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Scientific Credibility and Advocacy

We have seen that with few exceptions, the scientific evidence is not conclusive cloud seeding is causing the desired responses. More over, the evidence that human activity is ``causing" observed changes in weather and climate is also quite tenuous. With that in mind we ask, *should scientists be actively involved in advocating that we apply cloud seeding techniques to enhancing rainfall, or reducing emissions of greenhouse gases to alleviate greenhouse warming?* Certainly the scientists are the best informed with regard to the consequences of human activity and, one could say, that if the informed scientist does not take an advocacy role in recommending that action be taken, then no one else will.

Such a position is not without its dangers, however. If, for example, scientists participate in an operational cloud seeding program or play an obvious role as advocates of applying cloud seeding, they can jeopardize their credibility as truly objective scientists and therefore adversely affect both the program and the individual scientists. The same can be said with regard to advocates of major disruptive societal changes with regard to greenhouse emissions.

Some might argue that the risk of losing one's scientific credibility is purely a personal one and must be weighed against the potential societal gains by taking immediate action to relieve drought or reduce greenhouse warming. In fact, the adverse impacts extend far beyond those affecting the individual scientist. Loss of scientific credibility is infectious and can, therefore, propagate through an entire scientific discipline and even to the scientific community as a whole. The fall of the science of weather modification by cloud seeding was almost certainly due, in part, to a loss of scientific credibility. The global climate change community must likewise be careful that a loss of scientific credibility does not propagate through their discipline, or the discipline of atmospheric science as well. Thus premature advocacy that action be taken now, could, in the long run, destroy the prospects for obtaining solid scientific evidence that human activity is affecting weather and climate.

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- [Should Society Wait for Hard Scientific Evidence?](#)

