

A fictional interview of a climate-skeptic arguing about carbon cycle feedbacks

“Carbon Chaos is Overblown”: Climate Skeptic Dismisses Fears of Permafrost and Deep Ocean Carbon Release

By Sarah Lane, Environmental Correspondent, published March 25, 2025

Introduction

In a world increasingly concerned about runaway climate change, some voices remain skeptical—not just about the pace of warming, but about the core mechanisms scientists warn could accelerate it. Dr. Richard Malone, a retired geophysicist and outspoken critic of mainstream climate models, argues that fears of natural carbon release from permafrost or deep ocean stores are exaggerated, if not entirely unfounded.

In an exclusive interview with *EcoView Weekly*, Malone pushes back against what he calls “apocalyptic climate storytelling,” asserting that Earth’s systems are more stable and self-regulating than current scientific models assume.

“The Earth Isn’t a Loaded Gun”

EcoView Weekly (EW): Dr. Malone, you’ve said publicly that additional carbon release from permafrost or oceanic clathrates doesn’t pose a significant risk. Why?

Dr. Richard Malone: Because the idea that Earth’s carbon reservoirs are on the edge of collapse is scientifically flimsy. The permafrost, for example, has been thawing and refreezing in cycles for millennia. While there is some methane and CO₂ stored in it, most of that carbon is bound up in soil matrices or oxidizes before it can significantly impact atmospheric levels.

The deep ocean is even less of a concern. Methane hydrates, or clathrates, are stable at cold temperatures and high pressures. Even with some ocean warming, it’s a slow process. There’s no mechanism for a sudden, catastrophic release.

A Flawed Feedback Loop?

EW: But many climate models show a potential feedback loop—warming leads to more carbon released from natural stores, which leads to more warming. Isn’t that concerning?

Malone: It’s a nice narrative, but it assumes linear and unbuffered processes. What the models often overlook are negative feedbacks. As CO₂ rises, plant growth accelerates in many regions, pulling more carbon from the air. More cloud cover in warmer regions reflects solar radiation. These stabilizing effects aren’t given enough weight.

And remember, the IPCC itself shows wide uncertainty in how much carbon might be released from permafrost. The idea that we're sitting on a ticking methane time bomb is more Hollywood than science.

On Scientific Consensus

EW: You're going against the grain of the scientific consensus. What makes you confident you're right?

Malone: "Consensus" isn't science—it's politics. Many scientists are under pressure to align with climate narratives that get funding or political support. I'm not saying climate change isn't real, but the scale and speed of projected risks—especially from natural carbon feedbacks—are overstated.

I've spent 30 years studying Earth systems. The geologic record shows abrupt climate changes, yes, but not driven by runaway feedback loops. The planet has buffers. We forget that.

Skepticism in a Heated World

EW: What would you say to those who argue that even a small chance of runaway warming justifies urgent emissions cuts?

Malone: Precaution is good. Panic is not. If you base policy on worst-case scenarios, you end up hurting economies, restricting energy access, and disrupting lives—often in the developing world. Let's focus on resilience, better forecasting, and clean innovation, but drop the doomsday talk.

We're not about to cross some magical threshold where the permafrost burps us into extinction. Let's all breathe—literally and figuratively.

Conclusion

Dr. Malone's views remain controversial and are widely disputed by climate scientists. Yet, in a world navigating a complex climate reality, understanding all perspectives—even skeptical ones—can inform a broader debate about how we respond, prepare, and communicate science.

Note: The views expressed by Dr. Malone do not reflect the consensus of the scientific community, which affirms that permafrost and ocean carbon feedbacks pose potential long-term risks under continued warming.