

In Midst of ExxonMobil Climate Denial Scandal, Company Hiring Climate Change Researcher

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Caught in the [crosshairs of an ongoing New York Attorney General investigation](#) exploring its role in studying the damage climate change could cause since the 1970's and then proceeding to fund climate science denial campaigns, ExxonMobil has announced an interesting job opening.

No, not the [new lawyer](#) who will soon send the “[private empire](#)” billable hours for his defense work in the New York AGprobe, though that's a story for another day. Exxon is hiring for a [climate change researcher](#) to work in its Annandale, New Jersey research park facility.

“We are seeking a candidate to advance research and assessment providing fundamental understanding on global climate change issues,” [reads the job description](#).

It continues:

“The candidate would lead research in areas such as Earth systems science and the role of technologies and systems in managing the risks posed by global climate change. The successful candidate will develop collaborative research efforts, contribute significant publications, contribute to assessments (e.g., the IPCC) and demonstrate strong scientific leadership within both the corporation and external scientific community...Significant demonstrated experience in researching Earth systems science, integrated assessment and energy modeling is preferred. ”

It sounds a lot like a job description of a person who worked at the [unit](#) Exxon [had](#) at [its disposal](#) until the company [cut 83 percent of its climate research budget](#) and started funding denial to the tune of [\\$31 million since 1998](#).

Exxon would proceed to fund think-tanks — such as [Heartland Institute](#), [Cato Institute](#), [American Enterprise Institute](#) and [a whole network of individual deniers](#) — that ridiculed the same climate change models its researchers created — and that its new researcher will also create. Former CEO [Lee Raymond](#) also is [on record berating the same models](#), as is the [company via its ads](#).

And former [Exxon lobbyist William O'Keefe](#), most recently CEO of the [George C. Marshall Institute](#) (recently rebranded as the CO2 Coalition), was recently [exposed in a Greenpeace investigation](#) detailing the willingness of certain academics to [generate industry-friendly testimony and op-eds on a for-hire basis](#). Exxon has served as a [major funder of the George](#)

Deep Cuts

In a story running two days after Exxon announced it would be hiring, InsideClimate news reported on the deep cuts in the 1980's to Exxon's climate research program.

"Facing a budget crunch and sensing that any government efforts to clamp down on carbon pollution were a long way off, Exxon terminated two especially innovative experiments," [detailed InsideClimate](#). "The cuts reversed the course that the company followed in the late 1970s, when top company scientists warned Exxon's management for the first time of the risks of climate change, and launched internal research programs unparalleled among its oil industry peers."

InsideClimate [published the memorandum](#) in which ExxonMobil decided to make the cuts, and [two other memos](#) explaining which climate research programs would receive cuts.

Why cut climate research, though? The company calculated correctly — in large part due to its own lobbying and denial echo chamber efforts — that no strong regulations to curtail greenhouse gas emissions loomed on either the domestic or global level.

COP Writing on Wall or PR?

So why hire a climate researcher now? Perhaps Exxon sees the writing on the wall, as it did the first time around the block in the 1970's, that climate change is a global priority that demands attention.

In a recent blog post, Exxon [claimed to support the cutting of a deal](#) — a revenue-neutral carbon tax to be precise — at the United Nations climate summit in Paris.

"When it comes to COP21, we are hopeful that an agreement will be reached for meaningful action to address the risks surrounding climate change," the company wrote. "We encourage those gathered in Paris to embrace a principled approach to climate change risk. Such an approach holds great promise for ensuring that effective action will be taken to meet this global challenge."

The company has also spoken out about the [climate change costs of not coming to a substantive deal](#) in Paris.

Of course, Exxon continues to bankroll the campaigns of climate change denier politicians such as [U.S. Sen. James Inhofe \(R-OK\)](#), [U.S. Sen. Fred Upton \(R-MI\)](#), [U.S. Sen. David Vitter \(R-LA\)](#) and many others.

In fact, the company has already handed out [\\$349,250 in traceable money](#) to Republican congressional candidates so far in the 2016 electoral cycle. At this point in its history — [though not always the case](#) — the GOP has steeped itself in science denial and has [railed against](#) the [Paris Agreement](#) since nearly 200 countries agreed to it on Saturday.

Inhofe, recipient thus far of \$7,500 in Exxon campaign cash during this cycle, delivered a [recorded video keynote address](#) at a [Heartland Institute climate denial gathering](#) held in conjunction with the Paris UN climate talks.

Exxon also has [spent millions lobbying to lift the U.S. oil export ban](#), according to lobbying disclosure forms reviewed by DeSmog, a de facto form of climate denial given the [greenhouse gas emissions implications of](#) lifting the ban.

Considering these facts, the Exxon climate research hire appears much more likely to fit under the umbrella of Exxon's ongoing crisis communications PR plan, as the [company continues to spend big lobbying](#) for status quo (industry friendly) climate and energy policies.

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