



DPCC

DEMOCRATIC POLICY & COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE
CHAIRWOMAN DEBBIE STABENOW

The Trump Administration is Jeopardizing our Future by Attacking Science and Climate Research

*Senate Democrats urge the passage of the Scientific Integrity Act (S.775)
to ensure public science remains free from political pressure.*

This report details the Trump Administration's actions to suppress science across the federal government. It also includes a comprehensive list of all U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) climate research since January 2017, because the Administration has largely failed to publicize these important studies.

The climate crisis is real. But, Republicans and the Trump Administration are weakening environmental safeguards, burying climate crisis research, and attacking science that is critical to protecting American families and the economy.

President Trump has boasted about his efforts to roll back environmental protections. And behind the scenes, the Administration is working to discredit and influence public science with censorship, manipulation, and intimidation.

A [survey](#) conducted of more than 63,000 scientists across 16 federal agencies found evidence of “censorship and self-censorship, political interference in scientists’ work, low morale, decreased agency effectiveness, and dwindling resources” under Trump. [One](#) federal scientist has even compared his experience to “something out of a bad sci-fi movie.”

The Trump Administration Has Interfered With Science Across The Federal Government.

The White House

- **President Trump falsely stated Alabama was under threat from Hurricane Dorian.** After federal scientists publicly disputed his statements, Trump presented an altered NOAA forecast [map](#) in the Oval Office and insisted his lies were true in more than a dozen [tweets](#). Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross then directed NOAA officials to disavow the scientists who contradicted Trump, which the agency did. ([NYT](#))



(AP Photo/Evan Vucci)

- In 2018, the White House tried burying the federal government’s fourth National Climate Assessment by releasing it over Thanksgiving. A White House spokesperson later undermined the report’s findings by falsely claiming it was “based on the most extreme scenario.”¹ The report issued by 13 federal agencies concluded that climate change will

¹ <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-46325168>

disrupt the economies of every region and could cost the U.S. hundreds of billions of dollars annually if emissions aren't dramatically reduced. ([NYT](#))

- On June 14, **Trump signed an executive order to eliminate one-third of Federal advisory panels by September 30.** The order ultimately seeks to reduce the number of advisory panels – which provide critical input for federal health and environmental protections – across the government from 1,000 to 350. ([E&E News](#))
- **The White House omitted climate change from its national oceans research plan.** The Trump version eliminates a chapter on oceans and climate change and fails to include any research priorities related to climate change – as otherwise included in earlier versions published in 2013 and 2007. ([Columbia Law School](#))
- **The White House omitted climate change from its National Biodefense Strategy.** This omission dangerously overlooks science that warns climate change will increase the risk of vector-borne diseases. ([E&E News](#))
- **In 2017, the Trump Administration disbanded the National Climate Assessment Advisory Committee over concerns it lacked industry representation.** The committee helps local officials and private industry use the National Climate Assessment for long-term decision-making. ([WaPo](#))

U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA)

- **The Administration buried or downplayed significant USDA research relating to climate change, including a landmark study on how rising CO₂ levels are causing rice to lose nutrients.** Rice is a staple for 600 million people worldwide, but political officials questioned the study's findings and tried to minimize media coverage when it was published. ([Politico](#)) Senator Stabenow, Ranking Member of the U.S. Senate

Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry, is releasing a **summary of all climate change research USDA has participated in since January 2017** to ensure the public has access to these important studies so that farmers, ranchers, and rural communities can benefit from the findings.

- **The Administration tried blocking the release of a USDA climate change response plan written to help the agriculture industry understand, adapt to, and minimize the effects of climate change.** Administration officials instructed staff to keep the plan for internal purposes only. ([Politico](#))
- **The Administration is relocating USDA researchers from the Economic Research Service and the National Institute of Food and Agriculture from Washington D.C. to Kansas City, causing a massive “brain drain” of experience and a disruption of critical research.** More than 250 employees between the two agencies have already quit as a result, and their union expects less than 25% to make the move. ([NPR](#)) **White House Chief of Staff Mick Mulvaney celebrated the relocation, citing the difficulty of firing federal employees and hailing it as a “wonderful way to streamline government.”** ([Washington Post](#))
- In 2017, **Trump officials denied approval for a U.S. Forest Service scientist to attend a conference where he was scheduled to speak about the role climate change plays in wildfire conditions.** ([Scientific American](#))
- **Officials at the U.S. Forest Service removed references to climate change from the agency’s Wilderness webpage, including a note that climate change will alter the “ecological character and function of wilderness” areas.** ([Environmental Data and Governance Initiative](#))

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)

- **Administration officials at EPA implemented a new policy to restrict scientific studies used in agency rulemakings.** The new rule bars the

agency from using scientific information that is not publicly available – thereby excluding critical data kept confidential because of patient privacy policies. ([Columbia Law School](#))

