

Why did we undertake this study?

Science has demonstrated the climate is changing, governments agree that the science is settled, yet concerted action to mitigate and adapt to climate change is lacking. As a result, adverse global climate changes increase each year in the form of floods, heatwaves, and sea-level rise. This study brought a spotlight to this conundrum, arguing for a change in scientific practice that might lead to concerted climate action.

How was it done?

We explored three options for the climate change science community: (i) deliver more science, collect more evidence of deleterious impacts and hope for policy change; (ii) more social science research and advocacy on climate change to better understand why action has not occurred, and how to enable the changes required; or (iii) stop research that simply documents global warming and maladaptation, and focus instead on exposing and renegotiating the broken science-society contract.

What did we find?

In considering the three options, we found:

- The first two are not tenable.
- Given that climate change science is ‘settled’, and has been for decades, the evidence suggests climate research does not lead to government action.
- Increases in social science research, scientific advocacy, and support from civil society, have also not led to systemic change in government action. There is no evidence that more social science research and traditional forms of advocacy will lead to transformative action.
- The last option, a moratorium on science, is least palatable, but most likely to deliver sought after change.

What are the implications?

A critical juncture has now been reached for human and planetary well-being. Given the tragedy of climate change science, a moratorium offers the only real prospect for restoring the science-society contract. Other options are seductive but offer false hope.

Want more information?

The full paper is available from: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/17565529.2021.2008855>

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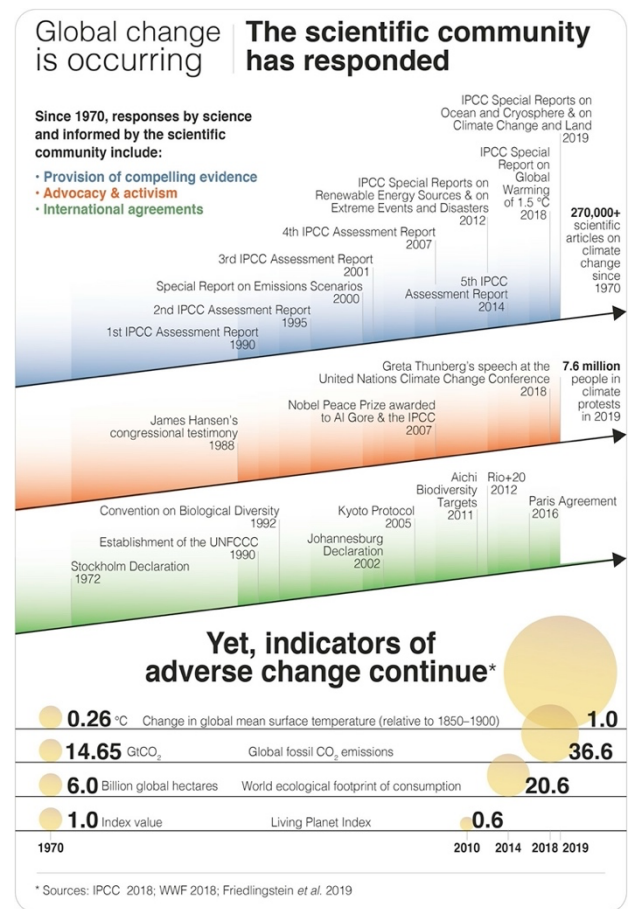


Figure 1: The tragedy of climate change science

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Coastal Governance: Embracing Vulnerability and Change

