

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Hurricanes and Climate Change

To the Editor:

Richard Monastersky's "[Future Forecast: Stronger Hurricanes?](#)" (*The Chronicle*, September 16) does a nice job over all in describing the issues and personalities involved with understanding the relationship of hurricanes and climate change in the context of a warming climate. However, it also contains some unfortunate mischaracterizations of a paper that I am lead author on, forthcoming in December in the *Bulletin of the American Meteorological Society*.

Monastersky writes that our paper "plays down global warming's influence on hurricanes" and "dismiss[es] the idea that climate change would make hurricanes significantly more dangerous." This is a misleading characterization of what we wrote. Our paper has considerably more nuance and is a serious, scholarly attempt to review current peer-reviewed literature on hurricanes and global warming.

In our abstract, we say: "Looking to the future, until scientists conclude (a) that there will be changes to storms that are significantly larger than observed in the past, (b) that such changes are correlated to measures of societal impact, and (c) that the effects of such changes are significant in the context of inexorable growth in population and property at risk, then it is reasonable to conclude that the significance of any connection of human-caused climate change to hurricane impacts necessarily has been and will continue to be exceedingly small."

This is not a dismissal or downplaying but a frank acknowledgement of the conditions under which we would expect to see a larger significance of the connections of hurricanes and climate change, based on the peer-reviewed literature available today.

If one takes a close look at the peer-reviewed research on hurricanes and climate change, there is in fact a significant consensus on the likely influence of climate change on future hurricane impacts. As Kerry A. Emanuel has written: "There is a huge upward trend in hurricane damage in the U.S., but all or almost all of this is due to increasing coastal population and building in hurricane-prone areas. When this increase in population and wealth is accounted for, there is no discernible trend left in the hurricane damage data." Emanuel further posits that it may be half a century before we can see any discernible influence of climate changes on land-falling storms.

This is exactly what we report in our paper, yet Monastersky characterizes our paper as being on one side and Emanuel's views on the other side. This is perhaps a good story line, but it is not quite accurate. ... On hurricanes and global warming there is a much stronger consensus among researchers than Monastersky has suggested in his article.

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