

SCIENCE AT WORK

Global Warming? Don't Mention It

As recent events in Florida have shown, you can't make climate change go away by trying to outlaw official mention of it.

In March, the Florida Center for Investigative Reporting made headlines by breaking the news that Florida Governor Rick Scott had allegedly placed a gag order on the terms "climate change" and "global warming." Scott denies imposing such a ban but many current and former state workers have come forward to confirm the report. Bart Bibler, land management plan coordinator at Florida's Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), says he was suspended for referencing climate change in his notes from a conference on sea level rise. Bibler was then asked to consult a doctor on his fitness for work before returning.

***UCS fights back
against Florida's
climate gag order.***

A former DEP employee, Kristina Trotta, said she was explicitly told by her supervisor to not mention global warming or climate change.

And Nicole Hernandez Hammer, a former assistant director of climate change research at the Florida Center for Environmental Studies who now consults for the Union of Concerned Scientists (UCS), says she was told to "tone down" mentions of climate change

(continued on page 2)

{IDEAS IN ACTION}

McDonald's and KFC Reverse Course on Palm Oil



UCS analysis, combined with member and supporter activism, helped push McDonald's and other fast food chains to buy only responsibly produced palm oil.

The UCS palm oil campaign won game-changing victories in April, capping years of effort to change the way companies source palm oil, a common ingredient in personal care, processed food, and fast food products. As our campaign has emphasized, palm oil production is a major driver of deforestation because plantation owners all too often clear tropical forests and peatlands. This wipes out critical habitat for elephants, orangutans, rhinoceroses, and tigers and releases massive amounts of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere, accelerating climate change.

In April, we published a report rating top companies' commitments to protecting tropical forests, and followed it up with hard-hitting graphics that reached as many as 5 million consumers through traditional and social media. Before the month was out, the top two global fast food chains—McDonald's and Yum! Brands (parent company of KFC, Taco Bell, and Pizza Hut)—pledged to buy only palm oil that does not contribute to deforestation.

These victories wouldn't have happened without the hundreds of thousands of UCS members and supporters who petitioned the two companies to buy only responsibly produced palm oil. Our shared efforts showcase what we can accomplish when engaged science is paired with action by our members and supporters.

The new report, *Fries, Face Wash, Forests: Scoring America's Top Brands on Their Palm Oil Commitments*, is a follow-up to a March 2014 UCS report that rated 30 leading companies in the packaged food, personal care, and fast food sectors on their professed

(continued on back page)

Science Won't Be Censored



© Richard Howard

We learned this spring that the Wisconsin Board of Commissioners of Public Lands—a body that manages some of the state's

forestlands—voted to ban staff from discussing climate change. The news came on the heels of widespread allegations that Florida Governor Rick Scott's administration banned state officials from using the terms "climate change" and "global warming" in their work. (Read more in "Science at Work," p. 1.) Before that, North Carolina banned state officials from modeling sea level rise more than 30 years into the future, apparently to avoid upsetting the real estate industry.

These misguided policies cannot be tolerated and UCS has been in the vanguard of fighting against them. Government officials are entrusted to safeguard public health, safety, and the environment, and they can't possibly do their jobs without high-quality science and the right to speak forthrightly about issues that affect us all.

For government officials anywhere to be ordered not to discuss one of our most pressing problems is deplorable and unacceptable in our democratic society. Equally important, the practice is potentially dangerous, especially in a state such as Florida where the threat from sea level rise is imminent and affects millions. As long as I have anything to say about it, UCS will always champion practical, science-based solutions and push back against efforts to suppress or distort science for political purposes.

KEN KIMMELL

FAST FACTS

Red-State Renewables

Scratch below the surface of the federal-level partisan divide and you'll find renewable energy expanding with bipartisan support in some surprising and inspiring places around the country.



NORTH CAROLINA: SECOND IN SOLAR

In 2014, North Carolina installed more solar photovoltaic systems than any other state in the country except California. The Tar Heel State's solar installations now generate enough electricity to meet the needs of close to 100,000 homes. Apple has gotten in on the Carolina sunshine, locating a 200-acre solar farm in the western part of the state to power its new iCloud data center.



