

GREATNESS AGENDA

The Corruption of Climate Science



off the table, along with their life-affirming affordable fuel.

By Edward Ring



May 23, 2023

“We need to criticize the people who got us here,” says [Alex Epstein](#), founder of the Center for Industrial Progress and author of [Fossil Future](#). “We can’t keep treating these designated experts as real experts. They are not real experts, they are destroyers. They are anti-energy, non-experts. And that needs to be made clear.”

Epstein is right, and his advice has never been more urgent—or as difficult to make people understand. It is no exaggeration that every major institution in America has now committed itself to the elimination of affordable and abundant energy. If it isn’t stopped, this commitment, motivated by misguided concern for the planet but also by a lust for power and money and by moral cowardice and intellectual negligence, will destroy Western civilization.

[Privacy](#) - [Terms](#)

For over 50 years, with increasing frequency, corrupted, careerist scientists have produced biased studies that, amplified by agenda-driven corporate and political special interests, constitute a “consensus” that is supposedly “beyond debate.” We are in a “climate crisis.” To cope with this climate emergency, all measures are justifiable.

This is overblown, one-sided, distorted, and manipulative propaganda. It is the language of authoritarians and corporatists bent on achieving even more centralized political power and economic wealth. It is a scam, perhaps the most audacious, all-encompassing fraud in human history. It is a scam that explicitly targets and crushes the middle class in developed nations and the entire aspiring populations in developing nations, at the same time as its messaging is designed to secure their fervent acquiescence.

What is actually beyond debate is not that we are in a climate crisis but that if we don’t stop destroying our conventional energy economy, we are going to be in a *civilizational* crisis.

Energy is the foundation of *everything*—prosperity, freedom, upward mobility, national wealth, individual economic independence, functional water and transportation infrastructure, commercial-scale agriculture, mining, and industry. Without energy, it all goes dark. And “renewables” are not even remotely capable of replacing oil, gas, coal, nuclear, and hydroelectric power. It’s impossible.

The only people who think renewables are capable of replacing conventional energy are either uninformed, innumerate, or corrupt. Period.

But to cope with the apocalyptic messaging of climate catastrophists, it isn’t enough to debunk the potential of renewables. It is also necessary to challenge the underlying climate “science.” The biased, corrupt, unceasing avalanche of expert “studies” serving up paid-for ideas to special interests that use them as bludgeons to beat into the desired shape every relevant public policy and popular narrative. So here goes.

A new study, released May 16, deserves far more criticism than it’s going to get. Authored by seven ridiculously credentialed experts and primarily affiliated with the leftist Union of Concerned Scientists, this study has the rather innocuous title: “Quantifying the contribution of major carbon producers to increases in vapor pressure deficit and burned area in western US and southwestern Canadian forests.” Bursting with charts and equations, and too many links to corroborating sources to count, the study has all the accouterments of intimidating credibility. But serious questions may be raised as to its logic as well as its objectivity.

Biased, Flawed Studies



For starters, this study doesn't restrict itself to "Quantifying the contribution of major carbon producers to increases in vapor pressure deficit." The authors can't resist attacking these "major carbon producers." In this revealing paragraph, the study's true intent becomes apparent: it is fodder for litigation.

"With the impacts of climate change growing increasingly severe, questions of who is responsible for climate change, how much responsibility each entity bears, and the obligations of those entities to mitigate future climate change and assist financially with climate adaptation are more present than ever in policy negotiations and in courtrooms around the world. These questions are deepened by the fact that the fossil fuel industry was aware of the climate-related risks of their products as early as the mid-1960s (Franta 2018) and, instead of shifting business practices, invested in campaigns and tactics to mislead the public and generate doubt about climate science."

That paragraph has nothing to do with the stated goal of the study. It just shows the political and legal context in which this study is designed to play a useful part. But what about the logic?

Here is where this study falls apart. It's always fascinating to wade through intellectual efforts that are the product of extraordinary diligence and rarified expertise, only to discover the absence of fundamental variables and realize that by leaving them out, the entire argument disintegrates.

To explain what the authors got wrong, it is first necessary to summarize what they did. In plain English, the authors claim that hotter summers in recent years have caused more severe forest fires in the western United States, and fossil fuel emissions are causing the hotter summers.

That's it.

To make their case, the authors have relied on a scientific term that imparts gravitas to the discussion, "vapor pressure deficit." This is a big phrase that simply means "dry air." The point they're making is that it isn't merely heat itself, but the fact that moisture is absent from the air, which causes trees to dry out faster and therefore become easier to ignite and burn. So far, so good. But there are at least two gaping holes in this reasoning. Both should be obvious.

