



EARTH DAY AT 40

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EARTH DAY

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Climate change threat backed by science ...

ANDREW GUNTHER



A dangerous gulf exists between scientists' concerns about climate disruption and public understanding. While self-proclaimed "climate skeptics" scoff at the scientific consensus as though it is opinion, national academies of science around the world call for action based on a consensus of conclusions from almost 200 years of research. We ignore this knowledge at our great peril.

Global warming was proposed in 1896 based upon physical

principles discovered earlier in the 19th century. Emissions from burning fossil fuels build up in the atmosphere, trapping heat and warming the Earth. That these gases trap heat is basic physics. It is why Venus is hotter than Mercury, though Mercury is closer to the sun.

Air bubbles preserved in ancient ice prove heat-trapping gases are now at levels not seen in the last 800,000 years. Air and ocean temperature changes, reduction in ice mass and increase in sea levels have resulted.

"Global warming" does not mean shredding your sweater. It means changes in distribution

of water, more forest fires, ocean acidification, more extreme weather events and altered distribution of pests and diseases.

The recently published stolen e-mails do not weaken the science, as the British House of Commons concluded. "Skeptics" in the media usually cherry-pick data or focus upon a particular place on the planet instead of global trends.

Denying the facts of climate science encourages Americans to confuse the unprecedented with the improbable, and this would be a tragic mistake with devastating consequences.

Andrew Gunther, Ph.D., is executive director of the Center for Ecosystem Management and Restoration in Oakland, Calif., and a member of the Union of Concerned Scientists' board of directors.



(GETTY)

... but scare tactics only hurt fight against global warming

BJØRN LOMBORG



The recent revelations that some climate scientists have been exaggerating the likely impact of global warming left a lot of people wondering whether they could trust anything the environmental activists tell them. Well, even though the Himalayan glaciers are not about to disappear — nor is 40 percent of the Amazonian rain forest at imminent risk of being destroyed — the fact remains that global warming is real, it's man-made, and we need to do

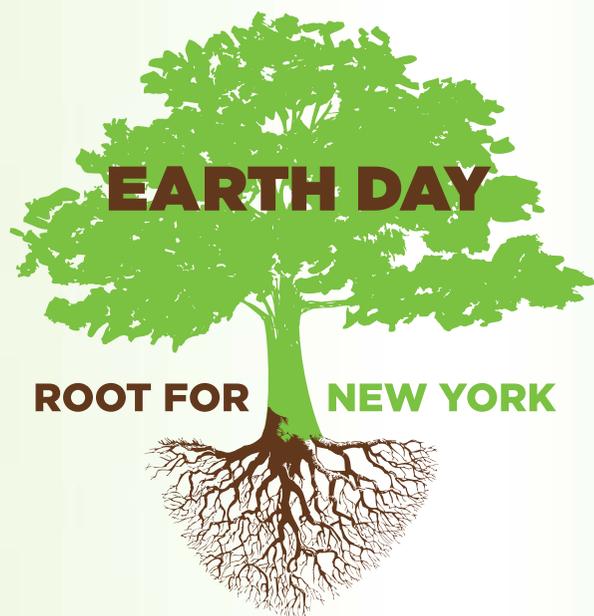
something about it.

For the better part of a decade, I have upset many climate activists by pointing out that there are far better ways to stop global warming than by trying to scare the socks off of people. Instead of obsessing about far-fetched, worst-case scenarios (like Al Gore's insistence that "we have just 10 years to avert a major catastrophe"), we need to focus on the true costs of dealing with the challenge of climate change.

In particular, rather than trying to make carbon-based fuels more expensive, we should be trying to make green energy sources cheaper. Right now there

simply aren't any affordable alternatives to coal and oil. We talk a lot about solar and wind power, but these green-energy technologies aren't anywhere close to being able to replace our reliance on fossil fuels. To achieve the kinds of breakthroughs it will take to fuel a carbon-free future, we must seriously ramp up our commitment to green-energy research and development. Not only would this be a much less expensive fix than trying to cut carbon emissions out of existence, it would also reduce global warming far more quickly.

Bjørn Lomborg organized the Copenhagen Consensus Center and is the author of "The Skeptical Environmentalist" and "Cool It."



What are you doing on Earth Day?

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