

January 29, 2016 - CLIMATE

It's a week since the big storm in the Northeast, time to have some more rational thought about weather. Our betters in media and government; that would be the climate Cassandra's, have been singing an Armageddon song. Patrick Michaels is first up with a retort to claims of the "warmest year yet."

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A good post from Power Line has more on the "warmest year."

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From WaPo we learn the snowfall totals from Reagan National might have been understated. Imagine that! Who knew government idiots could fail at such a small well defined task?

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*The National Weather Service has clear guidelines on how to measure snowfall for one simple reason: snowstorms have a huge effect on the economy, life and property. They have an impact on millions of people and can result in millions of dollars lost. They also play an obvious important role in the historical record.*

*The way that the snowfall has been measured at National in this storm has led to snowfall totals that could be much lower than what has actually fallen and may have unnecessarily withheld the storm from ending as one of the top 3 snowiest on record. ...*

NY Post has a good piece on the faux intellectualism of Hollywood idiots.  
Like most A-list celebrities in Hollywood, Leonardo DiCaprio is frequently in the news.

There's DiCaprio, in Cannes, France, on David Geffen's mega yacht, alone. And there he is on a different yacht in St. Tropez with his blonde of the month.

There he is getting off a private plane in the celebrity uniform of sunglasses and hoodie. And there he is getting on one again.

And last week, there he was in Davos, Switzerland, lecturing us all and blaming corporate greed for causing global climate change.

*It might be funny if it weren't so galling.*

Polls have long shown that Americans either don't believe in global climate change or don't consider it a serious issue. A Pew poll last November found that the United States was behind only China in its "concern" about climate change — but that such concern has grown substantially.

What polls also show, however, is that Americans are learning another lesson from our supposed elites: Believing in the existence of climate change or feeling "concern" is enough. Furrow your brow, and you're a hero. Even as belief and concern has increased in America, our behavior has stayed the same.

Could it be that we are hearing the hysterical pleas of "environmental activists" to change our ways or face doom and noticing that not only are they not changing their ways, but that their ways are far worse than our own? The loudest, most obnoxious and aggressive voices telling us the world is about to end plain old don't act like it. ...

Here's something from Joel Kotkin we missed at the start of the Paris climate confab in December.

The Paris Climate Conference, convening this week, takes place in the very place where, arguably, the most dangerous exemplar of hysteria, the Islamic jihadi movement, has left its bloody mark. Yet the think tank mavens, academics, corporate shills and endless processions of bureaucrats gather in the City of Light not to confront the immediate deadly threat, but to ramp up their own grisly scenarios and Draconian solutions.

Welcome to the age of hysteria, where friends and foes, and even those who blissfully talk past each other, whip themselves into an emotional frenzy that bears no discussion, debate or nuance. Rather than entering a technological age of reason, we seem to lurching towards a high-tech middle ages, where warring bands — greens, jihadis, libertarians, social conservatives, nationalists — immerse themselves not in intellectual competition but, inflating their own individual outrage. In this environment, exaggeration and hysteria are weapons of recruitment, while opposition is met with demeaning attacks, potential imprisonment and, at the worst, vicious acts of violence. ...

For some more topical grins, we have a [NY Times](#) piece from 16 years ago bemoaning New York's lack of snow.

*Once, and not so many years ago, no New Yorker would have dignified a January with three chilly days in a row and a soggy spurt of whitish precipitation as winter. Winter in New York was a season of single-digit temperatures, icy winds whipping off the Hudson and snow forts that did not begin to melt until March.*

*That chilly stuff Thursday that melted as soon as it touched asphalt -- snow? A sunny Friday afternoon in the 20's -- bitter cold? In Yazoo City, Miss., or Mobile, Ala., maybe. But not in New York City. Until now. Years of mild, rainy winters seem to be making New Yorkers hungry for the freezing winds and snow they deplored when it was plentiful.*

*So the arrival of a bit of real winter -- of Thursday's flurries in the city, of yesterday's lows in the teens, of foot-deep snow in Albany and the Catskills -- created the kind of excitement once reserved for much more extreme meteorological episodes. Radio and television announcers warned listeners about frostbite, and news writers dusted off adjectives like "blustery."*

*"It's good, the snow," said Glen Cooper, a telephone technician, standing on Eighth Avenue near Times Square, smiling, as the evanescent flakes melted on his face on Thursday. "Snow slows people down. It makes people happy. It's natural."*

*Freezing, snowy winters are not only natural for New York's trees and greenery, they are entwined in the lore and arts of the city. They influence moods, they inspire poetry and painting, they drive advertising and appetites, they build childhood memories. So the mild winters of the last few years have caused a major ripple effect, from ecology to gastronomy. ...*

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## Cato Institute

### [The Climate Snow Job](#)

by Patrick J. Michaels

An East Coast blizzard howling, global temperatures peaking, the desert Southwest flooding, drought-stricken California drying up—surely there's a common thread tying together this “extreme” weather. There is. But it has little to do with what recent headlines have been saying about the hottest year ever. It is called business as usual.