OKLAHOMA: WIND SWEEPS THE PLAIN

Oklahoma ranked second in the nation for wind power installations in 2014,

according to the American Wind Energy Association, capitalizing on the cost savings of wind over natural gas. The Sooner State also ranks fourth in the nation for total electricity generation from wind; in 2013, wind provided nearly 15 percent of all in-state electricity production—the equivalent of 1 million typical homes.



TEXAS: LONE STAR WIND

Texas installed more wind turbines than any other state in 2014. Employing forward-thinking policy and investment, the Lone Star State has nearly doubled its wind energy generation between 2009 and 2014, and now—remarkable for a state normally associated with fossil fuel production—wind accounts for nearly 10 percent of the electricity generated in Texas.

Global Warming? Don't Mention It

(continued from front page)

in a report on sea level rise funded by the Florida Department of Transportation. "I was shocked," she says.

As UCS analyses have shown, Florida—with its 1,200 miles of coastline and some 2.4 million people living

Florida residents deserve more than a head-in-the-sand approach to climate change.

within four feet of the high tide line—is especially vulnerable to sea level rise driven by global warming. UCS scientists

and activists responded swiftly and vigorously to Governor Scott's apparent head-in-the-sand approach to climate change, bringing even more public attention to the issue (see Ken Kimmell's comments at left).

"As Americans, we pride ourselves on freedom of speech," says Hernandez Hammer. "As the daughter of a Cuban immigrant, I'm especially sensitive to these freedoms. And as a taxpayer, I hold our government to the highest standards of truth and transparency. We should expect more."

You can stand up for science and voice your opposition to silencing discussion about climate change in Florida at www.ucsusa.org/action.

ASK A SCIENTIST

Why is the UCS palm oil campaign targeting consumer products companies instead of the companies that are actually clearing tropical forests to make way for oil palm plantations?

—Akhil Bhalla, Somerville, MA



© Mike Olliver

Lael Goodman, an analyst with the Union of Concerned Scientists Tropical Forest and Climate Initiative, responds:

UCS quickly recognized that there are thousands of producers growing oil palm trees, mostly in Indonesia and Malaysia. To interact with each of them directly would be an immense job for our small tropical forest team. So we took a close look at the palm oil supply chain—the route palm oil travels from the plantation to become an ingredient in a huge number of consumer goods—to see where we could have the most leverage.

As it turns out, most palm oil passes through a trader at some point in its journey. Traders are middlemen, buying palm oil from producers and mills and selling it to commercial

users. And unlike palm oil producers, there are only a few major traders that handle most of the world's palm oil.

We realized that if we could change the policies of even one trader, it would be akin to changing the policies of all the plantations supplying it. And we have: a UCS analysis linking fires that destroyed Indonesian tropical forests to producers supplying palm oil to the largest trader, Wilmar Agribusiness (which handles 44 percent of the world's supply), helped push Wilmar to pledge to go deforestation-free by the end of 2015.

But pressuring consumer products manufacturers, retailers, and fast food chains is also a key part of our strategy because UCS members and supporters interact with these companies on a daily basis. As we all know, corporations care about their image because it affects their bottom line. If these manufacturers, retailers, and fast food chains demand deforestation-free palm oil as a result of consumer pressure, the traders they buy from will have incentive to comply. And thanks to your help, this strategy of pushing on all fronts is working (see the related story on p. 1), making good on our pledge to build a healthier planet.

SCIENCE UNDER ATTACK—AGAIN

What if every time a government agency wanted to clean up our air or water, or implement food-safety or worker-safety protections, it had to go through a hopelessly gridlocked Congress first?

That's the idea behind legislation some in Congress are promoting as a way to improve transparency and accountability around new regulations. But the law is really an insidious attempt to stymie federal agencies'

The REINS Act will protect companies, not public health and safety.

ability to create science-based safeguards for public health, safety, and the environment.

If passed, the so-called REINS Act (Regulations from the Executive in Need of Scrutiny) would require Congress to approve all new “major” regulations before they could take effect. But the EPA, FDA, and other federal agencies already have robust systems in place to ensure their regulations are based on the best available science, and to provide opportunities for public input and comment.

What the REINS Act will actually protect are corporate interests—over the health and safety of Americans. You can urge Congress to let go of the REINS at www.ucsusa.org/reins.



