

## Greenpeace: Big Oil funds Climategate 'echo chamber'



### Kansas-based giant found to have 'spent millions' on research that casts doubt on climate change

By Tim Edwards

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**G**reenpeace claims to have proof of what environmentalists have suspected for years: that Big Oil is funding the activities of climate change deniers who have been instrumental in demonising the now-exonerated scientist at the centre of 'Climategate'.

A report published by the charity yesterday alleges that Koch Industries gave \$48.5m to organisations dedicated to producing research and campaigns that cast doubt on climate change. In comparison, oil giant ExxonMobil spent \$24m in the same period on its own climate change sceptic activities.

Koch is a private, Kansas-based conglomerate dealing in petroleum, minerals, chemicals and finance among other industries. With annual revenue of \$98bn, its owner, billionaire tycoon David Koch, says it's "the biggest company you've never heard of".

Americans for Prosperity, the Heritage Foundation and the Cato Institute have received respectively \$5m, \$1.6m and \$1m from Koch since 2005, according to Greenpeace. These conservative organisations were among many Koch-funded advocacy groups and think tanks which contributed to what Greenpeace calls the Climategate "echo chamber".

Climategate blew up in November following the hacking and dissemination of emails from the University of East Anglia's Climatic Research Unit. Climate change sceptics alleged the emails showed that CRU scientists misled the world by claiming climate change was happening despite the data proving otherwise. British MPs today cleared the CRU head, Dr Phil Jones, of distorting his data.

But climate sceptics have been making hay with the emails regardless. Steve Lonegan, a director of Americans for Prosperity, said Climategate could be the "biggest hoax our world has ever seen". The Heritage Foundation called Climategate a conspiracy that attempted to "freeze out dissenting scientists from publishing their work in reputable journals". Meanwhile, Patrick J Michaels of the Cato Institute is a vocal climate sceptic who says the CRU scientists perpetrated a "capital crime".

Much of the Koch money has gone to fund scientific studies that are apparently aimed at giving a veneer of respectability to

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climate change scepticism, which after all goes against the grain of mainstream scientific opinion.

A 2007 study funded by the Charles G. Koch Charitable Foundation and ExxonMobil concluded that polar bears were not declining because of global warming. "Polar bears of western Hudson Bay and climate change: Are warming spring air temperatures the 'ultimate' survival control factor?" was published in *Ecological Complexity* as a 'Viewpoint' piece and not subjected to peer review. Nevertheless, the paper was cited by then-Alaskan governor Sarah Palin to support her case against government action to protect the polar bear.

Two polar bear experts, Dr Ian Stirling and Dr Andrew Derocher, responded to the paper, saying: "[The article's authors]... suggest that factors other than climate warming are responsible for a decline in the polar bear population of Western Hudson Bay... In our examination of their alternative explanations, and the data available to evaluate each, we found little support for any."

Koch has defended its environmental record. In a statement, the company said: "The Greenpeace report... distorts the environmental record of our companies.

"We believe the political response to climate issues should be based on sound science. Both a free society and the scientific method require an open and honest airing of all sides, not demonising and silencing those with whom you disagree."

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One victim of demonisation - Dr Phil Jones of the CRU - would probably agree. ■

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