Surface temperatures are indeed increasing slightly: They've been going up, in fits and starts, for more than 150 years, or since a miserably cold and pestilential period known as the Little Ice Age. Before carbon dioxide from economic activity could have warmed us up, temperatures rose three-quarters of a degree Fahrenheit between 1910 and World War II. They then cooled down a bit, only to warm again from the mid-1970s to the late '90s, about the same amount as earlier in the century.

Whether temperatures have warmed much since then depends on what you look at. Until last June, most scientists acknowledged that warming reached a peak in the late 1990s, and since

then had plateaued in a “hiatus.” There are about 60 different explanations for this in the refereed literature.

That changed last summer, when the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) decided to overhaul its data, throwing out satellite-sensed sea-surface temperatures since the late 1970s and instead relying on, among other sources, readings taken from the cooling-water-intake tubes of oceangoing vessels. The scientific literature is replete with articles about the large measurement errors that accrue in this data owing to the fact that a ship’s infrastructure conducts heat, absorbs a tremendous amount of the sun’s energy, and vessels’ intake tubes are at different ocean depths. See, for instance, John J. Kennedy’s “A review of uncertainty in in situ measurements and data sets of sea surface temperature,” [published](#) Jan. 24, 2014, by the journal *Reviews of Geophysics*.

NOAA’s alteration of its measurement standard and other changes produced a result that could have been predicted: a marginally significant warming trend in the data over the past several years, erasing the temperature plateau that vexed climate alarmists have found difficult to explain. Yet the increase remains far below what had been expected.

It is nonetheless true that 2015 shows the highest average surface temperature in the 160-year global history since reliable records started being available, with or without the “hiatus.” But that is also not very surprising. Early in 2015, a massive El Niño broke out. These quasiperiodic reversals of Pacific trade winds and deep-ocean currents are well-documented but poorly understood. They suppress the normally massive upwelling of cold water off South America that spreads across the ocean (and is the reason that Lima may be the most pleasant equatorial city on the planet). The Pacific reversal releases massive amounts of heat, and therefore surface temperature spikes. El Niño years in a warm plateau usually set a global-temperature record. What happened this year also happened with the last big one, in 1998.

Global average surface temperature in 2015 popped up by a bit more than a quarter of a degree Fahrenheit compared with the previous year. In 1998 the temperature rose by slightly less than a quarter-degree from 1997.

When the Pacific circulation returns to its more customary mode, all that suppressed cold water will surge to the surface with a vengeance, and global temperatures will drop. Temperatures in 1999 were nearly three-tenths of a degree lower than in 1998, and a similar change should occur this time around, though it might not fit so neatly into a calendar year. Often the compensatory cooling, known as La Niña, is larger than the El Niño warming.

There are two real concerns about warming, neither of which has anything to do with the El Niño-enhanced recent peak. How much more is the world likely to warm as civilization continues to exhale carbon dioxide, and does warming make the weather more “extreme,” which means more costly?

Instead of relying on debatable surface-temperature information, consider instead readings in the free atmosphere (technically, the lower troposphere) taken by two independent sensors: satellite sounders and weather balloons. As has been shown repeatedly by University of Alabama climate scientist John Christy, since late 1978 (when the satellite record begins), the rate of warming in the satellite-sensed data is barely a third of what it was supposed to have been, according to the large family of global climate models now in existence. Balloon data, averaged over the four extant data sets, shows the same.

It is therefore probably prudent to cut by 50% the modeled temperature forecasts for the rest of this century. Doing so would mean that the world—without any political effort at all—won’t warm by the dreaded 3.6 degrees Fahrenheit by 2100 that the United Nations regards as the climate apocalypse.

The notion that world-wide weather is becoming more extreme is just that: a notion, or a testable hypothesis. As data from the world’s biggest reinsurer, [Munich Re](#), and University of Colorado environmental-studies professor Roger Pielke Jr. have shown, weather-related losses haven’t increased at all over the past quarter-century. In fact, the trend, while not statistically significant, is downward. Last year showed the second-smallest weather-related loss of Global World Productivity, or GWP, in the entire record.

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## Power Line

### **2015: Warmest Year On Record?**

by John Hinderaker

Government agencies and climate activists (but I repeat myself) are loudly proclaiming 2015 the “warmest year on record.” There are several obvious problems with this, starting with the fact that the “record” they refer to goes back only until the late 19th century, 1879, coinciding with the end of the Little Ice Age. So, yeah, things have gotten slightly warmer since the Little Ice Age. That’s a good thing.

