

‘Blatant Censorship’: Trump EPA Abruptly Muzzles Its Own Climate Scientists

EPA's move to cancel researchers' presentations at upcoming conference slammed as "abuse of power"

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Featured image: Scott Pruitt (Source: [Greenpeace USA](#))

In what critics are [calling](#) “a blatant example of the scientific censorship” being imposed on climate researchers by the Trump White House, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) late Sunday abruptly canceled the presentations of three government scientists who were set to discuss recent climate change findings at a conference in Rhode Island.

“They don’t believe in climate change, so I think what they’re trying to do is stifle discussions of the impacts of climate change,” John King, professor of oceanography at the University of Rhode Island, said of EPA administrator Scott Pruitt and other top White House officials.

Robinson Fulweiler, a Boston University ecosystems ecologist, echoed King’s critique in an [interview](#) with the *Washington Post*, calling the EPA’s move an “abuse of power.”

“The silencing of government scientists is a scary step toward silencing anyone who disagrees,” Fulweiler concluded. “The choice by our government leaders to ignore the abundant and overwhelming data regarding climate change does not stop it from being true or prevent the negative consequences that are already occurring and those that are on the horizon.”

The Rhode Island conference, still set to take place on Monday, was planned by the Narragansett Bay Estuary Program, which is funded by the EPA. Pruitt’s 2018 budget would eliminate the program entirely.

The three scientists who have been barred from speaking at the event contributed substantially to a [new report](#) released to coincide with the conference, and all three were planning to discuss the present and future impacts of human-caused climate change, Lisa Friedman of the *New York Times* [reports](#).

Specifically, Friedman notes, the event was “designed to draw attention to the health of Narragansett Bay, the largest estuary in New England and a key to the region’s tourism and fishing industries.”

Friedman went on to highlight the topics of the researchers' scrapped presentations:

Autumn Oczkowski, a research ecologist at the EPA's National Health and Environmental Effects Research Laboratory Atlantic Ecology Division in Rhode Island, was scheduled to give the keynote address. Colleagues familiar with her speech said she intended to address climate change and other factors affecting the health of the estuary.

Rose Martin, a postdoctoral fellow at the same EPA laboratory and Emily Shumchenia, an EPA consultant, were scheduled to speak on an afternoon panel entitled "The Present and Future Biological Implications of Climate Change."

Though the EPA's unexplained last-minute cancellation raised the ire of environmentalists, lawmakers, and climate researchers, it can hardly be viewed as surprising, given the Trump administration's track record and stated aims.

As *EcoWatch* [reported](#) late last week, the EPA scrubbed more than a dozen mentions of climate change from its website recently as part of "the Trump administration's ongoing efforts to pretend that climate change doesn't exist."

Trump's EPA has also [issued](#) a four-year "strategy" document that doesn't include the word "climate," threatened to "[purge](#)" scientists who refuse to toe the fossil fuel industry line, and [overwhelmingly privileged](#) the views of oil and gas industry representatives over those of environmental groups.

Sen. Sheldon Whitehouse (D-R.I.), who is scheduled to speak at Monday's conference, [slammed](#) the EPA's decision as harmful to both his home state and the nation.

"Muzzling our leading scientists benefits no one," Whitehouse concluded.

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