

## Global Warming A Layman's "No BS" Q&A Executive Summary

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**One of the most controversial subjects** facing scientists, policy makers and the general public today is "global warming." Most, if not all scientific debate on natural processes include skepticism and divergent opinions, but this particular topic has become far more polarized - and politicized - than most others in recent history. A Google search of "global warming" will produce thousands of websites and blogs of opposing points of view. An ongoing thread of discussion/debate on global warming can be found in our Hot Topics forum [here](#).

The two camps of opposing views are firmly entrenched, each steadfast in their claim that they know the answer and that the other camp has it all wrong. In one camp, we have those who firmly believe that the current warming trend on Earth is due entirely to man's unabated use of fossil fuels. This camp also predicts - with their conviction of "prevailing scientific consensus" - that the Earth and its inhabitants are facing a climatal disaster, the likes of which are unprecedented in Earth's history. Many in this camp, represented by the U.N. sponsored [Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change](#), an organization whose mission is the "understanding the scientific basis of risk of human-induced climate change, its potential impacts and options for adaptation and mitigation", also suggests that if we can sharply curtail our use of fossil fuels, that the pending environmental disaster can be curtailed or even avoided. Former Vice President Al Gore's movie, [An Inconvenient Truth](#), has become a public relations tool in this camp's campaign to educate the general public on the causes and dangers of global warming.

In the other camp we have an equally entrenched group that believes that the build-up of atmospheric carbon dioxide (CO2) due to man is insignificant and that the current warming of the Earth is entirely natural. This group points to the long and well-accepted history of climate change throughout Earth's history, insisting that the current warming trend is nothing unusual and can be fully explained by natural causes. In this camp, Christopher Essex and Ross McKittrick, authors of the book [Taken by Storm - The Troubled Science, Policy and Politics of Global Warming](#), are the most outspoken skeptics of the opposing camp. Ross McKittrick has also co-authored several [scientific papers](#) subjected to [independent review](#) that find serious flaws in the studies of global warming by Michael Mann, whose work is primarily used by the IPCC to support their claims and recommended policy changes in the global use of fossil fuels.

Reading through all of the scientific papers, web blogs, and trying to sort through all of the hyperbole presented in the media can be a daunting, if not impossible task for the average person in search of a basic understanding of the issue. As is the case in most highly polarized debates, the truth about global warming can no doubt be found somewhere between "the sky is falling and we can save you" and the "nothing's wrong, go back to sleep" claims. As just a another citizen looking to get a reasonable handle on the debate, and after wading through the major points made by the opposing camps, I offer my "no BS executive summary" below. Just as a bit of background, I have a degree in geology and as a former Earth Science teacher, feel that I have a bit more than a passing understanding and appreciation for the scientific process. I have also stayed at a Holiday Inn Express a few times. So if you are looking for some reasonable, logical middle ground to enter the fray upon, or to simply sit back and watch the opposing camps "Duke it out" in the media and on the Internet, I think the following will suit that purpose quite well.

Without further adieu,

### The Layman's "No BS" Q&A Executive Summary on Global Warming

*Is the Earth really getting warmer?* Yes. In this regard, there is no doubt that Earth's climate has been getting warmer over the last century.

*Is this the first time this has happened?* No. There have been countless cycles (large and small) of "global cooling" and "global warming" throughout the history of life on Earth due to natural causes including (but not limited to) variation in solar output, changes in atmospheric composition, volcanic eruptions, meteor impacts, etc.

*Is the current warming trend unusual in any way?* The build up of man-made carbon dioxide in the atmosphere, along with harmful

[land-use practices](#) and [destruction of habitat](#) in the 20th century has no doubt accelerated and contributed to the current change in climate.

*Is the build-up of CO2 in the atmosphere from the combustion of fossil fuels solely responsible for the current warming trend?* No. In all probability, the current warming trend is due to natural climate change pattern, enhanced/accelerated/exasperated (pick your own poison) by man-made CO2 emissions, harmful land use practices, deforestation, etc.

*Can we stop global warming?* No - no more than we can stop tsunamis or earthquakes. The processes of Earth's warming, which are already in motion, are not fully understood nor are the effects of man's role in those processes.

*Is the Earth going to suffer climatal catastrophe in the near future?* There is no credible evidence to support this claim. The climate is changing, but we have no reliable way of accurately forecasting the extent (or consequences) of this change.

*Should we reduce our dependence on fossil fuels, conserve energy, develop alternative energy sources and more environmentally-friendly land-use practices?* Uh, yeah - those are *really* good ideas! ;-)

I hope this short Q&A inspires you to do your own research and become better informed on this important issue. As for us at the Erhardt residence, we are taking a "grassroots" approach by reducing the amount we drive, lowering the heating thermostat, installing energy-efficient flourescent bulbs, and generally being more conscious of our energy usage. Whether our collective energy savings will have any effect at all on man's contribution to global warming is uncertain, but for that and many other good reasons it's the right thing to do.

**Note** - an ongoing commentary on this editorial can be found in our Hot Topics forum [here](#).

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