Actually, current temperatures are relatively cool-cooler than the Earth has been something like 90% of the time since the end of the last real Ice Age, 12,000 or so years ago. When the place where I am typing was buried under ice a mile deep. If you want to worry about climate change, contemplate the fact that we are due, or soon will be due, for another Ice Age.

Then there is the fact that the margin by which 2015 was the “warmest ever” is tiny compared to the margin of error in such measurements. Does anyone seriously believe that we can determine an average global temperature to within a few hundredths of a degree? Now, or 150 years ago? No.

Finally—for now—there is the fact that the “warmest ever” claim is based on surface temperature data that are fatally flawed, both because historical data have been altered by government-funded activists for political reasons, and because surface temperature stations are frequently—usually—thrown off by local environmental factors, most notably (although not most scandalously) the urban heat island effect.

[Dr. Roy Spencer](#) has more:

[O]ur satellite analysis has 2015 only third warmest [since 1979] which has also been widely reported for weeks now. I understand that the RSS satellite analysis has it 4th warmest. ...

There are many things I could say, but I would be repeating myself:

– **Land measurements**...that thermometers over land appear to have serious spurious warming issues from urbanization effects. Anthony Watts is to be credited for spearheading the effort to [demonstrate](#) this over the U.S. where recent warming has been exaggerated by about 60%, and I suspect the problem in other regions of the globe will be at least as bad. Apparently, the NOAA homogenization procedure forces good data to match bad data. That the raw data has serious spurious warming effects is [easy to demonstrate](#)...and has been for the last 50 years in the peer-reviewed literature....*why is it not yet explicitly estimated and removed?*

– **Ocean Measurements**...that even some NOAA scientists don't like the new Karlized ocean surface temperature dataset that made the global warming pause disappear; many feel it also forces good data to agree with bad data. (I see a common theme here.)

– **EI Nino**...that a goodly portion of the record warmth in 2015 was naturally induced, just as it was in previous record warm years.

– **Thermometers Still Disagree with Models**...that even if 2015 is the warmest on record, and NOAA has exactly the right answer, it is still well below the average forecast of the IPCC's climate models, and something very close to that average forms the basis for global warming policy. In other words, even if every successive year is a new record, it matters quite a lot just how much warming we are talking about.

This is a blindingly obvious point, but one that is always overlooked, probably on purpose, in news accounts. The real story is that by any measure, the Earth's climate is not behaving the way the alarmists promised it would.

Then we have scientists out there claiming silly things, like the satellites measure temperatures at atmospheric altitudes where people don't live anyway, so we should ignore them.

Oh, really? Would those same scientists also claim we should ignore the ocean heat content measurements — also where nobody lives — even though that is supposedly the most important piece of evidence that heat is accumulating in the climate system?

Hmmm?

Dr. Spencer goes on to discuss what he calls “the elephant in the room”: the corrupting influence of billions of dollars in government money:

By now it has become a truism that government agencies will prefer whichever dataset supports the governments desired policies. You might think that government agencies are only out to report the truth, but if that's the case, why are these agencies run by political appointees?

I can say this as a former government employee who used to help NASA sell its programs to congress: We weren't funded to investigate non-problems, and if global warming were ever to become a non-problem, funding would go away. I was told what I could and couldn't say to Congress...Jim Hansen got to say whatever he wanted. I grew tired of it, and resigned.

Let me be clear: I'm not saying climate change is a non-problem; only that government programs that fund almost 100% of the research into climate change cannot be viewed as unbiased. Agencies can only maintain (or, preferably, grow) their budgets if the problem they want to study persists. Since at least the 1980s, an institutional bias exists which has encouraged the climate research community to view virtually all climate change as human-caused.

There indeed is a climate change problem to study...but I don't think we know with any certainty how much is natural versus manmade. There is no way to know, because there is (contrary to the IPCC's claims) no fingerprint of human versus natural warming. Even natural warming originating over the ocean will cause faster warming over land than over ocean, just as we already observe.

But since the government has framed virtually all of the research programs in terms of human-caused climate change, that's what the funded scientists will dutifully report it to be, in terms of supposed causation.

And until the culture in the government funding agencies changes, I don't see a new way of doing business materializing. It might require congress to direct the funding agencies to spend at least a small portion of their budgets to look for evidence of natural causes of climate change.

Because scientists, I have learned, will tend to find whatever they are paid to find in terms of causation...which is sometimes very difficult to pin down in science.

This is the essence of the problem: the world's governments are pouring billions of dollars into "research" of one kind only: research that supports giving more power over the world's economies to governments. Huh. Funny coincidence: when the supposed climate problem was global cooling (a more realistic scare than global warming) back in the 1970s, the solution was more government power, too. Global cooling would have worked just as well for statists, probably better. But: cooling, warming, what's the difference? **We want your money, and we want to run your life!** That is what global warming hysteria is all about. The money and the power. Global warming activism is perhaps the most corrupt enterprise of the 21st century.

