of Global Action” at www.epa.gov/cira.

Professor South highlighted the EPA’s predictions for each of the years from 2017 until 2020. In 2017, the EPA estimate was 16,719,916 acres burned in the contiguous United States, going up to 33,689,335



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in 2020. If those numbers are met or exceeded in any single year, South offered to send a check for \$1,000 to any official who takes the bet. However, if the number is lower for every single one of the four years listed, any EPA official agreeing to the bet must hand over \$1,000 instead.

“When I gave my testimony to the U.S. Senate, I provided a graph that showed historical trends in wildfires for the USA so I know what is possible,” South said in the open letter. “In 1930, more than 52 million acres burned in the USA. Even so, I am willing to bet \$1,000 that none of the predictions above comes true. If you agree to this bet, I will send you \$1,000 if any year (before 2021) equals or exceeds these numbers for the contiguous US. If you agree to the bet, you will send me \$1,000 (in 2021) only if all the realized values are below predicted ones in the table above.”

Concluding his August 12 open letter, South practically taunted the EPA officials. “Do you have enough confidence in the IGSM-CAM model to bet?” he wondered. “If not, do you know of anyone with EPA who is willing to bet their own money on these EPA predictions? I await your reply.”

But a reply never came.

When reached at her office by *The New American*, Allison Crimmins, the EPA official that the letter was addressed to, said she was not allowed to talk to reporters and could not say anything else. Even when asked whether she could comment in her private capacity as a citizen on whether she would take the bet, she said no, because the letter had arrived at her work e-mail. Instead, she recommended contacting the EPA Office of Public Affairs. *The New American* left a voice message requesting a comment on South’s proposed wager, but the office did not respond by press time. Dr. South confirmed to *The New American* that nobody from the EPA had accepted the bet or even responded to his e-mail so far.

Despite the offer to bet with the EPA, which has the effect of making the EPA and its predictions look silly, South does have some respect for its new director, Scott Pruitt. In a letter sent to him in June, South highlighted the EPA’s 2015 predictions as part of an editorial he was working on, and he urged Pruitt to “keep up the good work.” In the piece, South told Pruitt that “you and I are on the same side of the AGW [anthropogenic global warming] debate.” Like President Trump, [who has ridiculed the increasingly discredited man-made global-warming theory as a “hoax,”](#) Pruitt [said in a TV interview that he did not believe human activities were a primary contributor to climate change.](#) Most Americans [in polls agree with that view](#), too, despite the “fake news” establishment media’s shrill advocacy on behalf of the imploding theory.

Of course, Professor South is not the first to use bets in this way. In 1980, for example, the famous Simon-Ehrlich Wager between Professor Julian Simon and population-control zealot Paul Ehrlich was made. Ehrlich ([along with fellow extremists such as Obama’s “science” czar John “forced abortions” Holdren](#)) had been making ludicrous “predictions” about supposed “overpopulation” leading to future resource scarcity. So, Simon, a business professor with an understanding of economics, made Ehrlich a bet that, no matter what resources Ehrlich chose to track, the inflation-adjusted price would go down over the next decade. Ehrlich chose five metals, And he lost on every single one, big time, sending Simon a check in 1990.

As *The New American* has documented extensively, man-made global-warming (and -cooling) theorists [have been making ludicrous predictions for decades that consistently prove to be false.](#) Claims about increasing fires have been a regular talking point, with even then-President Barack Obama claiming in 2012 that people can deny “the overwhelming judgment of science,” but “none can avoid the



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devastating impact of raging fires and crippling drought and powerful storms.” Ironically, all three of the examples he provided of what he called the “threat of climate change” actually discredited his argument.

As *Forbes* magazine pointed out the year after Obama’s prediction, the number of wildfires has plummeted 15 percent since 1950, and according to the National Academy of Sciences, that trend is likely to continue for decades. On “droughts,” a 2012 study published in the alarmist journal *Nature* noted that there had been “little change in global drought over the past 60 years.” The UN’s own climate alarmists were even forced to conclude that in many regions of the world, “droughts have become less frequent, less intense, or shorter.” And on storms, the predictions could not have been more wrong, with hurricanes and tornadoes striking in record-setting low numbers in recent years.

In an e-mail to *The New American*, Dr. South expanded on his motivations. “Even a basic climate model will give a wrong answer when the math is performed incorrectly,” he said, highlighting bogus temperature models used by federal agencies that measurements show to be incorrect. “I am not surprised when advocates who refuse to admit to math errors also refuse to bet on the flawed predictions they make.” South also noted that a number of authors behind AGW papers do not even follow the scientific method. “It seems to me that variability associated with predicted wildfire acreages is so high that the slope of their prediction is meaningless,” he added.

There are other problems, too. “Most of the EPA report provides no evidence that contradicts their conclusions,” South observed. “When folks choose (or are told) not to discuss papers that are counter to their wildfire predictions, I wonder if the report is driven by politics. When predictions are based on a political agenda, I like to see if the authors are willing to bet their own money on their scary predictions. Several modelers are willing to bet their own money on the stock market but it seems (to me) that most won’t make even a small wager on their own climate predictions/scenarios. Why should I believe in their scenarios, and alter my lifestyle, when they obviously have no confidence in their models?”

It is not surprising that, even though South deliberately offered to pay EPA scientists if they got just one year right, none of them have been willing to take the bet so far. In fact, climate alarmists have been [wrong about virtually everything](#), stretching [back to the 1970s when some of today’s man-made warming theorists were man-made cooling zealots literally calling on governments to melt the Arctic ice cap](#) by covering it with black soot. Seriously.

The fact that not one EPA official will take the bet should show Americans how confident they are in their latest predictions. Indeed, if their past track record is anything to go by, the odds of those wildfire prophecies coming true are below extremely low — practically every falsifiable prediction the alarmists have made has been debunked. But since the EPA is unconstitutional, and was created by Richard Nixon using an executive order, perhaps when their latest prophecies fail, the bureaucracy can finally be disbanded.

Alex Newman, a foreign correspondent for The New American, was at the UN climate summit in Paris. He can be reached at anewman@thenewamerican.com. Follow him on Twitter [@ALEXNEWMAN_JOU](#) or on [Facebook](#).

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