

<https://www.ucsusa.org/center-science-and-democracy/attacks-on-science#.XFHHac1Ok2w>

Union of Concerned Scientists

[Center for Science and Democracy](#)

Attacks on
science

The Trump administration and 115th Congress have been actively dismantling science-based health and safety protections, sidelining scientific evidence, and undoing [recent progress on scientific integrity](#).

[We've seen this movie before](#). And we know how to fight back. We're [standing up for science](#). We're inviting scientists to [securely share information on scientific integrity abuses](#). And we're encouraging our supporters to [watchdog this administration and Congress](#), as we did during the [George W. Bush administration](#) and the [Barack Obama administration](#).

Below is a running list of attacks on science—disappearing data, silenced scientists, and other assaults on scientific integrity and science-based policy. The list provides a representative sample of threats to the federal scientific enterprise.

Beyond this list, many other moves by the president and Congress degrade the environment for science and scientists in this country. For example, the president's Muslim ban [hurts science and scientists](#), including those working for the federal government and the president's [rescinding transgender protections](#) is damaging to the ability of all young budding scientists to reach their full potential. These actions are also important to document, and we continue do so on the [UCS blog](#).

Share these stories on social media, or use the embed link in the right sidebar to add this attacks tally to your own website. Tell us about case studies you think we should add through [these encrypted channels](#).



[EPA Keeps Data Analysis on Stream and Wetland Protections in the Dark](#)

The EPA proposed a rule that would shrink what waterways are federally protected under the Clean Water Act. The agency said that they could not quantify the impact of rolling back this rule; however, a 2017 analysis shows enormous impacts of the proposed rollback.



USDA Increases Line Speeds Endangering Poultry Processing Plant Workers

The USDA announced that poultry processing plants will be allowed to increase their lines speeds. This proposed rule puts poultry workers at a higher risk of injury.



The Trump Administration Kept Secrets on Border Wall Harms to the Environment

The DOI stripped language written by federal scientists on a key environmental impacts letter to the USCBP about the US-Mexico border wall.



The EPA Ignores Important Exposures to Dangerous Chemicals, Increasing the Risk to Public Health

EPA is conducting risk assessments on chemicals without considering the risk of exposure in air emissions, drinking water, and waste products.



EPA Dissolves an Advisory Panel of Scientists with Expertise on a Dangerous Air Pollutant

The EPA disbanded a panel of experts that advised leadership on air pollutants that are especially harmful to human health.



Trump Administration Priorities Dictate if USGS Scientists Can Present Research at Two Major Conferences

USGS scientists who want to attend scientific conferences are required to justify how their research relates to Secretary Zinke's 10 priorities.



The Department of Interior Restricts what Science can be used in Policy Decision-making Process

The DOI issued an order, claiming to practice an “open science” policy that can restrict the use of scientific evidence in policy decision.



Trump Administration Shuttters Federal Database of Best Medical Guidelines

A federal database that compiled the best medical guidelines out there, shut down its online database due to a lack of funds from the Trump administration and Congress.



Environmental and Public Health Laws Suspended at Parts of Trump's Border Wall

In January, the DHS announced that it is waiving 25 environmental, natural resource, and land management laws in order to expediate the construction of President Trump's border wall.



USDA Cancels Environmental Study, Allows Mining Near Minnesota Wilderness

The USDA canceled an assessment in Minnesota meant to study the effects of establishing sulfide-ore copper mines near one of the state's most fragile wilderness areas.



DOE Releases a Shoddy, Flawed Report to Justify the Benefits of Coal Power Plants

A report by the DOE used erroneous calculations in order to justify conclusions that coal power plants are essential during severe winter conditions.



Two Scientists Left U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Over Issues of Science Fraud on Endangered Beetle Assessment

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) is currently reassessing the status of the American burying beetle on the endangered species list.



Department of Energy Places Unprecedented Restrictions on Nuclear Safety Board

The DOE issued an order in mid-May that outlined new limits on an independent oversight board, which assesses safety concerns at nuclear facilities.



Trump Administration Lifts Ban on the Use of Dangerous Pesticides at U.S. Wildlife Refuges

The US FWS issued a memo saying that it will roll back its decision to ban neonicotinoid pesticides and pesticide-resistant crops in national wildlife refuges.



NOAA is Ordered to Override Endangered Species Protections to Access Water for California's Wildfires

Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross sent out a directive that stands in contrast to the scientific practices of how best to fight large wildfires.



