



VIRTUAL CLIMATE ALERT

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Exactly seven years ago, on March 13, 1993, the eastern third of the United States was pasted by a massive low-pressure system that (erroneously) was called "The Storm of the Century." The next day, Kevin Trenberth – a federal climatologist with the US National Center for Atmospheric Research – appeared on *Meet the Press* and blamed the storm on the combined effects of global warming, El Niño, and the eruption of Mt. Pinatubo. Never mind that the volcanic eruption caused a well-known global cooling. The March '93 storm dumped over two feet of snow in a wide swath from southwestern Virginia north through New York. It was followed by record cold.

Seven years later, a look out the window reveals blue skies, daffodils, and softball practice. Given a choice, which would you prefer?

We have just completed the warmest winter in the 105-year record for the continental US. Who's complaining? Why is it that the same federal climatologists who glibly pulled the greenhouse-effect trigger on the 1993 snowstorm can't bring themselves to explain to people that the reason they're happily outside in their shirtsleeves this year is global warming? Instead, this March, they've trotted out a tired and scientifically irresponsible scare story about how the warm winter is causing a spring drought.

Even a rudimentary statistical analysis of winter temperatures reveals that our coldness is determined by the number and severity of incursions of the miserable, deadly, and frigid air minted in northwestern Canada, Alaska, and Siberia. It is years during which we experience few such frigid blasts that people fondly recall as totally delightful. "Ah, the winter of 1931-32 (87°F in Roanoke, Virginia on February 11, 1932)." And, now, the winter of 1999-2000.

The climatologists could have looked it up. The January 24, 2000, edition of *Climate Research* proved that the greenhouse warming in the last half of this century has been inordinately confined to such cold airmasses. In the Northern Hemisphere's winter half-year (which itself contains over two-thirds of the surface temperature warming), these cold-hearted killers of the homeless are warming at a rate *ten times greater* than the average warming everywhere else! That paper proved that the greenhouse effect was the finger on the trigger in showing that the more cold air there is, the more it warms up.

Further proof, ironically, is provided by satellite and weather balloon data that show *no warming* (after allowing for the now-departed 1998 El Niño) since their records became concurrent in 1979. These instruments are best at measuring the atmospheric slice from roughly from 5000 to 30,000 feet in altitude. But the cold Siberian and North American air is usually more shallow than that. Please, because federal climatologists do not brook embarrassment with decorum, don't ask them whether this disparity between the surface and lower-atmospheric temperature was forecast by the computer-based climate models they cite as evidence for a global warming disaster.

With regard to drought, its main cause is lack of surface moisture. In the winter, over most of the nation, temperatures and the sun's angle are so low that there's very little evaporation. This is why, even in a dry January, most of the soils in the eastern half of the nation are saturated. Warming the winter, even as much as the three degrees or so that created our recent record, is equal to the average temperature difference between March 5 and March 15. Evaporation rates remain low because the mean temperature is still way below the annual average. So warm winter or not, winter temperatures do not cause droughts.

Nor is the consistency the hallmark of federal behavior. If global warming is caused by burning of fossil fuels (it probably is) and if it is a terrible problem (we'll bet it isn't), then the only way it can be stopped is by raising energy prices through the roof. How high? Well, \$2.00/gallon gasoline hasn't even dented consumption enough to cool the mean temperature of the planet by 1/1000 of a degree. But, judging from the softballs flying by my window on this fine March day, who on earth would want to do such a thing?

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Greening Earth Society *Virtual Climate Alerts* are published periodically in response to news coverage of climate-change advocacy that seeks to portray weather events and hypothetical climate scenarios generated by computer-based climate models as "climate reality." *Virtual Climate Alert* draws upon the expertise of Greening Earth Society science advisors and is coordinated by Dr. Patrick J. Michaels at New Hope Environmental Services in Charlottesville, Virginia.