Announcing the AAPG Climate Statement

May 2020 |

In July 2019, when the current AAPG Executive Committee took office, they inherited one piece of outstanding business: review the AAPG Climate Statement that had been approved by the previous EC, but also tabled for approval by the incoming EC.

Over the last seven months, and long before the two black swan events that are wreaking havoc on our industry and our Association, the EC engaged many of the Association's stakeholders, including the divisions, the Advisory Council, the Corporate Advisory Board and, by way of a survey, our members.

With their feedback and comments the EC decided that:

1. AAPG should have a statement on climate change.
2. That statement needs to reflect the Association’s mission and the values of our members – a considerable challenge given the highly political nature of the climate change debate.

Thus, the EC believes this statement, approved unanimously by the current EC, not only accomplishes those two objectives, but most closely reflects the considerable feedback we have received from our members and leadership over the past year.

The American Association of Petroleum Geologists has a long history as a proactive organization focused on advancing the science of geology, especially as it relates to petroleum, natural gas, other subsurface fluids and mineral resources. AAPG continues to promote and encourage its members to employ their surface and subsurface geologic skills and knowledge to exploring for, finding and producing these materials in an efficient, economic and environmentally sustainable manner while minimizing their impact on the world’s climate. AAPG believes in the principles of conservation, efficiency and sustainability regarding the use of all energy resources. In support of these objectives, the Energy Mineral Division was created in 1977 as an international forum for energy sources other than conventional oil and gas, and the Division of Environmental Geosciences in 1992 to promote environmental stewardship within the industry and to support and encourage research into the effects of petroleum\energy minerals exploration and production on the environment.

Our members share the concerns of the public, non-governmental organizations and governments about environmental issues, including climate change and energy sustainability. As earth scientists our members have a unique perspective and understanding of climate change throughout the geologic history of Earth and how climate has varied through time. The current world population of 7.8 billion people puts an
enormous strain on the Earth's resources that requires, in addition to hydrocarbon resources, the economic development of alternative and renewable energy sources. The AAPG encourages its members, through their own research, to continue to develop their own understanding of climate science and policies that are outside the core competencies of the organization and to work on improving the human condition while reducing energy's environmental impacts.

The AAPG accepts the immense challenges of the energy transition and will continue to support the important role that AAPG scientists play in improving the human condition, while minimizing environmental impacts of all forms of energy.

- We understand the growing need for energy and petrochemical feed stocks throughout the world, and the fact that renewable energy and emerging technologies will not meet these needs over the next several decades.
- We accept the immense challenges of both meeting the current and near-term energy demands as well as future energy needs and will continue to support the role AAPG members play in delivering responsible and sustainable energy to the world.
- We look to enhance the future by supporting AAPG members as they apply their surface and subsurface geological skills and their talents in areas such as carbon capture, utilization and storage (CCUS), geothermal energy development and critical minerals extraction, and to use creativity and innovation in the responsible and sustainable development of hydrocarbons, with the goal of reducing humanity's carbon footprint.

Aapg explorer (Click to View Archives)

The AAPG EXPLORER is the monthly tabloid magazine of the American Association of Petroleum Geologists that covers news of interest to the AAPG membership. Contents include coverage of the entire span of energy interest, with emphasis on exploration for hydrocarbons and energy minerals. Breaking news stories, features, profiles of personalities, comment columns and Association information is included. The AAPG EXPLORER is read by more than 42,000 members and friends of the Association in 129 countries.

Extended reading

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AAPG Climate Statement

AAPG Climate Statement: “the goal is to reduce humanity’s climate footprint.” Ok, now we have a topic to debate. I say this is a ridiculous goal, totally unattainable. Also, you should have listed the names of the Executive Committee members responsible for this statement. Thank you for this start. James D. Huggard
5/10/2020 8:55:59 AM  James Huggard

AAPG & Climate Change

Excellent statement which should unite the whole AAPG community. I applaud the EC on reaching this consensus. We are not climate scientists, or politicians, and need to apply our individual talents and opinions to the best of our knowledge and capabilities. We may have amongst us specialists with unique perspectives on the historic status of the earth and the impact of changes in climate, amongst other factors, on (relatively) abrupt changes in flora & fauna; this does not give us a leading role in defining policy or suggesting responses to observable trends in the earth’s current ecology. We should be a forum for active, open, and engaged research and debate on the issues as informed by our science. As with all scientific endeavours there are no definitive answers, I do not believe we should, as an organisation, reflect only one side of the current vitally important debates, including the population issue. Thanks to our responsible leadership.
5/8/2020 3:53:39 AM  Adrian Burrows

