Making Ripples

Climate Change Consensus: Fact or Belief?

by Amanda Bancroft

I don't believe in climate change. That's because science, unlike religion, does not require faith in something with a lack of hard evidence. Nobody can "believe" in science, but we can acknowledge facts that are represented by peer-reviewed scientific literature that has withstood the scientific process and emerged with a low degree of uncertainty and which has yet to be refuted. One such fact is that anthropogenic (originating in human activity) climate change is occurring, and this statement is a consensus among climate scientists as well as all nationally and internationally recognized scientific organizations.

According to NASA (National Aeronautics and Space Administration), "Ninety-seven percent of climate scientists agree that climate-warming trends over the past century are very likely due to human activities, and most of the leading scientific organizations worldwide have issued public statements endorsing this position." They link to statements from over 200 organizations, including American organizations such as: the Meteorological Society, Physical Society, Geological Society, Medical Association, Association for the Advancement of Science, Chemical Society, Geophysical Union, and international organizations worldwide, including the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change which involves over 2,000 scientists.

The National Academy of Sciences released research in 2010 from Stanford University compiling the climate papers of 908 climatologists who each authored a minimum of 20 peer-reviewed climate papers, finding that 97 percent of these climatologists support the tenets of anthropogenic climate change through the findings in their published research. Dr. James Lawrence Powell, a geologist with several degrees and 12 years of service on the National Science Board and current Executive Director of the National Physical Science Consortium, did a meta-study of 13,950 peer-reviewed climate papers published in 18 scientific journals from 1991 through 2012, and found that only 24 papers reported that global warming is not occurring.

Among officially recognized scientific organizations worldwide, exactly zero refute the claims of anthropogenic climate change or voice dissent regarding the scientific consensus (based on their website's position statements). There are four organizations issuing statements that accept climate change but are non-committal regarding human activity as a cause: the Canadian Federation of Earth Sciences, the American Institute of Professional Geologists, the American Geological Institute, and the American Association of Petroleum Geologists – the last major organization in the world to revise its climate change policy statement in 2007.

Human impact on climate has been measured in various ways across various fields including geology. The Geological Society of London, the world's oldest geological society, states that

"CO_2 is a major modifier of the climate system, and human activities are responsible for recent warming," noting in 2013 that new evidence contributed by geologists (especially regarding palaeoclimate records of past climate change) has strengthened this conclusion.

The fact is that among all leading science organizations worldwide, there is a consensus. Facts are things we don't have to believe; they simply exist. Even for most geologists, climate change is a fact harder than rock and much more difficult to weather.

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