

Here Are 7 Reasons 2017 Could Be The Worst Year Ever For Environmentalists

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January 14, 2017

The environmental movement could have a bad year in 2017.

Environmentalists saw their favored political party suffer losses in the 2016 election. Billionaire Tom Steyer was 2016's biggest political donor, pouring more than \$87 million into Democratic coffers — but his preferred candidates lost across the board.

President Barack Obama is leaving office Jan. 20, and President-elect Donald Trump will take his place. Republicans control both chambers of Congress, and have vowed to roll back Obama-era environmental regulations.

That's bad for environmentalists, but it could be even worse for these seven reasons:

1.) Trump Will Be The Green Movement's Worst Nightmare

Trump said policies created to fight global warming are hurting U.S. manufacturing competitiveness with China. That's not good news for activists.

Major environmental groups formally endorsed Democratic presidential nominee Hillary Clinton largely because they perceived Trump as hostile to policies Obama put in place to curb fossil fuels. Trump is unlikely to continue the environmental policies of his predecessor.

On top of that, Trump nominated Oklahoma Attorney General Scott Pruitt to head the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Pruitt has battled the EPA numerous times in court.

2.) Environmentalists Themselves Say It'll Be A Hard Year

Major figures in the environmental movement openly characterized the 2016 election as a huge defeat for their movement, and aren't looking forward to the coming year.

“Make no mistake — the election of Donald Trump could be devastating for our climate and our future,” Michael Brune, executive director of The Sierra Club, wrote in a press statement the day after Trump's victory. “Donald Trump now has the unflattering distinction of being the only head of state in the entire world to reject the scientific consensus that mankind is driving climate change.”

“The election of Donald Trump as president has been devastating,” Annie Leonard, executive director of Greenpeace, said after the election. “There’s no question, Donald Trump’s climate denial is staggering. He wants to shut down the EPA, ‘cancel’ the Paris Climate Agreement, stop funding clean energy research, and ‘drill, baby, drill.’”

3.) All Of Obama’s Green Regulations Can Be Overturned

Trump promised to undo many of Obama’s executive actions, especially those having to do with global warming. That means eight years of environmentalist lobbying could be undone.

“Governing by a phone and a pen is a two way street,” Aaron Johnson, a spokesperson for the pro-industry Western Energy Alliance, told The Daily Caller News Foundation. “Executive orders signed by President Obama can be reversed by the stroke of a pen by President Trump on Day One.”

Despite frequent claims by Obama that his new rules are “permanent,” regulations enacted by Obama’s “pen and phone” can be repealed solely by Trump.

“Proposed regulations or those still in development can be halted in their tracks once the new administration is in place,” Johnson said. “But final rules that have gone through the regulatory process are difficult to overturn quickly. The Ace in the Hole, however, is Congress. Major regulations issued at the last minute could come under legislative scrutiny under the Congressional Review Act and other bills the House considered just this week.”

4.) The EPA Will Likely Stop Listening To Greens

Trump’s EPA won’t have the cozy relationship with environmentalists the Obama administration did.

Trump’s EPA could crack down on a practice called “sue and settle.” This is when a federal agency quickly settles a lawsuit filed by environmentalists to force a rulemaking — all of this is done behind closed doors and without input from industry or the public.

“Sue and settle” allows green groups to sue the EPA to issue politically contentious regulations and get all their legal fees paid for.

The Center For Biological Diversity (CBD), for example, used “sue and settle” to get the federal government to list species under the Endangered Species Act. CBD boasts on its website that these tactics will end most oil and gas production in the U.S.

5.) This Is The End Of The Clean Power Plan

Trump is expected to repeal the EPA’s Clean Power Plan (CPP) limiting carbon dioxide emissions from coal plants.

The CPP is intended to slow global warming at a cost of \$41 billion — that’s \$10.74 a month for each American.

Even if it had been implemented, it wasn’t estimated to have a measurable impact on global warming. The CPP would only avert 0.019 degrees Celsius of warming by the year 2100, an

amount so small it can't be detected, according to analysis by the libertarian Cato Institute using models created by the EPA.

6.) The Keystone XL Pipeline Will Likely Be Built

Trump promised a major infrastructure program, which could include approving the Keystone XL pipeline.

TransCanada, the company behind the Keystone XL pipeline, filed a \$15 billion lawsuit last June against the Obama administration under the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). TransCanada claimed that Obama spent seven years using “arbitrary and contrived” analyses and justifications to delay the pipeline for political reasons.

Obama rejected the pipeline due to the perception among other countries it would increase global warming. Yet the pipeline would have increased America's carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions by less than three-tenths of one percent of the country's total annual CO₂ emissions, according to analysis by the EPA.

7.) Solar And Wind Power Aren't Doing Well

Wind and solar power aren't growing rapidly enough to achieve environmentalist's goals, despite decades of government support.

A new report published in January by energy giant ExxonMobil found that wind, solar and biofuels will only supply 4 percent of global energy by 2040.

Exxon suspects that the fastest growing source of energy in 2040 will be from natural gas, which will meet 25 percent of all demand, while coal power falls to 20 percent. The largest source of energy in 2040 will be oil, which will account for about 32 percent of total demand.

Exxon's 2040 projections are roughly similar to the current U.S. numbers, which got 33 percent of its power from natural gas in 2015, another 33 percent from coal, 20 percent from nuclear, and a mere 5.3 percent from wind and solar combined, according to the governmental Energy Information Administration.