## Washington Post

### [Washington, D.C., snowfall total called into question after improper measurement](#)

by Angela Fritz

It has become apparent this afternoon and evening, through multiple conversations with the weather observers at Reagan National Airport, that the snowfall totals submitted to the National Weather Service for that location have not been measured properly.

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The [National Weather Service has clear guidelines](#) on how to measure snowfall for one simple reason: snowstorms have a huge effect on the economy, life and property. They have an impact on millions of people and can result in millions of dollars lost. They also play an obvious important role in the historical record.

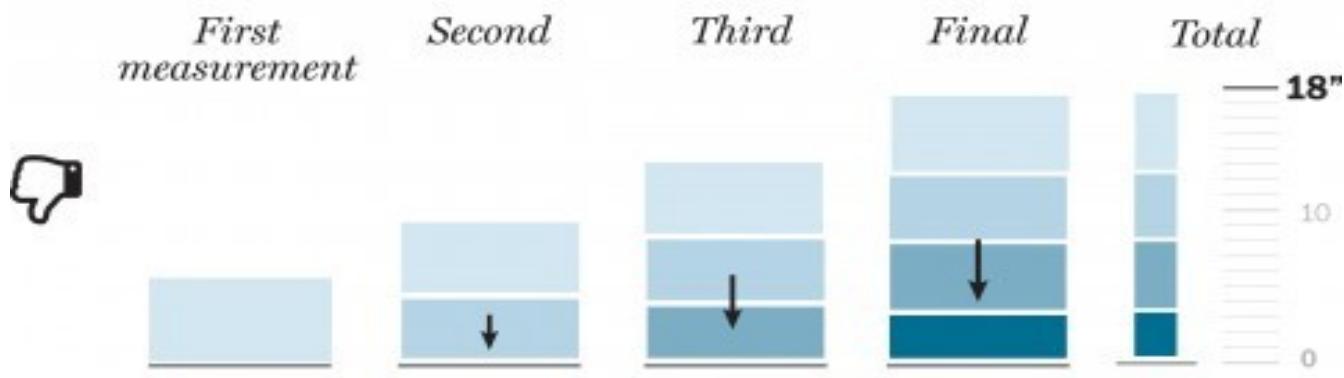
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## Where the National Airport snow count went wrong

The National Weather Service requires that observers use a snow board to measure total snowfall to minimize the effects of gravity on the count. The snowfall observation at National was done without a snow board.

*An example of how compaction works, and how to avoid it:*

**WITHOUT A SNOW BOARD**, snow was probably allowed to accumulate for the duration of the storm. As it did, the new snow pressed down on the old snow, compacting it. The amount of snow that actually fell was probably undercounted.



**WITH A SNOW BOARD**, observers are told to take a reading every six hours and then wipe it clean. Then, they should add together the four individual snowfall measurements at the end of the day to cut down on the effects of compaction.



Source: National Weather Service

KEVIN UHRMACHER/THE WASHINGTON POST

Snowfall is a very difficult thing to measure. The best way we have, and the way that the National Weather Service suggests, is with a snow board. The board is placed on the ground before the storm starts in a location that will be undisturbed by drifting. When the storm starts, snow is periodically measured, and the board is wiped clean.

If the board is not wiped clean before the next measurement, compaction can occur because of the weight of the snow, and the measurement will be lower than what has actually fallen.

The measurements taken at National were not done with a snow board, so they may have been reduced by compaction.

Jim Lee, the meteorologist in charge at the National Weather Service in Sterling, Va., told The Washington Post that he agrees that if the snow hasn't been measured by the guidelines, the totals are "perishable." Lee noted that in any storm, the observations are preliminary until they can survey it and make it official.

Capital Weather Gang's Jason Samenow explains how meteorologists classify blizzards.  
(Thomas Johnson/The Washington Post)

If the storm is potentially record-breaking – say, in the top 10, like this weekend's storm is – the Weather Service turns to the National Climatic Data Center to run the observations through quality control.

Though Lee's team was and will continue to be in the midst of an emergency situation Saturday night, he assured us that they will begin to look into the data as soon as the storm allows.

## NY Post

### Why Leo DiCaprio is just another climate hypocrite

by Karol Markowicz

Like most A-list celebrities in Hollywood, Leonardo DiCaprio is frequently in the news.

There's DiCaprio, in Cannes, France, on David Geffen's mega yacht, alone. And there he is on a different yacht in St. Tropez with his blonde of the month.

There he is getting off a private plane in the celebrity uniform of sunglasses and hoodie. And there he is getting on one again.

And last week, there he was in Davos, Switzerland, lecturing us all and blaming corporate greed for causing global climate change.

It might be funny if it weren't so galling.

Polls have long shown that Americans either don't believe in global climate change or don't consider it a serious issue. A Pew poll last November found that the United States was behind only China in its "concern" about climate change — but that such concern has grown substantially.