Not Where You Expected to Find DEFORESTATION?

The palm oil used in many of your favorite products may drive forest loss.

See how your favorite brands stack up:
www.ucsusa.org/palmoilscorecard

McDonald's and KFC Reverse Course on Palm Oil

(continued from front page)

plans to use deforestation-free, peat-destruction-free palm oil that has been sourced in a traceable and transparent manner. In that earlier report, the packaged food companies had the strongest standards; fast food companies had the weakest.

The new report tracks the same 30 companies' progress over the past year and adds a fourth category: the house brands sold by the 10 largest supermarket, pharmacy, and discount store chains. At the time of publication, only eight of the 40 companies had adopted palm oil commitments that



Several fast food chains, as well as manufacturers and retailers, have pledged to use deforestation-free palm oil as a result of consumer pressure—but many laggards remain.

fully protect tropical forests and peatlands. Those companies were ConAgra, Danone, Kellogg's, Nestlé, and PepsiCo from the packaged food sector, and Colgate-Palmolive, Henkel, and Procter & Gamble from the personal care sector. Fast food chains still lagged far behind, and store brands were just as bad.

PROGRESS IN THE FAST FOOD SECTOR

The day after publication, Yum! Brands announced that by the end of 2017 it will buy only palm-based cooking oil from suppliers that protect tropical forests and peatlands. That's a big deal. The company's three chains have more than 41,000 restaurants in more than 125 countries and territories around the world. Because this pledge only covers the oil

Yum! Brands buys for frying—not the oil in its sauces or baked goods, which it buys from other suppliers—UCS will continue to press the company to strengthen its commitment and provide information about how much oil it uses and how the oil is produced.

Then, in late April, McDonald's pledged to eliminate deforestation related to palm oil and all other ingredients from its *entire* global supply chain, and is expected to announce a timetable for its palm oil procurement later this year. That's an even bigger deal. With its 12,600 restaurants in the United States and 18,700 in more than 100 other countries, McDonald's is the world's most profitable fast food chain, serving more than 70 million people *every day*.

Another top 10 fast food chain, Dunkin' Brands—parent company of Dunkin' Donuts and Baskin-Robbins—announced last fall it would buy only 100 percent deforestation-free palm oil by 2016 for its U.S. locations. That still leaves seven of the top 10 fast food chains without a palm oil policy. It's time to step up public pressure on Burger King, CKE Restaurants (owner of Carl's Jr. and Hardee's), Domino's, DQ, Starbucks, Subway, and Wendy's. Read their scores and find out how you can help push these companies to adopt better policies—and ensure that industry leaders keep their palm oil pledges—at www.ucsusa.org/palmoilscorecard.

DON'T WAIT FOR THE NEWS!

Every day, UCS is posting news of victories you have helped us achieve, and calling for members to take action. If you're on our email list you're hearing about them first. If you're not, sign up today at www.ucsusa.org/join. You'll learn of exciting ways to participate in UCS program work, and be among the first to hear of the success your support has helped secure.

**Union of
Concerned Scientists**
Science for a healthy planet and safer world

Member of
EarthShare

FIND THIS ISSUE ONLINE: www.ucsusa.org/earthwise

The Union of Concerned Scientists puts rigorous, independent science to work to solve our planet's most pressing problems. Joining with citizens across the country, we combine technical analysis and effective advocacy to create innovative, practical solutions for a healthy, safe, and sustainable future.

EARTHWISE

A quarterly publication of the Union of Concerned Scientists. Articles from *Earthwise*, duly acknowledged, may be reprinted free of charge.

PRODUCTION

Seth Shulman, **Editorial Director**
Bryan Wadsworth, **Managing Editor**
Heather Tuttle, **Production Manager**
Rigsby Hull, **Design**

NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS

Two Brattle Square
Cambridge, MA 02138-3780
Phone: (617) 547-5552
Fax: (617) 864-9405

© JUNE 2015

UNION OF CONCERNED SCIENTISTS

♻️ PRINTED ON 100% POST-CONSUMER
RECYCLED PAPER USING VEGETABLE-BASED INKS

WEB: www.ucsusa.org
EMAIL: ucs@ucsusa.org