The EPA Eliminates a Strong Safeguard Against Industrial Air Pollution

The EPA has eliminated a long-standing air pollution policy, allowing major polluters to be reclassified under a less stringent category.



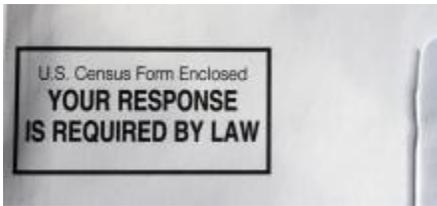
USDA Using a Restructuring Decision to Sideline Federal Researchers

The USDA proposed a reorganization of their research agencies. The restructuring may have been used to pressure scientists to quit, to reduce the size of the scientific divisions.



The EPA Continues to Suppress a Report on the Health Effects of Formaldehyde

EPA officials appear to be suppressing an important report on the risk of cancer from formaldehyde, a common chemical in many household products.



[Trump Appointee Added Citizenship Question to 2020 Census Over the Objection of Scientists](#)

Wilbur Ross, has added a question to the 2020 census asking if the respondent is a US citizen. The question is being added without going through normal testing procedures.



[DOI Officials Dismiss Evidence on Benefits of National Monuments](#)

The Department of the Interior (DOI) dismissed evidence showing the benefits of preserving our national monuments.



[Trump Administration Rescinds Policy that Promoted Science-Based Decision-making for National Parks](#)

Top officials at the Department of the Interior (DOI) ordered the deputy director of the National Park Service (NPS) to dismiss a directive that promoted science-based decision-making as a guiding principle for the preservation of ecological, historical, and cultural treasures at national parks, for reasons that appear to be politically motivated. Public policy decisions that are meant to protect America's public health and the environment are most effective when informed by scientific evidence. This cannot happen when science is sidelined in the policy-making

process. Our national parks are under severe threat from rising seas, floods, and wildfires and, if we want to protect our parks, we need policies that promote the best science available.



Department of Interior Buries Communications Policy After Attempting to Justify Muzzling Scientists

In June, the Los Angeles Times broke the story about a new policy at the US Geological Survey (USGS) requiring scientists to get permission before speaking to reporters and representing a dramatic change from decades of past media practices. The Department of Interior (DOI) falsely claimed the new policy was consistent with guidelines published during the Obama administration, which gave scientists more freedom to publicly share their expertise. [The policy](#) was removed from its original location and was buried deep in the DOI website after it was linked to by reporters.



White House Try to Cover Up Chemical Health Assessment

The Trump administration successfully stopped the publication of a study measuring the health effects of PFAS (per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances), a group of hazardous chemicals found in drinking water and household products throughout the United States. Studies have shown PFAS are associated with several detrimental health impacts, including decreased fertility, increased cholesterol, elevated cancer risk, interference with the body's natural hormones, and negative effects on growth, learning, and behavior of infants and older children. Many of the contaminated sites are on military bases across the country and affect military families directly. Multiple Republican and Democrat Congressmen have expressed concern about the censorship and have called for the report to be released.



[DOI Restricts Scientists From Attending Scientific Conferences](#)

The Department of Interior (DOI) and two agencies under the DOI have carried out policies that block or restrain federal scientists from attending or presenting at scientific conferences. High quality research often results from rich collaborations between scientists, and conferences are the primary vehicle for these opportunities to occur. By barring federal scientists from attending conferences, research progress and effectiveness is ultimately hindered, preventing federal agencies from fulfilling their science-based missions.



[Trump Administration Raids Workers' Tip Jars, Buries Data Showing That's a Horrible Idea](#)

In December the Trump administration proposed a new rule that specifically allows employers to control and distribute tip income as they see fit, taking away control of tip money from the employees—food servers, baristas, and many other hardworking people—who earned it. Now it has come to light that the Department of Labor, which proposed the rule, has suppressed data and analysis from the department's own experts showing the economic impacts of this rule.



[Administrator Pruitt Ignores EPA Staff Analysis of HONEST Act Costs](#)

An EPA analysis showing that Congress's proposed "HONEST Act" would cost the agency more than \$250 million per year was buried by Administrator Pruitt's office. The analysis, conducted by experts at the EPA, was to be sent on to the congressional budget office (CBO) from Administrator Pruitt's office, but it never made it there.



Department of Energy Prematurely Shuttters Tropical Research Project

The Department of Energy is terminating the Next-Generation Ecosystem Experiment – Tropics (NGEE-Tropics) research project about seven years ahead of schedule.



