

EDITORIAL

Without exception, every forecast predicts another very active Atlantic hurricane season. Things have calmed down since Tropical Storm Alberto battered northern Florida less than 2 weeks into the 2006 season, but many along the Gulf and East coast of the US, and in the Caribbean and Central America, await the arrival of the next storm with some trepidation. However stormy the activity in coming months, it is unlikely to match that within the US hurricane research community, where the debate on the role of climate change in the recent hike in tropical cyclone activity is becoming increasingly acrimonious. While there are still decriers, a number of pieces of research published in the last 12 months implicate climate change in a near doubling of the most powerful storms in the last few decades, with higher sea-surface temperatures fingered as the primary cause. The jury has still to present its final verdict, but it now seems highly likely that climate change will be found guilty. If just a 0.6 degree C rise in global average temperatures can bring about such a dramatic change in storm activity, maybe it is time to consider now, what the consequences might be of a future rise of 3, 4, 5 degrees C - or even more.

[Image: Hurricane Wilma in October 2005, the most intense hurricane ever recorded. Will the 2006 Atlantic hurricane season bring more Wilmas? Courtesy NOAA]

