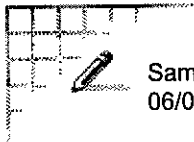


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Samuel A. Thornstrom  
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To: letters@nytimes.com @ inet  
cc: James Connaughton/CEQ/EOP@EOP  
Subject: Letter to the Editor re: US Climate Action Report

Attached below is a letter to the editor from James Connaughton, Chairman of the White House Council on Environmental Quality, responding to your recent coverage (Andy Revkin story and editorial, 6/3, and today's Bob Herbert column) of the US Climate Action Report.

Please contact me by email or phone (202.395.7419) if you have any questions about this letter -- I am CEQ's communications director. If you send me a fax number, I would be happy to also fax you a signed hard copy of the letter. I would also, of course, appreciate hearing from you as soon as possible about your plans for publishing this.

Thanks



JLC NYT letter 6-6-02.do

To the Editor:

Andrew Revkin's recent article ("Climate Changing, US Says in Report") and your accompanying editorial claim that the U.S. Climate Action Report 2002 provides "predictions [that] present a sharp contrast to previous statements on climate change by the Administration." The reality is quite the opposite. The Bush Administration has consistently talked about both the seriousness of potential global climate change and the enormous complexity and uncertainty in the current state of our scientific knowledge.

Last year, President Bush noted the natural greenhouse effect, and the rise in both surface temperatures and atmospheric concentrations of greenhouse gases. He noted that "the National Academy of Sciences indicate that the increase is due in large part to human activity." These concerns justify a strong national policy to address the scientific and technological issues related to climate change -- which the President is implementing.

At the same time, however, the President cautioned that "we do not know how much our climate could, or will change in the future... or even how some of our actions could impact it...." This is precisely the uncertainty that policymakers face: "No one can say with any certainty what constitutes a dangerous level of warming and therefore what level must be avoided."

Contrary to Mr. Revkin's assertions, the Report is consistent with both the President's statements and the state of scientific knowledge. It notes the "considerable uncertainty" about the science and the role of natural variations in the climate cycle, and says that its studies "recognize

that definitive prediction of potential outcomes is not yet feasible." The Report does not identify new risks, but rather provides a complete review of the numerous, often conflicting "what if" scenarios of potential impacts of climate change, both dire and beneficial. This account makes clear that complex computer models, of the sort used by the Clinton Administration's 2000 National Assessment, cannot make "accurate *predictions* of the specific changes in climate that will occur over the next hundred years."

The Report reflects the current state of climate change science, and the President's policies are appropriately based upon that knowledge. President Bush's climate change programs will advance our scientific understanding while reducing emissions of greenhouse gases. The President's FY '03 budget proposal requested over \$4.5 billion – a \$700 million increase – to fund climate change-related research and to advance the development and deployment of related energy and sequestration technologies.

Sincerely,

James L. Connaughton  
Chairman  
White House Council on Environmental Quality