

CLIMATE FACT CHECK: AUGUST 2025 EDITION

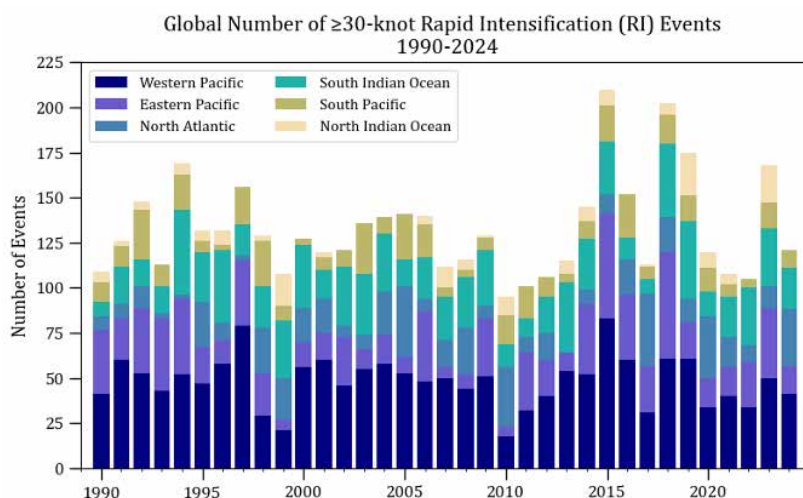
Debunking the latest unscientific fearmongering on hurricanes, wildfires, the Great Barrier Reef, 'heat stress', doomed bananas, & the alleged invasion of fire ants!

August 17th: No, hurricanes are not intensifying more rapidly due to climate change



Claim: WGRZ-TV, the NBC affiliate in Buffalo, New York, [reported](#) that Hurricane Erin's rapid intensification ([defined as](#) a 30-knot or greater increase in maximum sustained wind speed in 24 hours or less) from a category one to a five fits into an emerging pattern of more frequent rapid intensification events caused by warming oceans.

Fact-Check: There has been no discernible global-scale increase in the number of rapid intensification episodes since 1990 ([Klotzbach et al., 2022](#), Figure S1), despite warming oceans. Specifically in the Atlantic, there is a slight increase, but this is known to be due to a cyclical change in [ocean circulation](#) in 1995, which results in anomalous warming of North Atlantic waters. Over the last 25 years, there has been no trend in the Atlantic either.



Data: Updated from Figure S1 in Klotzbach et al. (2022) | Klotzbach, P. J., Wood, K. M., Schreck III, C. J., Bowen, S. G., Patricola, C. M., & Bell, M. M. (2022). Trends in global tropical cyclone activity: 1990–2021. *Geophysical Research Letters*, 49, e2021GL095774. <https://doi.org/10.1029/2021GL095774>

Chart: Chris Martz

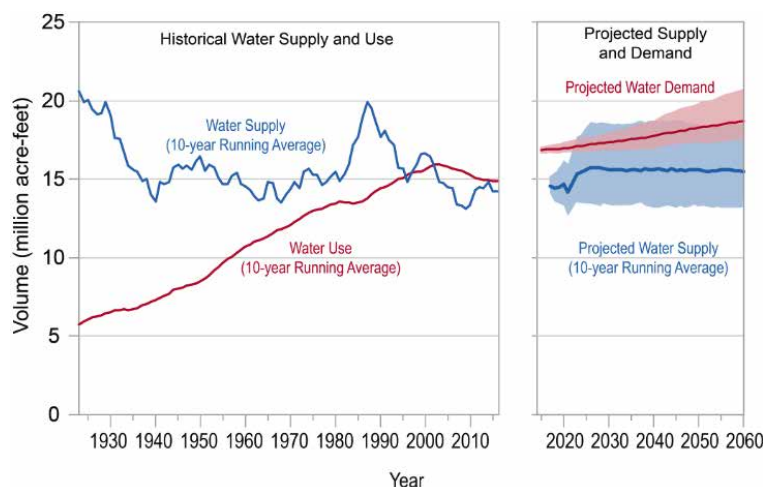
Updated data 2022-24: Courtesy of Dr. Phil Klotzbach, Colorado State University (CSU)

August 3rd: No, declining Colorado River Basin water storage is not “what climate change looks like”



Claim: Dr. Jonathan Overpeck, a climate scientist at the University of Michigan, took to his his X (Twitter) account to [claim](#) the long-term decline in Colorado River Basin reservoir storage is “what climate change looks like” and that this is “a crisis in the making” because tens of millions of people in the southwestern United States rely on it for water.

