

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

“Climate change is just an environmentalist’s P.R. tool. There’s no science to back that up.” –Peabody Energy, 2001

Source

In a meeting in March of 2001 on Capitol Hill, Peabody CEO Engelhardt told Rhode Island Senator Jack Reed that “Climate change is just an environmentalist’s P.R. tool. There’s no science to back that up.”ⁱ This exchange was reported by Jeff Goodall in the New York Times.

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 2001 IPCC report reviewed 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”ⁱⁱ

The National Climate Assessment, released in 2000 and written by leading US scientists and produced by the U.S. Global Change Research Program as required by an act of Congress, states “Long-term observations confirm that our climate is now changing at a rapid rate.” The report covers a range of impacts of human-caused climate change on the U.S. including impacts to natural ecosystems and water resources.ⁱⁱⁱ

More about Peabody Energy

Peabody Energy has consistently sought to discredit climate science as part of its efforts to undermine any possible climate policy. For example, in 2009, Peabody Energy submitted comments to the Environmental Protection Agency’s endangerment finding that determined

greenhouse gas emissions endanger public welfare and can therefore be regulated under the Clean Air Act. Peabody's comments calling for a "balanced view" of the benefits of carbon dioxide, including the "known benefits of CO₂ as plant food."^{iv} "Peabody is confident that the result of such a balanced view will be a finding of non-endangerment," the documented concluded.^v

In 2010, Peabody Energy attempted to leverage the 2009 stolen email incident, sometimes referred to as "Climategate" in a petition challenging the EPA's endangerment finding.^{vi} The petition attacked the IPCC, National Climate Assessment, and individual climate scientists. "Thus, EPA's attempt to transform a benign naturally-occurring substance into a dangerous air pollutant is based on evidence that it should never have used in the first place," Peabody argued in the petition. The EPA denied Peabody's petition and several others like it, noting, "The scientific evidence supporting EPA's finding is robust, voluminous, and compelling." In their response, EPA officials pointed to multiple independent investigations into the stolen emails "clearing the scientists of any wrongdoing."^{vii}

In 2014, Peabody Energy again revisited the issue of the endangerment finding in its comments on the EPA's Clean Power Plan proposal, attacking the findings of the IPCC as "fatally flawed." "But no science supports the relevant causal links – the connection between changes in GHG levels and any changes in climate,"^{viii}

In addition to discrediting science directly, Peabody also does so through their affiliations with industry groups, including ALEC and ACCCE.^{ix,x}

ⁱ Goodall, Jeff. 2001. How coal got its glow back. *The New York Times Magazine*, July 22. Online at <http://listserv.vt.edu/cgi-bin/wa?A2=envst-l;%2BqyYWg;200107221402540400>, accessed December 8, 2014.

ⁱⁱ 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.

ⁱⁱⁱ 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.

^{iv} Peabody Energy Corporation. 2009. Comments in Endangerment and cause of contribute findings for greenhouse gases under Section 202(a) of the Clean Air Act (U.S. EPA document EPA-HQ-OAR-2009-0171), Commenter 3261.1. Washington, DC: EPA. Online at http://www.troutmansanders.com/files/upload/Glaser_PB%20EF%20Comment%203.pdf, accessed February 25, 2015.

^v Ibid.

^{vi} Peabody Energy Corporation. 2010. Petition for reconsideration by Peabody Energy Company. Comments in Endangerment and cause of contribute findings for greenhouse gases under Section 202(a) of the Clean Air Act (U.S. EPA document EPA-HQ-OAR-2009-0171). Washington, DC: EPA. Online at http://www.epa.gov/climatechange/Downloads/endangerment/Petition_for_Reconsideration_Peabody_Energy_Company.pdf, accessed February 25, 2015.

^{vii} Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). 2010. Denial of petitions for reconsideration of the endangerment and cause or contribute findings for greenhouse gases under Section 202(a) of the Clean Air Act. Online at <http://www.epa.gov/climatechange/endangerment/petitions.html>, accessed February 25, 2015.

^{viii} Peabody Energy Corporation. 2014. Comments in *Carbon pollution emission guidelines for existing stationary sources: Electric utility generating units* (U.S. EPA document EPA-HQ-OAR-2013-0602). Online at <http://www.shb.com/newsevents/2014/CommentsbyPeabodyCorp.pdf>, accessed February 26, 2015.

^{ix} Woods, C. 2010. 35-day mailing—States nation policy summit. Memorandum to the Energy, Environment and Agriculture Task Force members of the American Legislative Exchange Council, October 27. Online at http://www.commoncause.org/issues/more-democracy-reforms/alec/whistleblower-complaint/original-complaint/National_ALEC_Exhibit_4_EEA_2010_SNPS.pdf, accessed December 8, 2014.

^x Weynand, B. 2011. 35-day mailing—Annual meeting. Memorandum to the Energy, Environment and Agriculture Task Force members of the American Legislative Exchange Council, June 30. Online at http://www.commoncause.org/issues/more-democracy-reforms/alec/whistleblower-complaint/original-complaint/National_ALEC_Exhibit_4_EEA_2011_Annual_Meeting.pdf, accessed December 8, 2014.