First, the heat waves afflicting western forests in recent years are not unique. Even in modern history, the hottest temperature ever recorded in California was in 2013, when it hit 134 degrees in Death Valley. As for whipsawing extremes, during the 1930s, a decade when hot temperatures rivaled if not exceeded those we experience today, the coldest temperature ever measured in California, negative 45 degrees, was recorded in Nevada County. But the last few centuries are a mere heartbeat in the meteorological history of California.

Last year the *San Jose Mercury* breathlessly reported that the drought—over now, by the way—was the "worst in 1,200 years." This raises the obvious question, what about that even bigger drought

that occurred 1,200 years ago? This same newspaper in 2014 reported that “past dry periods lasted more than 200 years.” And so what about these multi-century droughts? Do we have temperature data for them? Was it hot? What was the vapor pressure deficit during these prehistoric, 200-year droughts? Such questions are not asked, much less answered.

One can go on. Prehistoric Sequoias, the predecessors of redwood trees, first appeared in the fossil record 200 million years ago, when dinosaurs still walked the earth. In their current form, redwoods have thrived in California for over 20 million years. For most of that period, the average global temperatures were considerably higher than they are today.

But what if it isn't just heat, but dry heat, that is unprecedented today? What if the “vapor pressure deficit” is worse today than it has been at any time in 20 million years? That is a huge assumption, probably impossible to verify. Even if it's true, it doesn't make up for the study's other flaw, which is the density of forests in California today, which is truly unprecedented. The study's authors acknowledge they don't take this variable into account, writing:

“Our results highlight the roles of major carbon producers in driving forest fire extent by enhancing fuel aridity, but do not explicitly account for effects from non-climatic factors such as the prohibition of Indigenous burning, legacies of fire suppression, or changing human ignitions.”

The authors go on to contend this omission has “not modified the climate-BA [burned area] relationship at the scale of this study.”

They're wrong.

In California, wildlife biologists and forest ecologists who spend their lives studying and managing these timberlands unanimously agree that tree density has increased, thanks to “non-climatic factors such as the prohibition of Indigenous burning, and legacies of fire suppression.” The increase is *not* subtle. Without small, naturally occurring fires that clear underbrush and smaller trees, forests become overgrown. Controlled burns and responsible logging are absolutely necessary to maintain forest health. According to a study conducted in 2020 by UC Davis and USDA, California's mid-elevation Ponderosa pine and mixed conifer forests used to average 60 trees per acre, and now they average 170 trees per acre according to conservative estimates.

This is not an isolated finding. Observations of excessive tree density are corroborated by numerous studies, testimony, and journalistic investigations. Unlike the subjectively defined algorithms plugged into a climate model, excessive tree density is an objective fact, verified repeatedly by people on the ground. To imply by omission that more than tripling the density of trees across millions of acres of forest would not leave them stressed and starved for soil nutrients, sunlight, and water from rain and atmospheric moisture is scientific malpractice.

Without taking these additional factors into account, it is deceptive to indict fossil fuel emissions for causing wildfires. Perhaps some indirect connection can be established of debatable relevance, but for this study to assign specific percentages and acreages suggests a premeditated purpose: creating material for expert testimony for litigation against oil companies.

The Real Reason for Catastrophic Wildfires

California's forests are tinderboxes because environmentalists made it nearly impossible to get permits to do controlled burns and because environmentalists decimated the timber industry. In the face of relentless regulatory and litigious harassment, California's timber industry has shrunk from harvesting 6 billion board feet per year as recently as the 1990s to less than 2 billion board feet in recent years. Meanwhile, California's fire suppression industrial complex has grown to gargantuan proportions, pouring billions of dollars into putting fires out before they can spread.

The result is predictable and doesn't require a climate scientist to explain it. We have mismanaged our forests for decades, mostly thanks to the misguided influence of environmentalist pressure groups on the state legislature. California's forests are now overcrowded with trees that are stressed, dried out, and ready to burst into flames, with or without a "vapor pressure deficit."

The solution, according to climate catastrophists, is to empty the dangerous, flammable "urban/wildland interface" of human habitation, mandate electric vehicles, and sue oil companies. This will accomplish *nothing* for the forests, even if every apocalyptic climate scenario were to come true. A rational solution would be to bring back the timber industry, deregulate controlled burns and mechanical thinning, revive responsible grazing of cattle, goats, and sheep to remove excessive foliage, and watch the forests again thrive.