Fact-Check: While Dr. Overpeck is correct in stating that water storage [has declined](#) in the Colorado River watershed, the primary cause is that 30 million people now rely on that water for daily use. Demand for water outpaces the rate at which the reservoir can be replenished through rainfall and seasonal snowmelt. While drought in the southwest that has dominated the last 25 years has exacerbated the problem, [paleoclimate evidence](#) suggests that there have been far more severe and prolonged droughts in the region occurring long before mankind began burning fossil fuels for energy, notably the 400-year-long “[Medieval megadrought](#)” from 900 to 1300 AD.



August 5th: Was the 20-year-long pause in Arctic sea ice decline expected all along?



Claim: In a win for climate realism, two papers have been published in *Geophysical Research Letters* this year (one in [April](#) and the other in [early August](#)) detailing that sea ice extent in the Arctic has flatlined over the last 18-20 years as opposed to declining. However, the latter study emphasizes, “Large-ensemble CMIP5 and CMIP6 (Coupled Model Intercomparison Project) simulations reveal that such periods with minimal sea ice decline under increasing greenhouse gas emissions are not unusual.”

Fact-Check: The CMIP5 models [actually predicted](#) that a 20-year-long pause in sea ice decline had a 5% chance of occurring under the current emissions pathway and virtually 0% under the SSP5-8.5 / RCP8.5 high emissions scenario.

