

As a sailor, I like to read the free sailing magazine published here called Latitude 38. While it has excellent coverage of sailing-related issues, the publisher/editor is somewhere to the right of Attila the Hun politically; he is a die-hard “free” marketeer. As such, he gives credence to the global warming deniers. In their current issue, they published the following letter of mine, along with their reply:

WHEN WILL WE KNOW?

Oh lord, here we go again with the global warming “skeptics.” In the December issue, *Latitude* wondered, “What's with the 62% increase in Arctic ice over last year?”

True, you said that you “give the benefit of the doubt to the overwhelming majority of scientists who believe in climate change,” but that “we should know in 30 years or so.” Wrong. We know now. First of all, it took me all of 13.5 minutes to do a little research about the growth of “Arctic” ice. (You can do it, too, as there is this website called ‘google dot com’ that you can use for such information.) It turns out that it's in the Antarctic where sea ice (vs. land ice) has been increasing — despite the warming of the Southern Ocean. There are several reasons: Freshening of the ocean, changed wind patterns, decrease in the ozone layer. But not a cooler ocean!

Then there are all the other factors regarding global warming that leave absolutely no doubt that it's not a matter of 30 years from now; it is now: Increased ocean temperatures, increased wildfire season lengths and severity of fires, disappearance of major mountain ice caps from the Andes to Mt. Kilimanjaro, increased extreme weather patterns (storms, droughts, etc.). Plus the little detail that nine of the 10 warmest years on record have been in the last decade. Then there's the minor matter of increased acidification of the oceans. Since industrialization, the oceans have become 26% more acid and the rate of change is accelerating. (That took me all of 1.5 minutes to research.) Not only should sailors be concerned about this, but the vast majority of our oxygen is produced by the oceans' algae, which means we should all be concerned.

A year or so ago, I read a book called *Merchants of Doubt*. It describes how the tobacco industry purchased a gang of scientists to produce doubt over whether smoking tobacco caused lung cancer. The book documents the direct descent from these tobacco “merchants of doubt” to the global warming deniers. In part it's simple monetary greed on the part of these scientists. In part, because the solutions for these scientific facts didn't fit these scientists' world view, so the facts must change, not their world view. You might benefit from reading that book, too.

We all have to be really clear on what has already happened if we are to avoid the disaster that lies in wait. In the interest of responsible journalism, I hope you don't continue to give the slightest credence to these ‘merchants of doubt’.

John Reimann *Y-Knot?*, Catalina 36

Oakland

They replied:

John — We wouldn't classify ourselves as global warming skeptics by any stretch of the imagination. But as journalists, we're inherently skeptical of all claims. Plus, we have had firsthand knowledge of a progressive scientist's falsifying information to get more grant money.

But thank you for giving us the heads-up about the existence of google.com. What a neat thing. It only took us three minutes to discover that nearly 20 boats were unable to complete the Northwest Passage this year because of a 62% increase in the amount of sea ice. Guess what else we learned? The Northwest Passage isn't in the Antarctic, but the Arctic. So maybe you don't know as much as you think you do.

Then, curious about some of your other claims, we googled around for information about the increasing length of the fire season caused by global warming. After all, we know about the 19 firefighters who died in Arizona and the gigantic Rim Fire. Wanting to avoid any merchants of doubt, we went to the National Public Radio site. Well, tobacco merchants or their ilk have obviously hacked the NPR site because listen to the misinformation that's being put out: “With 15,000 firefighters deployed and three dozen major wildfires currently burning in five Western states, this would seem to be a wildfire season for the record books. And in one tragic aspect, it is. But by most measures, 2013 is the second-mildest fire season in the past decade.” What?! We have to take the NPR site back from the hackers.

The one thing everybody seems to agree on is that global warming means there are going to be a lot more hurricanes and stronger hurricanes. Unfortunately, the National Hurricane Center site apparently has been hacked, too, because they are reporting that this has been the longest time in recorded history that the United States hasn't been hit by a major hurricane. Furthermore, there were far fewer hurricanes in the Atlantic this year than the Hurricane Center folks had predicted. Think how many more people are being fooled.