- **The Government Accountability Office concluded that EPA ignored agency rules in order to fill its science advisory panels with industry representatives.** ([Senate EPW Committee](#))
- **In 2017, Administration officials abruptly, and without explanation, cancelled talks by three EPA scientists who were scheduled to discuss climate change at a conference.** ([NYT](#))
- **The White House removed language from a proposed EPA rule on how children, the elderly, and the poor are most vulnerable to climate-related health effects.** ([E&E News](#))
- **Officials removed the climate change research category from the EPA Science Matters website and buried the information it featured by scattering it into other pages on the site.** ([Environmental Data and Governance Initiative](#))
- **Officials removed references to climate change from the EPA “Heat Island Effect” webpage – thereby downplaying the impact of climate change in cities.** ([Environmental Data and Governance Initiative](#))
- **Administration officials removed several references to climate change on the EPA SmartWay website, including an entire section of the site titled, “The science is clear – greenhouse gas emissions from all sources must decrease.”** ([Columbia Law School](#))
- **In 2018, EPA political officials developed talking points for employees to use that cast doubt on the scientific consensus that humans are contributing to climate change.** ([Huffington Post](#))

- **The White House removed several references to the impacts of climate change on human health and welfare in the EPA’s proposed Affordable Clean Energy Rule** – its replacement for the Clean Power Plan. ([E&E News](#))
- **Administration officials removed “Climate” from the title of the EPA website “Energy Resources for State, Local, and Tribal Governments.”** They also scrubbed the term “climate change” from several pages and removed materials for local officials to use in preparing for climate change impacts. ([Columbia Law School](#))

U.S. Department of the Interior (DOI)

- **U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) Director James Reilly issued a directive prohibiting agency scientists from modeling the long-term impacts of climate change.** USGS reports are now prohibited from including climate modeling data for years after 2040, the very time the impacts of climate change will be most felt. ([NYT](#))
- **Administration officials pressured a National Park Service scientist to remove references to human contributions to climate change in a report and retaliated against her when she refused.** ([The Guardian](#)) ([Columbia Law School](#))
- **Administration officials implemented a new media protocol at DOI to restrict communication between scientists and the media.** The new rules require scientists to get approval from agency officials before agreeing to most interview requests. ([LA Times](#))
- **Officials at DOI removed all references to “climate change” from the WaterSMART program website,** which previously shared beneficial information on how the water conservation program would address climate change and future water demands. ([Environmental Data and Governance Initiative](#))

- **In 2017, Administration officials reassigned DOI climate scientist Joel Clement to an unrelated accounting job collecting oil and gas royalties.** Clement previously studied the impact of climate change on Alaska Native Communities, and he was one of many career officials involuntarily reassigned in 2017. ([WaPo](#))
- **Officials at the U.S. Geological Survey removed climate change as a topic from its Science Explorer website.** ([Environmental Data and Governance Initiative](#))
- **Officials at the U.S. Geological Survey removed references to climate change from a press release on a study of the California coastline, to downplay the devastating impact climate change and sea-level rise could have on the state. USGS sources also claim officials delayed the release by several months.** ([E&E News](#))
- **The Administration omitted all references to climate change in the DOI strategic plan for fiscal years 2018 to 2022.** The previous Administration’s strategic plan for fiscal years 2014 to 2018 mentioned “climate change” 49 times. ([Columbia Law School](#))

U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS)

- **The Administration removed all references to “climate change” and “global warming” from FEMA’s strategic plan for 2018-2022, despite scientific consensus that hurricanes and storms are intensifying under climate change.**² ([Bloomberg](#))
- **FEMA’s After Action Report on the 2017 hurricane season contained no mention of climate change, despite scientific consensus that climate change is increasing the intensity of hurricanes.**³ 2017 was the costliest and deadliest year on record for U.S. natural disasters.⁴ ([Columbia Law](#))

² <https://nca2014.globalchange.gov/report/our-changing-climate/changes-hurricanes>

³ <https://nca2014.globalchange.gov/report/our-changing-climate/changes-hurricanes>

⁴ <https://www.ncdc.noaa.gov/billions/summary-stats>

- **The White House and Administration officials prevented FEMA’s Technical Mapping Advisory Council (TMAC) from meeting for more than five months.** TMAC advises FEMA on flood dynamics and flood risks across the United States. ([E&E News](#))

U.S. Departments of State, Defense, and Energy

- In 2019, the Administration blocked written testimony from a senior State Department analyst on the national security implications of climate change. ([NYT](#))
- Administration officials at the Energy Department removed “climate change” from the description of what scientists in the Biological and Environmental Research group study. ([Environmental Data and Governance Initiative](#))
- The Administration disbanded the U.S. Navy’s Task Force on Climate Change, which conducted important research on the threats and strategic challenges associated with climate change. ([E&E News](#))
- The Administration removed several references to climate change from a Department of Defense report on how climate change is affecting military bases and installations. ([WaPo](#))

Other Agencies

- Officials at the Occupational Safety and Health Administration removed references from its webpage on the impact of climate change on heat-related health risks in the workplace. ([Environmental Data and Governance Initiative](#))
- The Administration removed references to climate change from its 2017 sustainability reports for the United States Agency for International Development and the Treasury Department. ([E&E News](#)) ([E&E News](#)).