What polls also show, however, is that Americans are learning another lesson from our supposed elites: Believing in the existence of climate change or feeling "concern" is enough. Furrow your brow, and you're a hero. Even as belief and concern has increased in America, our behavior has stayed the same.

Could it be that we are hearing the hysterical pleas of "environmental activists" to change our ways or face doom and noticing that not only are they not changing their ways, but that their ways are far worse than our own? The loudest, most obnoxious and aggressive voices telling us the world is about to end plain old don't act like it.

Who can forget Al Gore predicting the North Pole would be ice-free by 2014, and starring in the environmental catastrophe film “An Inconvenient Truth,” all while racking up an electric bill 20 times the national average for his 20-room house and pool house?

We’re willing to believe the science we don’t fully understand, but it would help if the actions of the lecturing class caught up with their alarmist rhetoric.

We abandon ship when we see rats making a run for it, but these rats are lounging by the heated pool and playing shuffleboard on the Lido deck. When Leo heads for a lifeboat (admittedly his track record isn’t great on that score), the masses might follow.

All these activists sound very worried. But they don’t act worried at all.

One of the Sony emails leaked by hackers last year revealed that DiCaprio took six private flights in six weeks. We might not know science, but we know math. A plane for one, taken once a week, hurts the environment far more than what regular people who “don’t believe” in climate change can do.

But back to Davos: How did all those “thought leaders” and super-serious people get there? According to The Guardian: “about 1,700 private flights in and out of Zurich and other airports.”

That’s a lot of flights. Should we be worried about carbon emissions? Sure sounds like it! According to the eco-warriors at the Brooklyn-based TreeHugger.com, “while there’s no real substitute for face-to-face interactions, it seems ridiculously hypocritical to waste so much hot air — about 12,000 tons of CO<sub>2</sub> — in order for the world’s economic elite to talk to each other.”

Silly TreeHugger. There’s no such thing as too much hot air when it comes to Davos. It’s the whole purpose of the gabfest.

And that’s the point, isn’t it? That no one who claims the sky is falling is also ducking for cover.

Several years ago, writer Gregg Easterbrook, criticizing environmentalist Laurie David in The New Republic, calculated that one of David’s cross-country flights was equivalent to driving a Hummer for a year.

David, who produced “An Inconvenient Truth,” admitted her private plane usage was a problem. She said, “This is not about perfection. I don’t expect anybody else to be perfect either. That’s what hurts the environmental movement — holding people to a standard they cannot meet. That just pushes people away.”

Actually, what pushes people away from the environmental movement is that those who proselytize changing our ways to help the environment seem most far removed from doing the same.

“You can make history,” DiCaprio once scolded the United Nations on climate change, “or be vilified by it.”

If these elites’ behavior is any indication, that’s an empty threat.

## **Orange County Register**

### **Fostering a climate of intolerance**

by Joel Kotkin

*Hysteria: state in which your emotions (such as fear) are so strong that you behave in an uncontrolled way; a situation in which many people behave or react in an extreme or uncontrolled way because of fear, anger, etc.*

The Paris Climate Conference, convening this week, takes place in the very place where, arguably, the most dangerous exemplar of hysteria, the Islamic jihadi movement, has left its bloody mark. Yet the think tank mavens, academics, corporate shills and endless processions of bureaucrats gather in the City of Light not to confront the immediate deadly threat, but to ramp up their own grisly scenarios and Draconian solutions.

Welcome to the age of hysteria, where friends and foes, and even those who blissfully talk past each other, whip themselves into an emotional frenzy that bears no discussion, debate or nuance. Rather than entering a technological age of reason, we seem to lurching towards a high-tech middle ages, where warring bands – greens, jihadis, libertarians, social conservatives, nationalists – immerse themselves not in intellectual competition but, inflating their own individual outrage. In this environment, exaggeration and hysteria are weapons of recruitment, while opposition is met with demeaning attacks, potential imprisonment and, at the worst, vicious acts of violence.

#### **Establishment's hysteria**

Amid the recent carnage in Paris – not to mention bloodshed in the Sinai, Beirut and Mali – one would expect the world's economic and political leadership to focus on that clear and present danger presented by Islamic extremism. But for years, much of the world's power structure, particularly on the Left, has convinced itself that climate change represents the greatest challenge to mankind, rather than more immediate threats such as terrorism, poverty, deforestation and stagnating global economies.

For some, climate change has become the default cause of virtually everything, even the Syrian civil war. However much dry conditions may have contributed to the crisis, this assertion ignores the fact that people have been killing each other in the Middle East from time immemorial and that droughts have been a constant threat in that region, as here in California, since before biblical times.