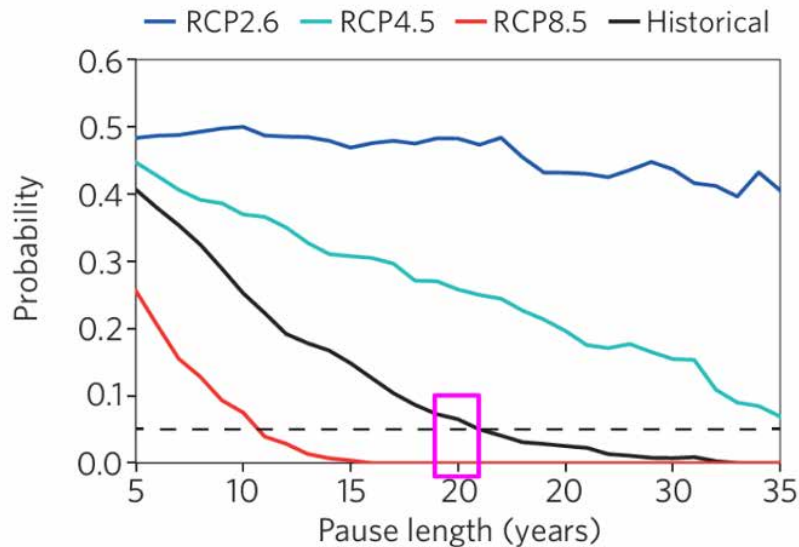


Figure 3 | Probability of a pause in September Arctic sea-ice extent

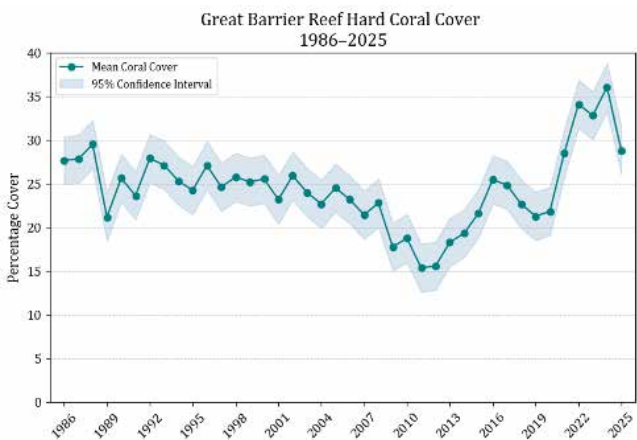
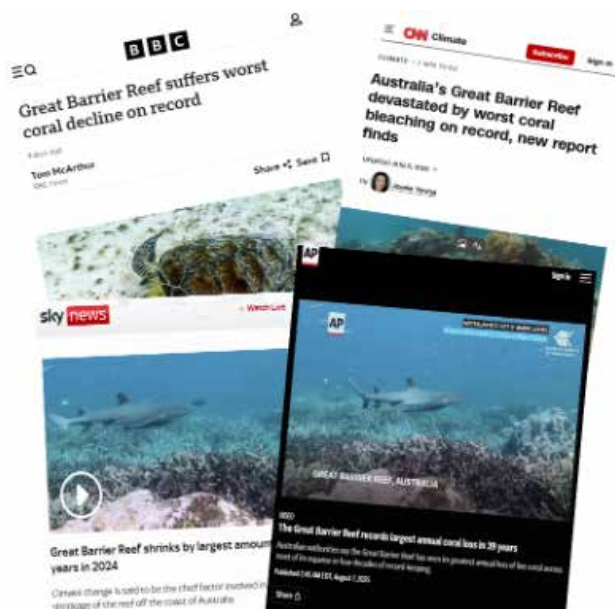
August 5th: Was the Great Barrier Reef really devastated by climate change-induced heat stress?



Claim: Legacy media outlets, including [BBC News](#) and [CNN](#), reported that the Great Barrier

Reef—the largest in the world—suffered its “worst coral bleaching event” on record, losing up to a third of its hard coral cover between last summer and this summer. They attributed this to climate change-induced heat stress caused by rising ocean temperatures.

Fact-Check: Although the reef did record its greatest year-to-year loss, what journalists won’t tell you is that hard coral cover remains in the [top five highest](#) on record since 1986. What’s more, the Australian Institute of Marine Science (AIMS) [report states](#) that while heat stress did contribute, losses were exacerbated by wave damage from tropical cyclones, “freshwater bleaching” caused by flood discharge from heavy rainfall along the coast of Queensland, and outbreaks of crown-of-thorns starfish that feast on coral.



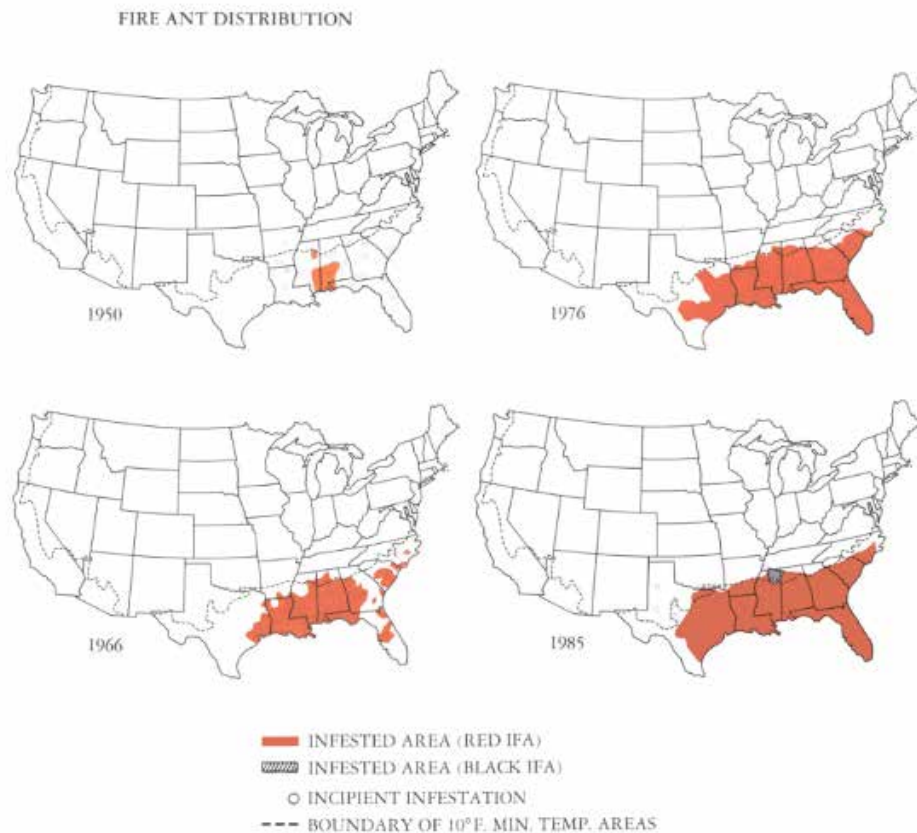
Data source: AIMS Reef Reporting Dashboard,
<https://apps.aims.gov.au/reef-monitoring/sector/ca/manta>
Chart: Chris Martz

August 6th: Climate change is causing invasive fire ants to spread?!

