

EARTH DAY

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... but scare tactics only hurt fight against global warming

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The recent revelations that some climate scientists have been exaggerating the likely impact of global warming left a lot of people wondering whether they could trust anything the environmental activists tell them. Well, even though the Himalayan glaciers are not about to disappear — nor is 40 percent of the Amazonian rain forest at imminent risk of being destroyed — the fact remains that global warming is real, it's man-made, and we need to do

something about it.

For the better part of a decade, I have upset many climate activists by pointing out that there are far better ways to stop global warming than by trying to scare the socks off of people. Instead of obsessing about far-fetched, worst-case scenarios (like Al Gore's insistence that "we have just 10 years to avert a major catastrophe"), we need to focus on the true costs of dealing with the challenge of climate change.

In particular, rather than trying to make carbon-based fuels more expensive, we should be trying to make green energy sources cheaper. Right now there

simply aren't any affordable alternatives to coal and oil. We talk a lot about solar and wind power, but these green-energy technologies aren't anywhere close to being able to replace our reliance on fossil fuels. To achieve the kinds of breakthroughs it will take to fuel a carbon-free future, we must seriously ramp up our commitment to green-energy research and development. Not only would this be a much less expensive fix than trying to cut carbon emissions out of existence, it would also reduce global warming far more quickly.

Bjørn Lomborg organized the Copenhagen Consensus Center and is the author of "The Skeptical Environmentalist" and "Cool It."