Yet this reflects the growing tendency among climate change activists to promote their cause with sometimes questionable assertions. Generally level-headed accounts, such as in the Economist and in harder-edge publications like the Daily Telegraph, have demonstrated that many claims of climate change activists have already been disproven or are somewhat exaggerated.

For example, there are such facts as the unexpected expansion of Antarctica's ice shelf or that Arctic ice remains, although somewhat diminished, despite predictions it would have disappeared by now.

Greenpeace founder Robert Johnson suggests we are moving from legitimate rational concern about changing global conditions and toward a state of "climate hysteria." This, he suggests, is openly promoted by a scientific and political establishment fed, emotionally and sometimes

economically, by selling ever more extreme scenarios. Climate scientists, notes the left-leaning magazine Oz, are even embracing emotion and salesmanship as a part of their job description as researchers, quite a departure from past standard professional behavior.

Rather than address possible shortcomings in their models, climate change activists increasingly tend to discredit critics as dishonest and tools of the oil companies. There is even a move to subject skeptics to criminal prosecution for deceiving the public.

How much this does for our understanding of the complexities of climate seems questionable, but the incessant campaign on the issue clearly is having an effect on the society's rationality. Canadian psychologists have already found elevated levels of anxiety among young people, who, after all, have been told that their world could be coming to an end, no matter what we do.

## **Race and Religion**

Racial nationalists and religious zealots have savored the fruits of hysteria long before scientists and environmentalists. Islamic terrorists, of course, are the most obvious example, a group so profoundly paranoid that the very existence of non-Muslims, or even those who prefer other interpretations of Islam, cannot be tolerated. If green hysterics seek only banishment from polite society, and perhaps a little jail time, for climate infidels, the jihadis of ISIS seek to snuff out their opponents' existence, the more cruelly the better.

Sadly, this form of hysteria also tends to bring out the latent jihadi in others as well. Whatever one might think of what constitutes the best immigration policy, the Paris massacres have emboldened the increasingly hysterical Donald Trump. He has now added calls for bans on Syrian refugees and for Muslim registries to his crude assaults on Mexican immigrants as tending to be rapists and criminals. The paranoia around which Trump rallies his supporters reflects the ancient Greek adage: Those who the gods wish to destroy they first drive mad. The bad news for Republicans is that even rightfully angry Americans will not elect a madman as president.

The rise of hysteria also impacts how Americans deal with issues such as race. President Obama's racial fixation has made him incapable of addressing genuine concerns about sanctuary cities and the troubling crime problem around undocumented immigrants. This behavior simply encourages the Trumps and other opponents of immigration to ramp up their divisive, nativist rhetoric.

Similarly, the president's embrace of groups like Black Lives Matter and support for related protests on campus, has a potential downside. For one thing, it makes addressing serious issues, like police brutality, more partisan than it should be; rejecting the idea that "all lives matter" is not a formula for promoting racial harmony. The whole tone of campus protests – including the shout-downs of anyone who deviates from the PC party line – has even become too much for the president, who should be credited for denouncing the "dogmatism" of many campus protests and a tendency to deal with opposition by "simply shutting other people up."

Yet the insanity on campuses may be beyond even the president's influence. Hysteria demands conformity, and the wiping out of every nuance of difference is a prerequisite. Creating "safe spaces" on campus – and hectoring and assaulting reporters, as occurred at the University of Missouri – grows from the same hysterical and paranoid impulses that animate segments of the Republican base.

## **What's ahead?**

Years ago the great social thinker Daniel Bell wrote about "the end of ideology," and, decades later, Francis Fukuyama insisted we were approaching "the end of history" with the triumph of Western liberal values. Unfortunately, these predictions have proven way off-course. If anything, ideologies – some of them originating in the seventh century – have been getting stronger, and their adepts ever more hysterical and intolerant. When even science, the supposed lodestone of rational discourse, is politicized, we may be surrendering some of the core values that have distinguished Western civilization from others.

What we need now is something very much the opposite of hysteria and intolerance. Discussion, and reason, is impossible in a room of shouters, relentless PR campaigns and threats of imprisonment, much less so when the hysterics are also firing guns. The age of hysteria threatens many things, among them finding the best, and least-destructive to society, ways to address the very important issues that the Paris Conference now seeks to address.

## NY Times

### Winter in New York: Something's Missing; Absence of Snow Upsets Rhythms Of Urban Life and Natural World

by Barbara Stewart

Once, and not so many years ago, no New Yorker would have dignified a January with three chilly days in a row and a soggy spurt of whitish precipitation as winter. Winter in New York was a season of single-digit temperatures, icy winds whipping off the Hudson and snow forts that did not begin to melt until March.

That chilly stuff Thursday that melted as soon as it touched asphalt -- snow? A sunny Friday afternoon in the 20's -- bitter cold? In Yazoo City, Miss., or Mobile, Ala., maybe. But not in New York City. Until now. Years of mild, rainy winters seem to be making New Yorkers hungry for the freezing winds and snow they deplored when it was plentiful.

