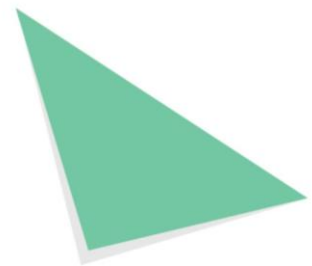


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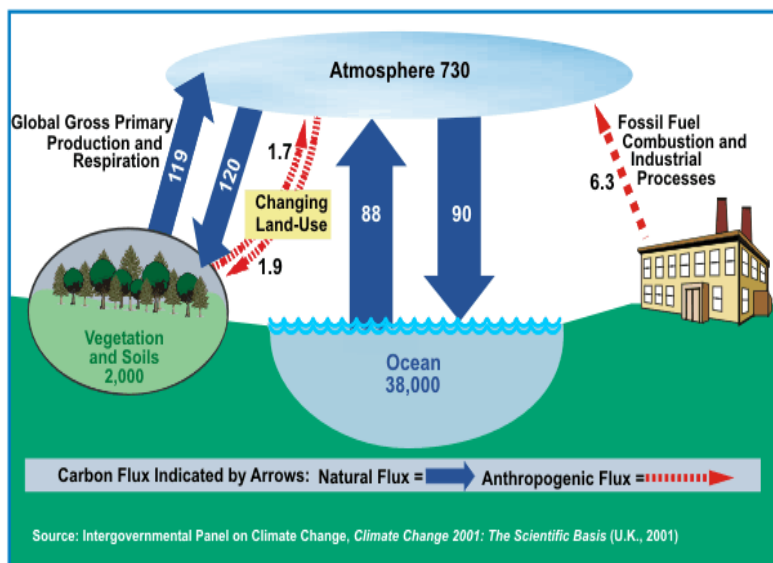


What is Climate Change?

U.S. Energy Information Agency

Concentrations of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere are naturally regulated by numerous processes collectively known as the “carbon cycle” (Figure 2). The movement (“flux”) of carbon between the atmosphere and the land and oceans is dominated by natural processes, such as plant photosynthesis. While these natural processes can absorb some of the net 6.1 billion metric tons of anthropogenic carbon dioxide emissions produced each year (measured in carbon equivalent terms), an estimated 3.2 billion metric tons is added to the atmosphere annually. The Earth’s positive imbalance between emissions and absorption results in the continuing growth in greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. In computer-based models, rising concentrations of greenhouse gases generally produce an increase in the average temperature of the Earth. Rising temperatures may, in turn, produce changes in weather, sea levels, and land use patterns, commonly referred to as “climate change.”

Figure 2. Global Carbon Cycle (Billion Metric Tons Carbon)



<http://www.eia.gov/oiaf/1605/ggcebro/chapter1.html>

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