



# ENERGY NEWS

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## Welcome to Atlantis-Dade County

by Robert Farmer, ©1999

The most perplexing question facing those concerned about global climate change is: will we ever get serious about implementing solutions?

For attendees at the EPA Conference *Climate Change: What Does It Mean For South Florida?*, the answer appeared to be "not until we start building the levees". This, of course, is not a palatable answer to you or me but in the context of the international politics being played with this issue, it's just about the only honest response EPA, or anyone else, can give now. Think about it...

At the international level the climate change policy community acknowledges that solutions fall into two broad categories: greenhouse gas mitigation and climate change adaptation. The former is preventive and defines what we need to be doing today, the latter is protective and defines what we need to do tomorrow if we're failing.

Greenhouse gas mitigation tackles emissions head-on and is the realm of the energy engineer. Mitigation is divided into sink-based solutions: the capture and disposal of carbon dioxide, and the enhancement of forest sinks; and source-based solutions: energy conservation, efficiency improvements, fossil-fuel switching, renewable energy, and nuclear energy fall into these categories.

Climate change adaptation, on the other hand, is a damage-avoidance strategy. Cities and even whole countries are building, or have built, sea walls to protect themselves against rising sea levels. In South Florida we would also be building systems to protect the Everglades and our drinking water from salt water intrusion. In this scenario climate change impacts are inevitable and societies are taking active defensive measures.

Held in downtown Miami on May 26th, the EPA Conference was the first of two conferences on global warming hosted by the Environmental Protection Agency for South Florida audiences. The second was held in Marathon, in the Florida Keys, on the following day.

This was not a conference for faint hearts. This was about climate change *adaptation*, not about mitigation. We heard a lot about how sea level rise is actually happening and of the need to start thinking about how much we're prepared to handle. Do we build levees for 1, 2 or 4 feet of sea level rise? And how do we make those kinds of choices?

But where was the talk about prevention, and implementing greenhouse gas solutions? Harvey Ruvin, the visionary behind Miami-Dade's 1993 "Urban CO<sub>2</sub> Reduction Program" told us "Miami-Dade is in a holding pattern until we can create a new energy paradigm". Anyone familiar with the efforts of Miami-Dade's Depart-

ment of Environmental Resource Management can attest to their accomplishments, but all readily acknowledge that voluntary efforts only go so far before economic incentives and a greater sense of urgency expressed by our political leaders need to kick in.

But there is appallingly little action in Washington. Take a look at the Senate Concurrent Budget Resolution for FY2000 (*S.Con.Res. 20*), introduced March 19th. It conveys "the Sense of Congress" that "funds should not be provided to put into effect the Kyoto Protocol prior to its Senate ratification".

This wait-until-it's-too-late attitude has prevailed since 1997. Meanwhile, the EPA is reduced to preparing us for the worst and the implementation of real solutions is left wanting for concerned political leadership. •



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His technical expertise includes large scale to small scale power generation, combined heat and power (CHP), marine and surface transportation, and alternative fuel applications.

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