So the arrival of a bit of real winter -- of Thursday's flurries in the city, of yesterday's lows in the teens, of foot-deep snow in Albany and the Catskills -- created the kind of excitement once reserved for much more extreme meteorological episodes. Radio and television announcers warned listeners about frostbite, and news writers dusted off adjectives like "blustery."

"It's good, the snow," said Glen Cooper, a telephone technician, standing on Eighth Avenue near Times Square, smiling, as the evanescent flakes melted on his face on Thursday. "Snow slows people down. It makes people happy. It's natural."

Freezing, snowy winters are not only natural for New York's trees and greenery, they are entwined in the lore and arts of the city. They influence moods, they inspire poetry and painting, they drive advertising and appetites, they build childhood memories. So the mild winters of the last few years have caused a major ripple effect, from ecology to gastronomy.

To gardeners, one of the most troubling aspects of an April-like January is that it causes many flowering plants and trees to bloom prematurely, including bulbs and fruit trees. Tricked into thinking that spring is approaching, the early buds leave themselves vulnerable to cold snaps, like this one.

Like a quilt on a bed, a blanket of snow keeps the organisms beneath the surface of the soil warm. Without this covering, the insects, bacteria and tree roots underground are left to the mercy of sudden freezes. That could mean there will be fewer ladybird beetles and other useful insects in the spring, said Maurice J. and Catherine A. Tauber, entomologists at Cornell University.

And a complex biological chain reaction, beginning with bacteria living in the soil, could result in high-acid soil, which could run off into the streams and rivers and harm the fish, said Gary M. Lovett, a scientist at the Institute of Ecosystem Studies in Millbrook, N.Y.

Without their warm snow cover, birches and sugar and red maples, too, are vulnerable to freeze damage, said Allan Auclair, a scientist at the RAND Corporation, a nonprofit research and policy organization in Washington. Sugar maples in Vermont are showing damage, which is probably at least partly the result of the lack of snow, he said.

The already overabundant deer, mice and squirrel populations are likely to increase even more because food supplies are more plentiful and accessible in mild weather. (Luckily, the even more dreaded rats and cockroaches should not proliferate any more than usual.)

But it does not take a scientist to size up the effects of snowless winters on the children too young to remember the record-setting blizzards of 1996. For them, the pleasures of sledding and snowball fights are as out-of-date as hoop-rolling, and the delight of a snow day off from school is unknown.

"I bought a sled in '96 for my daughter," said Dr. Michael Oppenheimer, a scientist at the nonprofit Environmental Defense Fund. "It's been sitting in the stairwell, and hasn't been used. I used to go sledding all the time. It's one of my most vivid and pleasant memories as a kid, hauling the sled out to Cunningham Park in Queens."

Marcella Durand, 32, a poet at the St. Marks Poetry Project in the East Village, remembers burrowing through tunnels and building igloos and snowmen in a snow-buried TriBeCa. "I really miss the snow," she said. "I miss the peace. I miss looking out the windows onto streets with snow falling around the lights, like a special halo. It brought a little bit of peace to the city. It's the only thing that seems to quiet the city down."

Of course, it is easy on a 50-degree day in January to wax nostalgic about the glories of a hard freeze. Even people who moved to Miami to escape the cold have been overtaken by a craving for the coziness of a warm fire in a snowstorm. Some even crank up the air-conditioning so they can huddle by a fake-log fire with a hot whiskey or a cup of cocoa.

Another result of the succession of warm winters is the emergence of a cause of clinical depression. These are bad times for the tiny group of people who become depressed in the summer and cheerful in the winter. "Some people are energized by winter," said Dr. Thomas Wehr, a psychiatrist at the National Institutes of Mental Health. "They look forward to summer with dread." The mild weather is cheating them of the cold they crave, he said.

At least part of the reason for the recent warm winter is La Nina, the chilly air in the equatorial Pacific that has been pushing the vast stream of cold air north along the border of the United States and Canada. This has been allowing space for warm winds from the south to expand into the Northeast, including New York. And Dr. Oppenheimer, among other ecologists, points to global warming as perhaps the most significant long-term factor.

