

John Harte (University of California, Berkeley - USA)

Global warming: Why the skeptics are wrong

Abstract:

I review the current status of knowledge about global warming and its likely impacts on both human society and natural ecosystems. Then I present the major arguments posed by skeptics of global warming science and show how these are readily answered. One genuine source of uncertainty in climate science stems from the fact that most current climate models do not describe ecological responses to warming, and thus they ignore feedback mechanisms that arise from the coupling of climate and ecosystems. From analysis of past climate change and from ongoing ecosystem-warming experiments and field observations, I argue that climate-ecosystem feedbacks are likely to bring about future warming that is considerably more intense than is currently projected. Finally I respond to the frequently made argument that the cost of preventing global warming will be unacceptably high; a review of the major policy options available to mitigate global warming suggests that the steps that can be taken to reduce the threat would make good sense even if climate change science were wrong and the threat did not exist.