

Climate Science vs. Fossil Fuel Fiction

An Infographic from the Union of Concerned Scientists

www.ucsusa.org/fossilfuelfiction

Source Material and Background Information

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“...current indirect CO₂ benefits clearly outweigh any hypothesized costs by literally orders of magnitude; the benefit-cost ratios range up to more than 200-to-1.” –Peabody Energy, 2014

Source

This statement was made by Peabody Energy in a 2014 comment to Minnesota regulators in response to updating the state’s social cost of carbon policy.ⁱ The statement drew from a document prepared by Dr. Roger Bezdek for the American Coalition for Clean Coal Electricity (ACCCE) titled “The Social Costs of Carbon? No, the Social Benefits of Carbon.”ⁱⁱ

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 costs and benefits of climate change have been extensively examined in the scientific literature. The White House recently updated (2014) the official U.S. social cost of carbon (SCC), which attempts to estimate the costs of damage from carbon pollution.ⁱⁱⁱ

Carbon pollution, from human activities like burning fossil fuels and cutting down tropical forests, is causing climate change. And the impacts of climate change—including drought, heat waves, and coastal flooding, and resulting public health and economic consequences—are costly for society. Yet these social costs (costs that are borne by society at large, and not by the companies producing, distributing and earning large profits off fossil fuels) aren’t currently factored into decisions by individuals, companies or governments about how much carbon to emit. Using the SCC to help guide climate policies can help ensure that at least some of the social costs (those that are included in the current SCC estimate) are weighed against the benefits of activities that emit carbon.

At [\\$37 per metric ton of CO₂](#) in 2015 (2007 dollars, using a 3% discount rate), the current U.S. Government estimate of the SCC is almost certainly an underestimate of the costs of climate

change and can be improved in the future. While the SCC remains an incomplete enumeration of the dollar costs of climate change (because of data limitations and uncertainties), numerous economists and scientists agree that over the long term the costs of carbon pollution clearly outweigh the benefits of continuing to ramp up emissions.^{iv}

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.”^v “Peabody is confident that the result of such a balanced view will be a finding of non-endangerment,” the documented concluded.^{vi}

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.^{vii} 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.”^{viii}

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,”^{ix}

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

ⁱ Coddington, K.A. 2014. Comments in *Investigation in environmental and socioeconomic costs under Minn. Stat. 216B.2422, subd. 3* submitted by Kazmarek Morey Cloud Laseter LLP on behalf of Peabody Energy (Minnesota PUC document E-999/CI-00-1636). Saint Paul, MN. Online at <https://www.edockets.state.mn.us/EFiling/edockets/searchDocuments.do?method=showPoup&documentId=%7B5A BE804A-F073-47DA-9ED7-65BD39EDB1DC%7D&documentTitle=20146-100803-01>, accessed December 8, 2014.

ⁱⁱ Bezdek, R. 2014. *The Social Costs of Carbon? No, the Social Benefits of Carbon*, Prepared for the *American Coalition for Clean Coal Electricity (ACCCE)*, January. Online at http://www.americaspower.org/sites/default/files/Social_Cost_of_Carbon.pdf, accessed December 8, 2014.

ⁱⁱⁱ http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/omb/inforeg/social_cost_of_carbon_for_ria_2013_update.pdf

^{iv} Ackerman, F. and Stanton, E.A. 2012. *Climate risks and carbon prices: Revising the social cost of carbon. Economics*. Online at <http://www.econstor.eu/bitstream/10419/57819/1/690226691.pdf>, accessed March 4, 2015.

^v 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.

^{vi} Ibid.

^{vii} 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.

^{viii} 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.

^{ix} 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.

^x 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.

^{xi} 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.