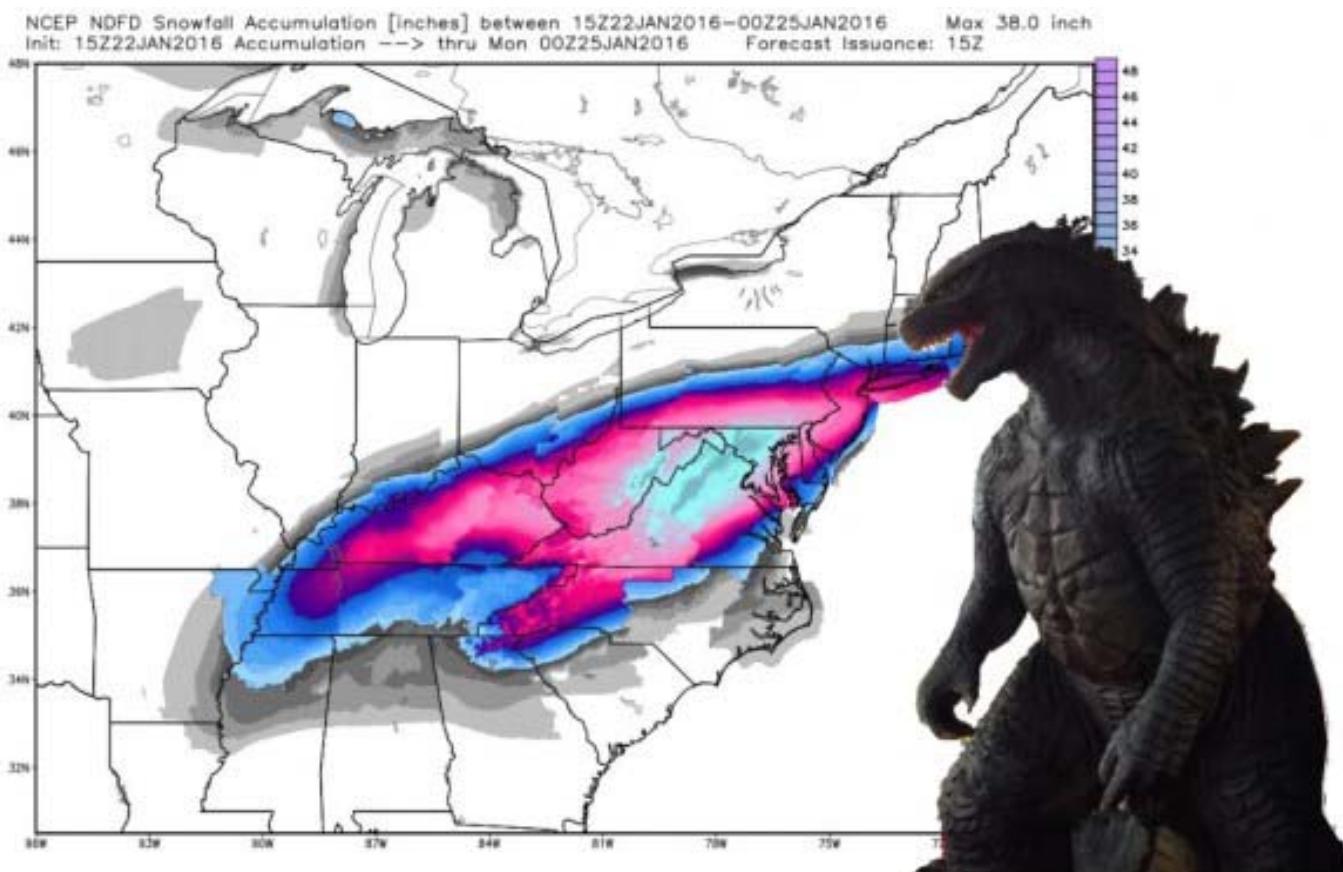
Nearly everybody has an occasional craving for an icy, snowy day. What use are beautiful wool sweaters, high leather boots, thick stews and hot toddies when it's warm? At Cashmere, Cashmere on the Upper East Side, sales of sweaters and sweatshirts have been slow, though they picked up during yesterday's cold, said Jan Mehalick, the owner. At Judson Grill in Midtown, customers are ordering fish at lunch instead of the hearty winter cassoulet, Bill Telepan, the chef, said.

And snowstorms make the city beautiful, at least for a day or two. From an aesthetic point of view, drab light and rain cannot compare with the glistening white and pristine silence of snow. Snow makes events vivid. Who could forget the familiar Currier & Ives images and E. B. White's rendition of stoic Maine farmers and their camaraderie during deep snowfalls.

Who could forget the sight of people cross-country skiing down Broadway during the blizzards of 1996? During the Great Blizzard in 1947, jazz fans created an urban legend when they turned out in force to hear Duke Ellington and his musicians play the "Liberian Suite" in Carnegie Hall.

Despite global warming and La Nina, New Yorkers who are hungry for snow and ice may still find some satisfaction in the months ahead. Snow is predicted for Tuesday -- and that could well mean a snowfall that sticks, rather than mere flurries. Over the next 10 weeks, there are plenty of "snow opportunities," said Fred Gadomski, a meteorologist at Pennsylvania State University.

"All it takes is one or two good snowstorms and you've got yourself a winter," he said. "If I were a betting man -- and I'm not -- but if I were, I'd say there's a good chance there'll be a good old-fashioned snowstorm some time this winter."



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