

# Climate Science vs. Fossil Fuel Fiction

An Infographic from the Union of Concerned Scientists

[www.ucsusa.org/fossilfuelfiction](http://www.ucsusa.org/fossilfuelfiction)

## Source Material and Background Information

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**“...support for the effects of climate change on public health and welfare is limited and is typified by a high degree of uncertainty.” –  
ConocoPhillips, 2009**

### Source

In ConocoPhillips' 2008 comments on the EPA's endangerment finding (U.S. EPA document EPA-HQ-OAR-2009-0171) they state “[W]e believe that despite uncertainties over the extent of human contributions and the timing and magnitude of future impacts, citizens, companies, and governments should take prudent action now to address GHG emissions. While the EPA proposal includes support for the existence of climate change, the support for the effects of climate change on public health and welfare is limited and is typified by a high degree of uncertainty.”<sup>i</sup>

### Exposing the Disinformation: Science Facts

At the time of this quote, the scientific evidence of the cause and impacts of climate change was well documented. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) was established in 1988 in recognition of the problem of global warming. Climate experts from around the world synthesize the most recent climate science findings in periodic reports. The 2007 IPCC report (AR4) concluded that “There is very high confidence that the net effect of human activities since 1750 has been one of warming”, and “discernible human influences extend beyond average temperature to other aspects of climate” such as increased risk of heat waves, sea level rise, and the frequency of heavy precipitation events. The report also specifically points out the systems, sectors and regions likely to be especially affected by climate change, including human health in populations with low adaptive capacity, and further that “within other areas, even those with high incomes, some people (such as the poor, young children and the elderly) can be particularly at risk.”<sup>ii</sup> The 2009 U.S. National Climate Assessment, a report produced by the U.S. Global Change Research Program, adds weight to the IPCC findings by highlighting the public health

risks posed by global climate change. “During the summer, public health and quality of life, especially in cities, will be negatively affected by increasing heat waves, reduced air quality, and insect and waterborne diseases.”<sup>iii</sup>

## More about ConocoPhillips

ConocoPhillips, like other major oil producers, has recently acknowledged the realities of climate science on their website: “We recognize that human activity, including the burning of fossil fuels, is contributing to increased concentrations of greenhouse gas (GHG) in the atmosphere that can lead to adverse changes in global climate.”<sup>iv</sup> However, they continue to support climate-denying trade and special interest groups, including the American Petroleum Institute (API), the Western States Petroleum Association (WSPA), the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and others.<sup>v</sup> Until 2012, ConocoPhillips was a member of American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC).

At a May 2008 hearing before the Senate Judiciary Committee, a company executive testified, “ConocoPhillips has acknowledged the scientific consensus that human activity. . . is contributing to increased concentrations of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere that can lead to adverse changes in global climate.”<sup>vi</sup> He further stated that the company supported “a mandatory national framework in the U.S. for reducing carbon dioxide emissions.”<sup>vii</sup> Yet shortly before climate legislation was introduced in the Senate in February 2010, ConocoPhillips withdrew from the U.S. Climate Action Partnership, a group of corporations that advocates for policy action.<sup>viii</sup> Subsequently, ConocoPhillips began criticizing the legislation, and it set up a political-action webpage asking employees to call legislators and express opposition to that climate bill.<sup>ix</sup>

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<sup>i</sup> Sheets, Jeff W. 2008. Comments on the EPA advanced notice for proposed rulemaking for regulating greenhouse gas emissions under the Clean Air Act (EPA document EPA-HQ-OAR-2008-0318) on behalf of ConocoPhillips. Online at <http://www.regulations.gov/contentStreamer?objectId=0900006480cc3428&disposition=attachment&contentType=pdf>, accessed February 26, 2015.

<sup>ii</sup> Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). 2007. Summary for policymakers. In *Climate Change 2007: Synthesis Report. An Assessment of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change*, edited by L. Bernstein., P. Bosch, O. Canziani, Z. Chen, R. Christ, O. Davidson, W. Hare, S. Huq, D. Karoly, V. Kattsov, Z. Kundzewicz, J. Liu, U. Lohmann, M. Manning, T. Matsuno, B. Menne, B. Metz, M. Mirza, N. Nicholls, L. Nurse, R. Pachauri, J. Palutikof, M. Parry, D. Qin, N. Ravindranath, A. Reisinger, J. Ren, K. Riahi, C. Rosenzweig, M. Rusticucci, S. Schneider, Y. Sokona, S. Solomon, P. Stott, R. Stouffer, T. Sugiyama, R. Swart, D. Tirpak, C. Vogel, G. Yohe. Cambridge, UK, and New York, NY: Cambridge University Press. Online at [https://www.ipcc.ch/pdf/assessment-report/ar4/syr/ar4\\_syr\\_spm.pdf](https://www.ipcc.ch/pdf/assessment-report/ar4/syr/ar4_syr_spm.pdf), accessed February 26, 2015.

<sup>iii</sup> U.S. Global Change Research Program. 2009. *Global climate change impacts in the United States*. Washington, DC. Online at <http://downloads.globalchange.gov/usimpacts/pdfs/climate-impacts-report.pdf>, accessed March 4, 2015.

<sup>iv</sup> ConocoPhillips. 2015. Climate change: Committed to sustainable development. Online at <http://www.conocophillips.com/sustainable-development/environment/climate-change/Pages/default.aspx>, accessed February 26, 2015.

<sup>v</sup> ConocoPhillips. 2015. ConocoPhillips 2013 trade associations with membership dues over \$50,000. Online at <http://www.conocophillips.com/sustainable-development/our-approach/living-by-our-principles/policies/political-support-policy-procedures/Documents/2013%20COP%20Trades%2050K%20Plus.pdf>, accessed February 13, 2015.

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<sup>vi</sup> Lowe, J.E. 2008. *Exploring the skyrocketing price of oil*. Testimony before the Senate Judiciary Committee, May 21. Online at [www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/CHRG-110shrg43354/html/CHRG-110shrg43354.htm](http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/CHRG-110shrg43354/html/CHRG-110shrg43354.htm), accessed March 19, 2012.

<sup>vii</sup> Ibid.

<sup>viii</sup> Burnham, M. 2010. Conoco, BP, Caterpillar leave climate coalition. *New York Times*, February 16. Online at [www.nytimes.com/gwire/2010/02/16/16greenwire-conoco-bp-caterpillar-leave-climate-coalition-73582.html](http://www.nytimes.com/gwire/2010/02/16/16greenwire-conoco-bp-caterpillar-leave-climate-coalition-73582.html), accessed January 30, 2012.

<sup>ix</sup> ConocoPhillips. 2009. Act now for energy. Online at [www.conocophillips.com/en/actnow/Pages/index.aspx](http://www.conocophillips.com/en/actnow/Pages/index.aspx), accessed October 12, 2011.