**florida
today**

Claim: A recent article in Florida Today (FT) claims that invasive fire ants are spreading across Florida thanks to a “boost from climate change.”

Fact-Check: Fire ants have been widespread in Florida for decades. Fire ants (*Solenopsis invicta*) first arrived in [Mobile, Alabama, via South American shipping](#) in the 1930s—not because of climate change, but thanks to lax port controls as documented by USDA's APHIS website. Their spread is consistently tracked with expansions of highways and railroads, plus the movement of landscaping materials, not minor temperature shifts. The facts show that fire ants spread explosively from the 1940s to the 1970s, northward from the coasts, during a period when the Earth was experiencing modest cooling.



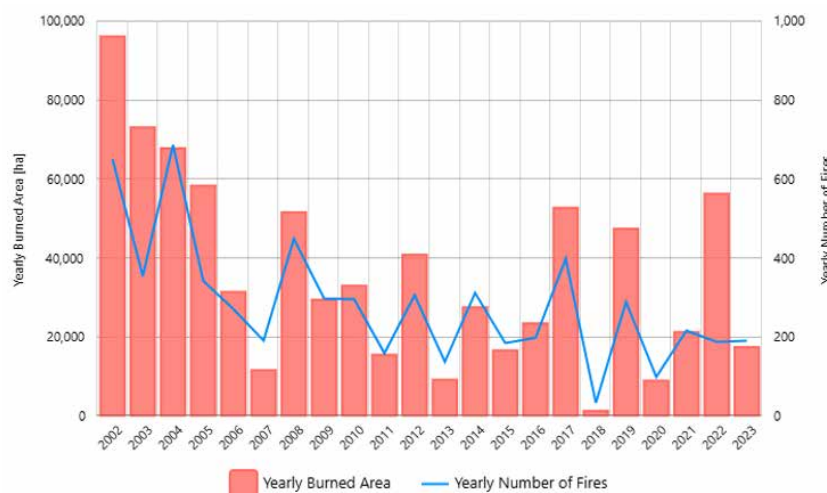
August 11th: Climate change isn't worsening wildfires in France



Claim: A [recent report](#) by France 24 asserts that the recent Aude wildfire in southwestern France was unprecedented, and it resulted from human-caused climate change.

They interviewed Jean-Pascal van Yperselem, a professor of climatology and environmental sciences at UCLouvain, to discuss the fire. He said that he believes "it is once more a very strong signal that climate change is intensifying the conditions that make those very big fires and forest fires more likely."

Fact-Check: It is simply false to claim that wildfires are getting worse in the region. [Data is available](#) from Copernicus, a joint effort between NASA and the European Space Agency, tracking wildfires in France since 2002. Even if this year proves to be a higher-than-average year, there is no trend in increasing wildfires in France. This recent fire was not even the worst in French history. As [many other news sources](#) explain, while this year's fire in Aude burned more than 16,000 hectares, it is only the most damaging fire since the one that burned over 50,000 hectares in 1949.