Trump Administration Violates Law, Extends Fishing Season for the Gulf Red Snapper

The fisheries office of the NOAA decided to disregard their science-based quota requirements and extend the recreational fishing season of the red snapper in the Gulf of Mexico.



The Trump Administration Manipulates Study on Economic Benefits of Refugees in US

The Trump administration rejected a cost-benefit analysis on the economic impact of refugees because it clashed with the administration's political position on the subject.



Trump Political Appointees Interfere in Scientific Grants Process

The Department of Interior (DOI) has directed political appointees to begin reviewing discretionary grants to make sure that they align with the priorities of the Trump administration. The directive is being strictly enforced.



Trump Administration Rescinds Fracking Rule for Public Lands

The Trump administration rescinded a 2015 Bureau of Land Management rule that set standards for well construction, wastewater management, and chemical disclosure around hydraulic fracturing on public lands.



Another National Academy of Sciences Study Halted

A National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (NASEM) study aimed at investigating how the Department of Interior's (DOI) Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement could improve its inspections of offshore oil and gas development was halted by DOI. Officials at NASEM said they were not given a reason why the study was halted.



Ban on Scientific Words at CDC Causes Uproar

On December 15, 2017, news broke that the Trump administration was prohibiting the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) from using the words “vulnerable,” “entitlement,” “diversity,” “transgender,” “fetus,” “evidence-based,” and “science-based” in documents being prepared for next year’s budget.



Treasury Economists Barred from Conducting Tax Plan Analyses

Treasury Secretary, Steven Mnuchin, repeatedly stated that the \$1.5 trillion tax overhaul would pay for itself through economic growth and that a Treasury Department analysis would provide evidence of this. However, the administration never produced such an analysis.



Trump Administration Illegally Withholds Funding from Key Energy Research Program

The Department of Energy withheld almost \$100 million of appropriated funds from the Advanced Research Projects Agency-Energy (ARPA-E). The Agency funds high-risk energy research projects that have the potential to yield high rewards.



Environmental Protection Agency Contract with Firm Linked to EPA Employee Surveillance Has Chilling Effect on Agency Scientists

The Environmental Protection Agency hired a Republican public relations firm to take over tracking the agency's press coverage. The firm is closely linked with a Republican opposition research group that had filed information requests against EPA employees who in their capacity as private citizens or union members had expressed concern about the agency's direction.



Joshua Tree National Park Superintendent Reprimanded for Climate Change Science Tweets

After Joshua Tree National Park's Twitter account published a series of tweets based on climate change science, Secretary of the Interior Ryan Zinke reprimanded the park's superintendent and ordered the park to cease posting tweets on climate change.



Scott Pruitt Continues Attacks on Independent Science Advice at the EPA

Several months after undermining the independence of one of EPA's main advisory committees, EPA administrator Scott Pruitt attacked the independence of another, the Science Advisory Board (SAB), by ordering that no scientists receiving EPA grant funding could serve on the SAB.



Accumulating Evidence: Federal Scientists are being Silenced

Three EPA scientists were prevented from speaking at a conference on the effects of climate change.



Department of Interior Scrubs Climate Change from its Strategic Plan

A leaked draft of the Department of Interior's strategic plan for 2018-2022 eliminated all mention of climate change and instead prioritized energy production on public lands.



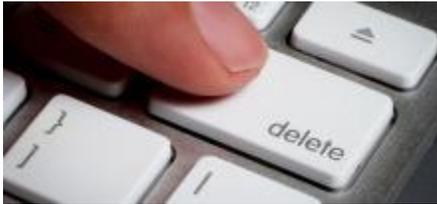
Political Appointee Removing "Climate Change" from EPA Grants

John Konkus, a political appointee reviewing grant solicitations and proposals at the EPA, is cutting references to climate change—and canceling competitively awarded grants.



[The Trump Administration Fakes Science to Justify Restrictions on Birth Control Access](#)

The administration claimed that scientific evidence supported their decision, but they got the science all wrong.



[Department of Treasury Deletes Economic Science Paper from Website](#)

The findings of the analysis run contrary to Treasury Secretary Mnuchin's statements that a corporate tax cut will benefit workers the most.



[Department of Interior Halts Study on Health Risks of Coal](#)

On August 18, 2017, the Department of Interior (DOI) ordered the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine to cease all work on a study examining potential health risks for people living near surface coal mining sites in the Appalachian Mountains. While DOI claimed that it was halting and reviewing all studies in excess of \$100,000, this study seems to be the only one currently halted.



[Energy Department Scientists Barred From Attending Nuclear Power Conference](#)

More than two dozen US scientists were prevented from attending a key international meeting on nuclear reactors.