Energy Realities and the BIG Elephant in the Living Room

We might very reasonably wish for a more assertive statement instead of delicately threading the needle, however, I want to thank the Executive Committee for a Climate Change Statement that tacitly acknowledges the scientific basis for concern about anthropogenic CO2 emissions, as well as acknowledging the economic and engineering realities of the global energy picture... It will be several or perhaps many decades before a full transition from fossil fuels to cleaner energy can actually be implemented. In the meantime, the world needs energy, and geoscientists will help provide that energy, as cleanly as possible whether with oil and gas or with energy minerals. As said by a number of our geoscience colleagues, “It is not the fuel, it is the emissions”. Utter and radical overturn of an immense global energy
infrastructure, at the expense of the global economy, is not done quickly or without massive social upheaval. We have the needed technology in hand to capture carbon emissions and subsurface geoscientists are the people who can help put the carbon where it will stay. Meanwhile, massive reduction of flaring and venting is an obvious, immediate and highly visible opportunity that should be implemented by companies across our industry. Unfortunately, the enormous and rapidly growing elephant in the living room, and by far the greatest all-around threat posed to our planet, is human population growth. Population drives essentially all critical environmental concerns. Nobody, and most certainly no politician, wants to talk about it, but every family on Earth having one less child would accomplish more than all the windmills and solar panels we might imagine.

5/6/2020 11:32:45 PM   Lee Krystinik

This is not a climate change statement—it takes us backward

I am really disappointed in this response. AAPG MUST be part of the solution to emissions and CO2 reduction. This takes no position at all and fails to take into account the broader opinion of climate research and even policy shifts in many major companies to embrace a carbon-neutral future. The 'climate train left the station' many years ago. The public, globally, is demanding fewer emissions, cleaner air and even for those 'man-made climate deniers'—economically developing technologies which will not only diversify our energy sources but bring clean energy to the 'energy poverty' parts of the world. Our fossil fuels, when we burn them, produce many critical fuels and materials than enhance our lives, but we also put into the air emissions which are harmful to life and environment. Our commitment to eliminating those emissions, meeting the public demands for zero CO2 emissions, ending global flaring practices and being viewed as an attractive, clean and progressive industry to work in are essential to our survival as an industry and as AAPG as an organization. We can, and must, do better than this statement. AAPG should embrace the Paris Climate Accord and help lead the way in what is certain to be a dramatic shift in energy usage in the future. I am proud to be a petroleum geologist, but want to be part of a future that clearly is helping with sustainability. Too many industries fail by not adapting to change. This statement does nothing to assure me AAPG will lead the way instead of just making excuses for the status quo.

5/6/2020 2:49:56 PM   John Dolson

AAPG Climate Statement

Seems to use a lot of words to say not much. Wasted opportunity.

5/6/2020 1:08:32 AM   Lachlan Halett

Where is the statement on Climate Change?
I am greatly disappointed with this non-statement. I fully agree with Mary Barrett's comments. Where is AAPG's strong stance on whether the present change in the climate is human-induced or not? I cannot believe that an organization of geologists has any doubts about the absurdity of the human-induced hypothesis. I spoke to several persons that submitted their views to the AAPG survey and none agrees with that. The so-called science about the human-induced daydream is simply based on numerical modellings that dismiss the geological record of climate changes and try to foresee future tragic scenarios. Thousands of papers were published on the results of such modellings that eloquently honor the half-century aged concept of GIGO. Models that lack the full comprehension of the complex laws that control climate changes and inputs of physical properties that are absolutely ill-controlled. Models that had strongly failed to forecast the real outcomes of the last 20 years. If any of our members are believers of the numerical manipulation of data please refer to the excellent books by geologist Greg Wrightstone (2017) and by political scientist Marc Morano (2018), among several others. AAPG should elegantly, but firmly, refute that mankind has any significant influence on climate change and that the ongoing changes show no deviation from the rich and bountiful geological record on past climate changes. This should be the main message of our Statement. By trying to please both sides of this hot debate AAPG ended up displeasing both. Such a weak positioning is not what we expect from the Association that represents the profession that has provided mankind with the main source of energy that fuels our lifes, our essentials and our comfort in this planet for the last 160 years.

