

ECONOMIC RECESSION: AN INADVERTENT GIFT FROM THE GLOBAL ECONOMY TO THE GLOBAL CLIMATE

STEVEN W. RUNNING

Oct 20, 2008

For the last half dozen years, global carbon emissions have matched or exceeded the dreaded “business as usual” scenarios used by global climate modelers for the IPCC 4th assessment simulations of climate projections to 2100. As a climate scientist I have watched with some horror as the Global Carbon Project has tracked the acceleration of real global emissions in the last half dozen years now matching the A1FI scenario (Figure 1). The A1FI scenario generated global temperature increases of 4-6deg by 2100 in the IPCC 4th climate projections. As I now watch the spectre of a global economic recession or even depression begin to emerge, I imagine that the emissions trajectory may drop down to the much more desirable B1 or B2 scenarios in the next few years, even *before* major shifts to alternative energies mature. With this scenario, the GCMs predicted a global temperature rise in 2100 of “only” half of the A1F1, a remarkable improvement. A global emissions rate starting from this lower trajectory will be dramatically easier to reach 80% reductions by 2050 and should now be encouraged!

This meeting is being held at what may prove to be a very pivotal moment in human history. We may have a unique opportunity to help the global economy, as it recovers, to rebuild on a new, much less energy and resource intensive pathway, and accelerate all of the efforts towards a new global energy policy. It seems this near-term objective should be a part of our deliberations.



