

Letters to the editor

Fact checking a climate change zealot

To the editor:

In the Sept. 15 edition of the Gloucester Daily Times, an opinion piece was published titled "Climate change another fact for team Trump to conveniently ignore," by Ann McFeatters, a columnist for the Tribune News Service. She says, "Scientists have figured out that hurricanes are stronger, bigger and more dangerous because warming ocean temperatures spawn monster storms. Climate change, worsened by burning fossil fuels, is

warming oceans. Storms will get worse."

McFeatters then says, "But, friends, this is not a matter of religious-like belief. Facts are facts or they wouldn't be facts." And, she goes on to state that these facts are being ignored by the Trump administration.

The problem is that her facts are not correct. When one looks at the federal government's historical hurricane data, the truth is that Harvey and Irma were not at all unusual. In fact, the

official data available from NOAA, clearly shows that hurricanes are not becoming more numerous or more powerful when they make landfall in the U.S., negating the key point of her argument.

NOAA's Hurricane Research Division maintains a database of all the Hurricanes that impacted the U.S. mainland from 1851 to 2016. Harvey and Irma have not yet been added to the official database, but news reports indicate that, at landfall, both had maximum winds of

about 115 knots or 135 miles per hour. This puts them on the low end of Category 4 on the Saffir-Simpson Hurricane Wind Scale (131 to 150 mph). There are 14 hurricanes in the NOAA hurricane database that were stronger than these two, and 10 others that tied them.

A more detailed inspection of the NOAA Hurricane database shows that, in the 160 years between 1850 and 2010, there was an average of 17 hurricanes per decade that made landfall in the U.S. Of

these, an average of five per decade, or about one-third, were Category 3 or higher.

If one compares those long-term averages to the last 40 years (1970 to 2010), there were fewer hurricanes, 15 per decade compared to 17 per decade for the previous 160 years. And, on average, five per decade of Category 3 or higher. This is the same average as that for the last 160 years.

So, the data shows the opposite of what is being claimed by Ms. McFeatters

and other climate change zealots. Hurricanes are not becoming more frequent or of higher intensity due to climate change.

Those who advocate that climate change is occurring at an alarming rate, is man-made and that drastic, expensive actions need to be taken to avert disaster, are free to make their points. But, they need to be sure that their "facts" are true, or they lose all their credibility.

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