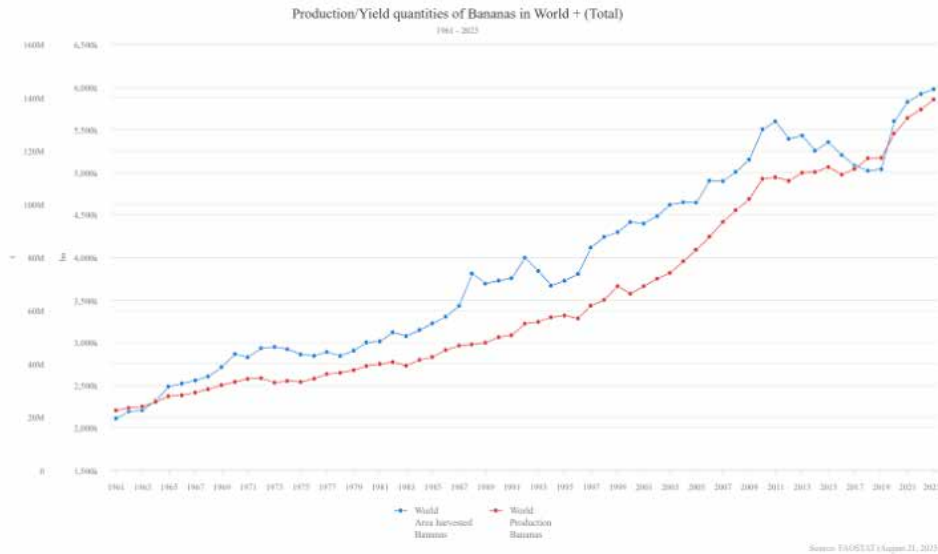


August 27th: Wrong, TIME Magazine, climate change isn't dooming your bananas



Claim: A recent article in TIME Magazine, "[Climate Change is Coming for Your Bananas](#)," claims that a warming planet is threatening global banana production, portending shortages and higher prices.

Fact-Check: The data and history of banana cultivation tell a different story, with yields and production numbers from the regions highlighted in the story setting new record highs in recent years. In fact, according to the [UN's Food and Agriculture Organization](#) (FAO), global banana production has increased by more than eightfold since 1961, rising from approximately 22 million tons to 129 million tons in 2023.

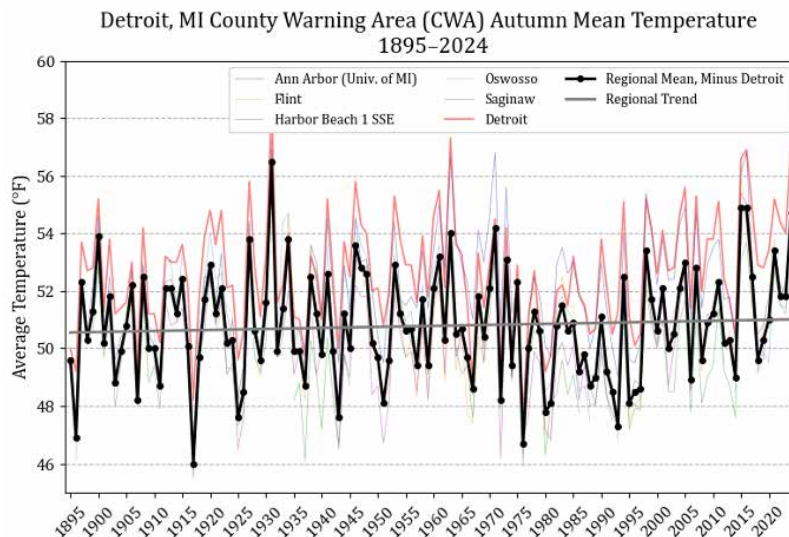


August 27th: Fall temperatures in Detroit have warmed by nearly 4°F?!



Claim: Climate Central, a nonprofit climate news organization based out of Princeton, New Jersey, [posted a chart](#) on X showing that the average autumn temperature in Detroit, Michigan, has risen by 3.8°F since 1970, which is statistically significant. They argue fall warming “means that risky heat, fire weather, and allergies linger later into the year.”

Fact-Check: While this [NOAA data](#) is correct, Climate Central's presentation of it is misleading. Detroit has daily thermometer data extending back to 1874, and most of the nearby rural and suburban COOP stations have daily data going back to the mid-1890s. Since 1895, there has been a slight warming in Detroit—mostly due to urbanization—and virtually no long-term trend in fall temperatures at the surrounding climate monitoring sites. The warmest fall in the region occurred in 1931. The only reason Climate Central would choose to start its analysis in 1970 is to get a desired upward trend.



Data source: NOAA United States Global Climatology Network-daily (GHCNd), <https://www.ncdc.noaa.gov/data/global-historical-climatology-network-daily/>

Chart: Chris Martz

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