And just last week some scientists — who are obviously deniers in the employ of the merchants — said they recorded the lowest temperature ever on earth. While it might have seemed as if it hit -135° in San Francisco Bay Area last month, these frauds claim it was actually in Antarctica.

But we know what you mean about the deniers being persistent. Why, on June 6 the New York Times, which must now be owned by Fox News and the Koch brothers, reported the following: "The rise in the surface temperature of earth has been markedly slower over the last 15 years than in the 20 years before that. And that lull in warming has occurred even as greenhouse gases have accumulated in the atmosphere at a record pace." According to the Times, "this is a bit of a mystery to climate scientists." Lies, lies and more right-wing lies!

If we can be serious for a moment, we know what Aristotle meant when he said that "one fine day does not spring make," so there can be lots of weather aberrations within a greater pattern. And we know that the overwhelming consensus of scientists say there is climate change. Not being climate scientists, who are we to doubt them? Still, there are so many weather variables that we still can't get accurate four-day forecasts, so we're not stone-cold convinced that the many-times-greater variables 30 years down the road can be forecast with absolute certainty.

I sent them the following reply. We will see if they publish it:

In your response to my letter on global warming/global climate disruption, you basically behave like the politicians you love to hate: you try to have it both ways.

On the one hand, you write that you aren't global warming "skeptics" and ask "who are we to doubt" the overwhelming majority of scientists. You even admit that individual events by themselves don't prove or disprove a general weather trend, but then you turn right around and present a series of exactly such individual events in a manner to try to cast this doubt.

You put forward the fact that a record number of boats have been caught in the arctic ice last year in such a manner as to cast doubt on the fact of the long term shrinking of this ice. It's true that the arctic ice did not shrink last year (one particular year), but had you done a simple google search using the words "arctic ice cap shrink" you would have found such sites as these: <http://www.nrdc.org/globalwarming/qthinice.asp> and <http://www.forbes.com/sites/alexknapp/2013/07/27/melting-polar-ice-cap-created-a-lake-on-top-of-the-world/>. And as for that record number of boats caught in the ice -- maybe it was because a record number tried the Northwest passage exactly because the arctic ice cap is shrinking so rapidly.

You imply that a (claimed) mild wildfire season last year shows there is no long term trend towards longer and more intense wildfire seasons in general. Again, a simple google search comes up with articles like this one (<http://www.dailykos.com/story/2013/06/04/1213785/-Wildfire-season-is-longer-more-destructive-now-than-in-the-1970s>) which shows that the season has increased by two months since the 1970s and burn nearly twice as much land (in the US).

Then you say that "just last week some scientists... said they recorded the lowest temperatures ever on earth." Which scientists? Because, yes, there are an entire group of them who are under the direct pay of the oil companies, just as were a similar group under the pay of the tobacco industry when they were putting out all sorts of research that "proved" that smoking cigarettes doesn't cause cancer. And where were these low temperatures recorded, when and for how long? This makes a huge difference because one aspect of global climate disruption is that the differences in temperatures between the poles and the middle of the planet (nearer the equator) has lessened.

You cite a report that claims that the rise of surface temperatures of the earth have slowed down, as if that means that we should doubt the fact of global warming. Here (<http://www.cejournal.net/?p=2740>) for instance, is a chart of global mean temperatures since industrialization (1880). Of course, your source for that claim is Fox News and the Koch Brothers. Next you'll be citing Bernie Madoff as an investment strategist.

You confound the fact that meteorologists have difficulty pinning down a short term forecast with an ability to understand long term trends. You ignore the uncontested fact of nine of the ten warmest years ever recorded having been in the last ten years, the long term shrinking of mountain glaciers, the continuing acidification of the oceans. These uncontested facts prove that global warming is not some theory to be proven or disproven 30 years from now; it is here and now.

And don't even try to use the current mid-west cold spell to cast doubt; that cold in these latitudes comes at the expense of warmer temperatures in the arctic.

Back in the 1960s, a generation of German youth turned to their parents and demanded answers for what they were doing during the Nazi years; were they complicit. If current climate trends continue, a future generation will turn on the present generation with a similar question. They will be justified in condemning those who are all too willing to sacrifice scientific fact at the altar of abstract political ideals. Shame on you.

John Reimann
Y-Knot?, Catalina 36
Oakland, CA