

17106 EPA head Scott Pruitt denies that carbon dioxide causes global warming

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Scott Pruitt, Donald Trump's head of the US Environmental Protection Agency, has dismissed a basic scientific understanding of climate change by denying that carbon dioxide emissions are a primary cause of global warming.

Pruitt said that he did not believe that CO₂, a heat-trapping gas, was pushing global temperatures upwards.

"I think that measuring with precision human activity on the climate is something very challenging to do and there's tremendous disagreement about the degree of impact, so no, I would not agree that it's a primary contributor to the global warming that we see," he said.

"But we don't know that yet ... We need to continue the debate and continue the review and the analysis" he added.

This means Pruitt disagrees with his own agency, which states on its website that carbon dioxide is the *primary greenhouse gas that is contributing to recent climate change*. This finding is backed by Nasa, which calls CO₂ *the most important long-lived 'forcing' of climate change*".

Scientists have understood for more than a century that CO₂ traps heat. Atmospheric concentrations of the gas have increased by more than a third since the industrial revolution, driven by the burning of fossil fuels and deforestation.

Pruitt's comments were quickly condemned by scientists and environmental activists.

Kevin Trenberth, senior scientist at the National Center for Atmospheric Research, said: "Pruitt has demonstrated that he is unqualified to run the EPA or any agency. There is no doubt at all that the planet is warming, and it is primarily due to increased carbon dioxide in the atmosphere from burning of fossil fuels. Carbon dioxide is a greenhouse gas and we can demonstrate clearly that the observed warming of the planet would not have occurred without that change in atmospheric composition. These are scientific facts, not opinion, and politicians must take account of the scientific evidence."

Pruitt has previously been ambiguous on the issue of climate change, telling the Senate that while he accepts the world is warming it is *hard to measure with precision* the human influence.

One of the main functions of the EPA is the regulation of greenhouse gases, including CO₂. Pruitt, in his previous role as attorney general of Oklahoma, tried to stop Obama's Clean Power Plan, which imposes emissions limits on coal-fired power plants.

The plan, similar to many of the other Obama-era policies to combat climate change and safeguard clean air and water, is likely to be abandoned by the Trump administration.

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