Pedro Victor Zalan

AAPGs statement about climate change

This is weak and disappointing. We can do better than this. Robbie Gries

Robbie Rice Gries

To State or not to State - This Is the Question

I am afraid the very foundations of this statement (if it really is) embed two fundamental mind-set problems: 1) "AAPG should have a statement on climate change." Well, just about time. Maybe, AAPG should long have had such a statement. Mark Tingay and others have well highlighted why and it seems disheartening to recall the fact that, oh well, just the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change issued quite a global report about it. As a professional and scientific international beacon, it should be only natural that AAPG had positioned itself in the intellectual public discourse on climate change as a factor that is here to stay. An element of life, now and tomorrow (and since yesterday, in fact), that is to say: global time windows, something that the enormous and passionate AAPG's scientific realm well knows and daily works upon. 2) "That statement needs to reflect the Association's mission and the values of our members – a considerable challenge given the highly political nature of the climate change debate." It is, indeed, a life-changing intellectual challenge, given the broad scientific nature of the climate change debate. Scientific - not

https://explorer.aapg.org/story/articleid/56986/announcing-the-aapg-climate-statement
political. Not only is it scientifically wrong to quote climate change as a "political debate". Rather, it is a politically-charged theme in the public discourse - of course it is, and understandably so. Precisely because of this, a scientific venue and voice with the standing of AAPG should not certainly lean back so as to 'pass unnoticed' in the debate because it is politically-charged, but precisely to re-instate the debate where it belongs: science, in the physical world. AAPG has a precious, premier position to scientifically discuss the geology surrounding climate change like few other international scientific societies can. That is the intellectual challenge. Statements without leadership waste words and impoverish the image of those who utter them; in contrast, intellectual openness reveals brightness.

5/5/2020 5:34:55 PM  Umberto Fracassi

AAPG Climate Statement

As I read the several comments by certain individuals seriously condemning this statement on Climate by the AAPG, I shake my head in wonderment at their ignorance, clearly in the camp that fossil fuels adding CO2 to the atmosphere is a cause of global warming. I would strongly suggest that they do some research back into the many papers (hundreds) published by real scientists that clearly show that AC02 has absolutely nothing to do with global warming. If they have problems in finding such papers I can suggest some. Michael J Wilson

5/5/2020 5:10:17 PM  Michael Wilson

Non-Statement

I agree with Mark Tingay. this is fairly simple physics that we have known about for years. I, for example, funded Wally Broecker, "The Father of Global Warming", while I was a Program Manager at the Office of Naval Research. 1978-81. It was obvious back then. Our Military, mainly the Navy, has been acting on it for almost two decades. I have been with the petroleum industry since 1983, but give talks on the economic effects of climate change and especially climate migration which we are already seeing. The AAPG needs to lead. Mark E. Odegard, Ennis, MT

5/5/2020 1:45:04 PM  Mark Odegard

Recent Statement on Climate Change

I was very disappointed in the statement. It said nothing about the subject of climate change. It was an advertisement for the AAPG. I agree with everything the statement says but I don't know if the AAPG supports the science behind human induced climate change. The current debate about human induced climate change has always been an embarrassment to many of us. Many of our science cohorts have
questioned the AAPG's commitment to science. I was hoping that would change with an unambiguous acceptance of what a large majority of the science community now takes as a given. Even if the EC came out with a firm denial of human induced climate change, we would have somewhere to go with the debate within our society and good debate can be enlightening. This statement leaves us wondering what the AAPG supports. Maybe that is for the best but the statement is an equivocation not a statement based on science which is what I would hope for from the AAPG.

5/5/2020 1:33:02 PM   David Fowler

Still Waiting for a Climate Change Statement...

I am confused. This is not a climate change statement, as it does not state what the core concepts of AAPG members are about climate change. So, my interpretation is that we do not have a climate change statement. And I am a little confused about the call for members' research on modern climate change of the past 150 years that you call on--is that one of our core competencies? Oh well. How do we know what the decades will bring concerning research on alternative energy resources? It should would be helpful if AAPG supported the level of tax breaks and financial assistance for that research as we are praying for right now from the states and federal governments.

