

National Journal

The Koch Brothers: Award-Winning Eco-Stewards

Harry Reid, who says they “are against anything that protects the environment,” has it exactly backward.

By Deroy Murdock
August 15, 2014

In Senate Democratic leader Harry Reid’s febrile mind, Charles and David Koch are twin volcanoes. They mercilessly belch hot, noxious gases into Earth’s feeble atmosphere. Maybe the evil Koch brothers can’t help it. More likely, though, they pollute heavily — just for laughs.

“Charles and David Koch are waging a war against anything that protects the environment,” Reid bellowed on the Senate floor last May. “While the Koch brothers admit to not being experts on the matter, these billionaire oil tycoons are certainly experts at contributing to climate change. That’s what they do very well. They are one of the main causes of this. Not a cause, one of the main causes.”

Reid’s spokesman, Adam Jentleson, doubled down on his boss’s single-minded disdain for the Koch brothers. As Jentleson told the *Washington Post*: “The Koch brothers have been very clear that they want free rein to pollute as much as they want and emit as much carbon into our atmosphere as they want while the rest of us suffer the consequences.”

The *Post*, as luck would have it, gave Nevada’s Reid three out of four Pinocchios for his manifest mendacity.

Thus, Reid and other Kochophobic liberal Democrats will be shocked to learn that, since January 2009, the wicked Koch brothers’ companies have won 792 awards for environmental quality, operational safety, community service, and philanthropy. The Kochs donate hundreds of millions of dollars for — among other things — cancer research, the fine arts, and libertarian groups, such as the Cato Institute and the Institute for Humane Studies, with which I have collaborated for decades.

Even more amazing, a racist, far-right cabal known as the Obama administration has bestowed dozens of these awards upon enterprises controlled by the “un-American” Koch brothers, as Reid so graciously described them.

- The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency gave its 2009 SmartWay Excellence Award to Georgia-Pacific, a Koch Industries company.

“I commend Georgia-Pacific for its leadership in promoting sustainable transportation practices through the SmartWay Transportation Partnership,” said Margo T. Oge, director of EPA’s Office of Transportation and Air Quality. “These actions demonstrate a commitment to a cleaner environment and more secure energy supply.”

- Georgia-Pacific’s gypsum plant in Blue Rapids, Kans., scored a Sentinels of Safety Award from the Mine Safety and Health Administration. Employees at this installation performed their jobs throughout 2009 with no recordable injuries.
- Koch Industries’ headquarters tower in Wichita, Kans., was cited by the EPA as an Energy Star building in 2009. That year, by coincidence, Wichita State University’s Multicultural Affairs Office gave Koch Industries its Martin Luther King Jr. Corporation of the Year Award.
- The Kochs’ 130,000-acre Matador Ranch spans five Texas counties and nurtures some 2,500 head of cattle. In October 2010, the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the federal Fish and Wildlife Service gave Matador a regional Environmental Stewardship Award, in conjunction with other private-sector and Texas-based groups.

“Matador Ranch is clearly a leader in many areas,” according to Jeff Goodwin of the USDA’s Natural Resources Conservation Service. “The ranch team has developed a sustainable approach to rangeland management that mutually benefits the land, the water, the wildlife, and the livestock operation.”

- Based in Green Bay, Wisc., the Kochs’ C. Reiss Coal Company was recognized in 2011 under the STAR Voluntary Protection Program of the U.S. Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA).
- The U.S. Forest Service gave Georgia-Pacific its 2011 Two Chiefs Partnership Award. This honor specifically credited G-P’s wood- and fiber-supply group in Philomath, Ore., for its watershed-restoration and natural-resource-preservation efforts in the Siuslaw National Forest on the coast of the Beaver State.
- Koch Carbon of Corpus Christi, Texas, was recertified under OSHA’s VPP STAR program in May 2013. This petroleum-coke plant, a division of Koch Minerals, won plaudits for its exceptional operations and safety.

If this widely overlooked news about the Koch brothers’ greenness stiffens Harry Reid’s scowl, he should snap at Obama, the man whose executive branch keeps handing the Kochs one environmental-achievement award after another.