If mismanagement is what's really causing forest superfires, media misinformation is what's preventing policy reform. A *Sacramento Bee* headline, for example, says, "Fossil fuel companies to blame for share of California wildfires . . ." From *The Hill*: "Scientists blame fossil fuel production for more than a third of Western wildfires." From "Pulitzer Prize-winning" *Inside Climate News*: "Fossil Fuel Companies and Cement Manufacturers Could Be to Blame for a More Than a Third of West's Wildfires." *None* of these media reports mention tree density.

The monolithic alignment of the scientific and journalistic community in support of an authoritarian, utterly impractical "climate" agenda reveals a misunderstanding if not outright betrayal of scientific and journalistic core values. Both disciplines are founded on the bedrock of skepticism and debate. Without nurturing those values, the integrity of these disciplines is undermined. When it comes to issues of climate and energy policy in America, science and journalism are compromised.



Fossil Fuel Industry Failures

Let's suppose that back in the mid-1960s, oil companies were presented with a theory that fossil fuel emissions would cause the climate to warm. Wouldn't their first rational response be to question this theory? Why would questioning a *theory* constitute "misleading the public"? Even if some of the executives in these companies believed these theories, it would be absurd to suggest all of them did. In any boardroom discussion, and this is amusingly ironic, the economic interests of an oil corporation would compel their directors to be intellectually honest and not simply accept the theory that their product was going to warm the planet. Good luck proving that oil companies intentionally misled the public.

But so what? Were America's oil and gas companies simply supposed to believe all these nascent theories and shut down? What exactly should they have done, back in the mid-1960s, to cope with this allegedly looming climate emergency? Were solar panels and wind turbines ready for rapid deployment back then? Of course not, especially since solar panels from China, and wind turbines from Germany, are still not capable of providing more than a small fraction of the energy we need.

The real crime, if you want to call it that, isn't that oil and gas companies questioned climate change theories back in the 1960s or '70s. It's that they're accepting them *now*.

Oil and gas companies today are not willing to challenge the climate crisis orthodoxy, or the myth of cost-effective renewables at scale. They aren't willing to devote their substantial financial resources to debunking this agenda-driven madness that is on the verge of taking down our entire civilization. The fact that America's oil and gas companies have adopted a strategy of appeasement is a crime against humanity. The fact that these companies are failing to make long-term investments to develop new oil and gas fields, and instead are reaping windfall profits as they sell existing production at politically inflated prices, that, too, is a crime against civilization.

Ultimately, the Union of Concerned Scientists and the major oil companies are complicit in the destruction of America's energy economy. Because rather than declaring total war on these paid-for, flawed scientific studies and the special interests that fund them, oil companies will engage in theatrical litigation, knowing that the cost of settlements won't even come close to the short-term profits to be had by slowly asset stripping their companies while selling diminishing quantities of fuel at punitive rates.

Epstein is right that we must criticize the "experts" that want to destroy human civilization with climate alarmism. But we must also recognize and criticize the institutions targeted for destruction. Instead of fighting this lunacy, they are taking their money off the table, along with their life-affirming affordable fuel, and heading for the hills.

Ears Ringing? Do This Immediately, It's Genius (Watch)



Forget Implants! Try This Gum Graft Technique Instead

Brain Scan Uncovers Real Cause of Tinnitus (Ear Ringing)

Do This Immediately if You Have an Enlarged Prostate (Watch)

Do This Immediately if You Have an Enlarged Prostate (Watch)

Diabetes Is Not from Sweets! Meet the Main Enemy Of Diabetes

Share on



About Edward Ring

Edward Ring is a senior fellow of the Center for American Greatness. He is also is a contributing editor and senior fellow with the California Policy Center, which he co-founded in 2013 and served as its first president. Ring is the author of *Fixing California: Abundance, Pragmatism, Optimism* (2021) and *The Abundance Choice: Our Fight for More Water in California* (2022).



Archive

 Photo: Joe Sohm/Visions of America/Universal Images Group via Getty Images

Content created by the Center for American Greatness, Inc. is available without charge to any eligible news publisher that can provide a significant audience. For licensing opportunities for our original content, please contact licensing@centerforamericangreatness.com.

JOIN THE DISCUSSION

Want news updates?

Sign up for our newsletter to stay up to date.

Enter your email

Subscribe



[Privacy Policy](#) [Terms of Service](#)

©2013 - 2023 American Greatness. All rights reserved.
America's Talking is a registered trademark of Braveheart Media Holdings LLC. All rights reserved.