5/5/2020 11:02:28 AM   Mary Barrett

AAPG should abide by its name with emphasis on PETROLEUM

As geologist, we understand that climate changes. Its happened for millennia without human influence. There is not any over whelming evidence that the petroleum, coal or humans are causing any substantial increase in earthly temperature. Ice core records show to the contrary of increased temperatures and "green house" gases. Lets please focus on new technologies and ideas for greater petroleum discoveries and extraction, field studies and analogies to help direct and influence ideas of places to look for new oil and continuing to promote the oil industry as the future of cheap, affordable and reliable energy needed to improve the human condition. Ernie Grodi

5/5/2020 10:20:57 AM   Ernest Grodi

Disappointing - Please reconsider the original statement provided to the EC in Feb 2019

This “climate statement” is weak and disappointing, and I disagree with its message. It underscores the importance of hydrocarbon production (yes, still a needed activity for the foreseeable future), but provides no support or emphasis on addressing known issues resulting from that production. The only “mission” I get
from this statement is maintaining the status quo. I expected AAPG to be a driver for building our knowledge base and affecting change in all geoscience areas; that's why we have disciplines for Environmental and Business & Economics, no? To hear that AAPG is only going to encourage “its members, through their own research, to continue to develop their own understanding of climate science and policies” breaks that spirit of collaboration and continued improvement. And to follow that with saying climate change and policies are “outside the core competencies of the organization” essentially communicates that AAPG doesn't prioritize “minimizing their impact on the world’s climate.” If we care about the environment and climate, should we cancel our AAPG membership and find a more suitable organization? As an earth scientist working in Chevron for 9+ years, I was hoping for a statement with a discrete position and goals. My own company has a stronger public stance on the environmental impact of oil and gas production and consumption, with clear goals for the future. AAPG's 2018-2019 Climate Change Committee drafted a much more appropriate statement (link below) that I think would have easily navigated the “highly political nature of the climate change debate.” Please reconsider their proposed climate statement and breathe some life into the current version and AAPG. https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&source=web&cd=2&cad=rja&ved=2ahUKEwi24Lmg3JrpAhUOP6wKHfDJBMUQFjABegQIBxAB&url=reports%2F2019-AAPG-annual-report.pdf%3Fver%3D2019-11-26-095523-457&usg=AOvVaw2fOjztw_6DLbF8zbf7-QMX

5/4/2020 12:39:38 PM  Tonya Richardson

AAPG - the ONLY science organisation in the world to not accept the science of climate change

I am disheartened to see that AAPG has published a weak climate change statement. AAPG is first and foremost supposed to be a scientific organisation, and yet remains the only science organisation to ignore the overwhelming peer reviewed science on climate change. The science underlying human impacts on climate change is not political - it is basic physics known for over 100 years. CO2, methane and other gases are known greenhouse gases, meaning they reduce the amount of outgoing radiation from exiting the atmosphere. We have direct physical measurements from both ground and satellite instruments directly showing that progressively less radiative energy is exiting our atmosphere over time, and that the change over time is only in wavelengths that are the direct fingerprint of increased CO2, methane and other greenhouse gases human activity is causing to be accumulated in the atmosphere (e.g Harries et al 2001). The amount of energy retained by increased greenhouse effect is sufficient to cause all recent warming (Feldman et al, 2015). Hundreds and hundreds of studies have shown there are no other causes for the current warming known to science. The geological record tells us that greenhouse gases are one driver of climate and past changes in these gases has caused climatic events. ALL branches of science have reached an evidence backed conclusion on climate, including all other geological societies. The radiative absorption properties of CO2 are not political - they are just physics. AAPG should be front and centre in trying to engage and lead efforts on climate change. But, a scientific society cannot do that if it buries it's head in the sand and ignores the science learned from literally >100 thousand peer reviewed studies on the
topic. The published climate statement is not leadership, it is simply disappointingly hollow. It is not what the society needs to help stop the loss of members and lack of engagement with the people that are the industry's future.

5/3/2020 10:14:25 PM   Mark Tingay

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