

Climate Science vs. Fossil Fuel Fiction

An Infographic from the Union of Concerned Scientists

www.ucsusa.org/fossilfuelfiction

Source Material and Background Information March 2015

“...it is impossible for scientists to attribute the recent small surface temperature increase to human activity.” – ExxonMobil, 2000

Source

ExxonMobil published an ad in 2000 in the New York Times and The Wall Street Journal titled “Unsettled Science.” It referenced a published article that ExxonMobil claimed disputes that global warming is happening, or at least that the science is certain.^{i,ii} The author of the scientific paper referenced, Dr. Lloyd Keigwin, responded to ExxonMobil with a letter saying that Exxon Mobil exploited his research for political purposes, and has stated that Exxon Mobil’s use of his data was inappropriate.ⁱⁱⁱ A group of ExxonMobil shareholders, upset by ExxonMobil’s deliberate use of inaccurate statements to mislead stockholders and the public about the impact of humans and fossil fuels on the Earth’s temperature, brought forth a resolution calling on the company to link executive compensation to environmental progress and handing of the company’s environmental liability.^{iv}

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 National Climate Assessment, produced by the U.S. Global Change Research Program as required by an act of Congress, report released in 2000 states “Long-term observations confirm that our climate is now changing at a rapid rate.” The “increase [in carbon dioxide] has resulted from the burning of coal, oil, and natural gas, and the destruction of forests around the world. Rising concentrations of CO₂ and other greenhouse gases are intensifying Earth’s natural greenhouse effect.”^v

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) was established in 1988 in recognition of the problem of global warming. Through the IPCC, climate experts from around the world synthesize the most recent climate science findings in periodic reports. The 2001 IPCC report states “An increasing body of observations gives a collective picture of a warming world and

other changes in the climate system.” and “There is new and stronger evidence that most of the warming observed over the last 50 years is attributable to human activities”^{vi}

More about ExxonMobil

ExxonMobil has been spreading climate denial and disinformation for decades, as documented in UCS’s “[Smoke, Mirrors, and Hot Air](#).”^{vii} In a 2009 comment on the EPA’s endangerment finding filed by the “BCCA Appeal Group” (named for the Greater Houston Partnership’s Business Coalition for Clean Air) on behalf of its members, including ExxonMobil, the following statements are found: “Here, as in other areas, the specific effects of climate change remain too uncertain to justify a welfare-related endangerment finding,” and “[B]y attempting to regulate a global problem with domestic regulation, EPA will not only wreak havoc on the U.S. economy but global GHG emissions may actually increase as a result.”^{viii}

ⁱ Gelbspan, Ross. 2014. Exxon-Mobil uses New York Times Ad to spread untruths. *The Heat is Online*. Online at <http://www.heatisonline.org/contentserver/objecthandlers/index.cfm?id=3442&method=full>, accessed December 8, 2014.

ⁱⁱ ExxonMobil. 2000. Unsettled Science. Ad on the Op-Ed page of *New York Times*, March 23. Online at https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=2&ved=0CCMQFjAB&url=http%3A%2F%2Fresearch.greenpeaceusa.org%2F%3Fa%3Ddownload%26d%3D4038&ei=HqFvVMm5E-7ksASr0oGQBw&usq=AFQjCNHT0_jDBo_TfGRYdeATCXyMb59tog&bvm=bv.80185997,d.cGU&cad=rja, accessed December 8, 2014.

ⁱⁱⁱ Herrick, Thaddeus. 2001. Weighing the evidence of global warming: A scientist’s work on ocean becomes fodder for skeptics—Much to his dismay. *Wall Street Journal*, March 22.

^{iv} Ibid.

^v United States Global Change Research Program. 2001. Climate change impacts on the United States: The potential consequences of climate variability and change. In the *National Climate Assessment*. Washington, DC. Online at <http://data.globalchange.gov/assets/9a/aa/ec5b4bb3b895bc8369be2ddac377/nca-2000-report-overview.pdf>, accessed February 26, 2015.

^{vi} Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). 2001. Summary for policymakers. In *Climate Change 2001: The Scientific Basis. Contribution of Working Group I to the Third Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change*, edited by J.T. Houghton, Y. Ding, D.J. Griggs, M. Noguer, P.J. van der Linden, X. Dai, K. Maskell, and C.A. Johnson. Cambridge, UK, and New York, NY: Cambridge University Press. Online at http://www.ipcc.ch/ipccreports/tar/wg1/pdf/WG1_TAR-FRONT.PDF, accessed February 25, 2015.

^{vii} Union of Concerned Scientists. 2007. Smoke, Mirrors & Hot Air: How ExxonMobil Uses Big Tobacco’s Tactics to Manufacture Uncertainty on Climate Science. Online at http://www.ucsusa.org/sites/default/files/legacy/assets/documents/global_warming/exxon_report.pdf, accessed December 9, 2014.

^{viii} BCCA Appeal Group. 2009. Comments in Endangerment and cause or contribute findings for greenhouse gases under section 202(a) of the Clean Air Act (U.S. EPA document EPA-HQ-OAR-2009-01271). Washington, DC. Online at <http://www.regulations.gov/#!documentDetail;D=EPA-HQ-OAR-2009-0171-3509>, accessed December 9, 2014.