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August 15, 2016: The Hottest July in Recorded History

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Title: The Hottest July in Recorded History

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8/15/2016—This is like a nightmare—actually, it is a nightmare. NPR just reported on NASA's conclusion today that July 2016 was the hottest July on record. It was 1.5 degrees F higher than the long term average (I believe they use 1950 to 2000 as the benchmark, but I have to check.) Well, no one said defeating global warming would be easy. No one even assured us it would be possible. The difficulty is not the nightmare. Not even the harm is the nightmare. More valuable than any policy, even a crucial policy like fighting global warming, is truth. The denial of global warming in its human causation is the nightmare. I don't get it. There are still people—I am talking about leaders in our government (in fact Donald Trump among many others) who still say the whole notion is made up. They say the warming stopped or even say that the numbers are cooked. But even worse, because seemingly intentionally misleading, there is Paul Ryan, who acknowledges warming but says climates change all the time. It will warm now and will presumably cool later. (This might turn out to be true in the long run—there could always be another ice age). Ryan denies that humans are causing this warming. In other words, scientists in the 1980's noticed the build up of gasses and warned it would warm the planet. Now the planet is warming and what? It is just a coincidence? But why wouldn't Ryan want to do something to stop this? He has kids. Surely he can't really care more about his career than their safety. George Will says people like me want to stifle debate. But you don't debate facts. There is no judgment to bring to bear. Warming is happening or it is not. Humans are causing it or they are not. It is not debating if suddenly in one realm standards of proof are absurdly elevated. We accept many scientific findings with far less warrant than we have about the warming climate. Anyway, go ahead and debate. The scientists do that every day. But I have been hearing since the 1990's that this isn't true—my son's swimming coach used to tell me it is all made up. Yet it continues to get warmer—as if it were true. We can't even start to protect ourselves unless we can reach a consensus that the threat is happening. At that point, there will be tremendous disagreement about what and how much to do. That won't bother me. But the denial. It is a scandal by evil people.