NOAA Neglects to Connect Human Activity to Greenhouse Gases

A news release from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration failed to link greenhouse gas emissions to human activity.



Teen Pregnancy Prevention No Longer a Priority Under Trump Administration

The Trump Administration cut over \$200 million in funding for teen pregnancy prevention programs and research.



Administrator Pruitt Wants to Delay Climate Science

Scott Pruitt announced that he is planning a “Red Team–Blue Team” exercise to challenge mainstream climate science.



[Department of Interior Censors Press Release on USGS Study](#)

The Department of Interior demanded that language about climate change be removed from a press release announcing a new publication by scientists working for the United States Geological Survey.



[Advisory Committee Shakeup Targets Independent Science and Scientists](#)

The Trump administration is actively working to strip away the independence of science advisory committees at several government agencies.



[Congress Falsely Asserts Carbon Neutrality of Burning Biomass for Electricity](#)

Congress included an anti-science provision in its omnibus FY17 spending bill that could create harmful impacts on forests and climate policy.



[Climate Change Language Altered on DOE Webpages](#)

Trump Administration officials are systematically editing Department of Energy websites to strip references to climate change, downplay impacts of fossil fuels and scale back benefits of clean energy.



[Trump Administration Disregards Science, Trades Kids' Brains for Dow Profit](#)

On March 29, 2017, EPA head Scott Pruitt disregarded robust scientific evidence and announced that he would not ban a pesticide that poses a clear risk to children, farm workers, and rural drinking water users.



[Trump Administration Puts NASA Earth Science Missions on the Chopping Block](#)

The President's proposed 2018 budget would terminate four essential NASA Earth science missions: PACE, CLARREO Pathfinder, OCO-3, and DSCOVR Earth. [Read more >](#)



[EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt Lies About the Causes of Climate Change](#)

In March 2017, EPA Administrator Pruitt falsely claimed that carbon dioxide is not a primary contributor to global warming.



[President Trump Proposes Deep and Damaging Budget Cuts to NOAA](#)

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration is one of our nation’s premiere science agencies and deeply interwoven into the nation’s economy—and yet the Trump administration has proposed deep and damaging cuts to the agency's budget. [Read more >](#)



[EPA Retracts Methane Information Requests](#)

The Trump EPA withdrew a request (initiated by the Obama EPA) for data on methane emissions from the US oil and gas industry.



[HHS Rolls Back LGBT Data Collection](#)

The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) stopped including questions about LGBT people in two surveys.



[Government Data Disappears Across Multiple Agencies](#)

Previously public government data from several agencies has been removed from public view in the early weeks of the Trump administration. [Read more >](#)



[The Congressional Review Act: A Radical Threat To Science](#)

An obscure, radical, and rarely used congressional trick called the Congressional Review Act (CRA) has put crucial victories on public health and the environment at risk. [Read more >](#)



[Transition Team Restricts EPA Staff Attendance at Alaska Conference](#)

The EPA's White House transition team cut staff attendance at an annual Alaska environmental conference in half, which had conference attendees wondering about the future of environmental protection for their communities. [Read more >](#)



President Trump Signs Anti-Science "Two-for-One" Rule

President Trump's executive order requiring agencies to rescind two regulations for each new one they promulgate is arbitrary and unreasonable, violates the law, and threatens public health and safety. [Read more >](#)



Federal Agency Websites Altered

Scientific content has been changed on several agency websites in the early weeks of the Trump administration—and the alterations share some common themes. [Read more >](#)



EPA Grants and Scientific Studies Reviewed by Political Appointees

When EPA contracts and grant awards were frozen for review by political appointees on the Trump transition team shortly after the inauguration, that review included scientific data and studies—which may have violated the agency's scientific integrity policy. [Read more >](#)



CDC Cancels Climate Change Conference

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, facing likely opposition from the incoming administration, canceled a planned conference on climate change and health—setting a worrisome precedent of self-censorship and denying scientists an opportunity to share information. [Read more >](#)



Trump Transition Team Temporarily Halts Grants and Contracts at EPA

A freeze on new EPA grants and contracts, announced within hours of President Trump's inauguration, did not result in any immediate funding cuts. However, the episode raises troubling questions about how the agency will operate under Trump. [Read more >](#)



Communication from Multiple Agencies Restricted after Trump Takes Office

In the first week of the Trump administration, media blackouts were issued across many federal agencies—and science-driven agencies that work on climate change were among the primary targets. [Read more >](#)