



Written by [James Heiser](#) on November 23, 2010

Siberian Methane: The Latest Eco-boogeyman

For those who have tracked the development of the theory of manmade climate change in recent years, it seems as if its adherents thrive on a succession of purported crises. It is as if every study which is debunked, every scandal which discredits the prophets of doom, and every economic failure associated with the climate change theory has sparked two more crises to take their place.

Now, climate hypochondriacs have found something new to worry about: methane frozen in the Siberian permafrost. An Associated Press article (“Leaking Siberian ice raises a tricky climate issue”) announced the doom which awaits us all:



Gas locked inside Siberia’s frozen soil and under its lakes has been seeping out since the end of the last ice age 10,000 years ago. But in the past few decades, as the Earth has warmed, the icy ground has begun thawing more rapidly, accelerating the release of methane — a greenhouse gas 23 times more powerful than carbon dioxide — at a perilous rate.

Some scientists believe the thawing of permafrost could become the epicenter of climate change. They say 1.5 trillion tons of carbon, locked inside icebound earth since the age of mammoths, is a climate time bomb waiting to explode if released into the atmosphere.

Presumably readers are not to take notice of the fact that these 1.5 trillion tons of carbon were drawn out of the atmosphere in the first place, most likely during a pesky ice age which has still not freed Siberia from its chilly grasp. Even if the gas reserves are as large as purported, their release would simply be part of a natural cycle.

But the “news” about Siberian methane is not really all that new to the scientific community. *Nature* published an abstract ([“Methane bubbling from Siberian thaw lakes as a positive feedback to climate warming”](#)) in July 2006 which noted:

Large uncertainties in the budget of atmospheric methane, an important greenhouse gas, limit the accuracy of climate change projections. Thaw lakes in North Siberia are known to emit methane, but the magnitude of these emissions remains uncertain because most methane is released through ebullition (bubbling), which is spatially and temporally variable.

If the issue of Siberian methane has been known to the climate science community for years, why the sudden media interest? In the words of the AP article:

Climate change moves back to center-stage on Nov. 29 when governments meet in Cancun, Mexico, to try again to thrash out a course of counteractions. But U.N. officials hold out no hope the two weeks of talks will lead to a legally binding accord governing carbon emissions, seen as the key to averting what is feared might be a dramatic change in climate this century.

Most climate scientists, with a few dissenters, say human activities — the stuff of daily life like



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driving cars, producing electricity or raising cattle — is overloading the atmosphere with carbon dioxide, methane and other gases that trap heat, causing a warming effect.

It is quite telling that the “demons” enumerated by the environmentalist fringe now include the most basic elements of the agricultural — let alone the industrial — age: Not only “driving cars” but also “producing electricity” and “raising cattle” are threatening the planet? Are we actually to believe that “saving the Earth” implies a return to a hunter-gatherer society?

Apparently so, for we are also told by the AP:

Yet awareness of methane leaks from permafrost is so new that it was not even mentioned in the seminal 2007 report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, which warned of rising sea levels inundating coastal cities, dramatic shifts in rainfall disrupting agriculture and drinking water, the spread of diseases and the extinction of species.

“In my view, methane is a serious sleeper out there that can pull us over the hump,” said Robert Corell, an eminent U.S. climate change researcher and Arctic specialist.

[Independent reviewers](#) have used words other than “seminal” to describe the IPCC’s 2007 report, and when grading that report, they awarded it an “F” for its stunning lack of peer-reviewed studies to back up its claims. However, given the precipitous decline in the credibility of the entire field of anthropogenic climate change since the [Climategate revelations](#), let alone the [credibility problems](#) which have confronted the IPCC in particular in the past year, the notion that the 2007 report is now to be seen as “too conservative” strains credulity.

After the debacle of last year’s Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen, conference organizers are, no doubt, facing a tremendous credibility deficit as they prepare for next week’s conference in Cancun, Mexico. At the very least, delegates should find it somewhat easier to push their agenda in this year’s comparatively balmy surroundings than they did during the cold and snow they confronted last year. Given the fact that the UN’s agenda concentrates more on [economic redistribution](#) than the environment, means that climate change theorists have not yet begun to restore their credibility.

Photo: In this photo taken Oct. 23, 2010 Russian scientist Sergey Zimov demonstrates for AP Television News the emission of methane trapped under the ice of a Siberian lake near the town of Chersky, Russia AP Images



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