

EPA

Group sues for access to scientific-integrity documents

Amanda Reilly, E&E News reporter

Published: Wednesday, February 7, 2018



Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility has filed a lawsuit to obtain records on U.S. EPA scientific policies. Claudine Hellmuth/E&E News

An environmental group filed a lawsuit yesterday seeking documents related to U.S. EPA science in the wake of Administrator Scott Pruitt's decision to bar staffers from presenting climate change studies at a conference last October.

Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility (PEER) says the agency failed to respond to a Freedom of Information Act request that sought research objectives and communications related to its scientific integrity policy.

EPA also failed to furnish documents illuminating the policies that guide staff participation in events, the lawsuit contends.

"PEER now turns to this court to enforce the FOIA's guarantee of public access to agency records," said the [complaint](#), filed in the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia.

PEER said its December FOIA request stemmed from concerns that EPA was impeding the Office of Research and Development from "freely disseminat[ing] its scientific research."

The green group cited EPA's decision in October 2017 to cancel the presentations of two agency scientists and a consultant at a conference convened in Narragansett Bay, R.I., for the release of a major report on the status of New England's largest estuary. The report included an extensive section on climate change ([Greenwire](#), Oct. 23, 2017).

Democrats responded by accusing Pruitt of "muzzling" EPA scientists.

For his part, Pruitt attempted to reassure Democrats that he wouldn't stop scientists from publicly discussing their work. He told Sen. Sheldon Whitehouse (D-R.I.) that "procedures have been put in place to prevent such an occurrence in the future" ([E&E News PM](#), Dec. 6, 2017).

"I am committed to upholding EPA's Scientific Integrity Policy, which ensures that the Agency's scientific work is of the highest quality, is presented openly and with integrity, and is free from political interference," Pruitt wrote in a December letter to Whitehouse.

PEER used the letter as a basis for its FOIA request. The group is seeking a court order compelling EPA to release the requested documents.

"The head of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency promised lawmakers that there would be no recurrence," PEER said in a statement. "EPA Headquarters, however, has been unable or unwilling to produce any written records describing these corrective actions."

E&E News PM is written and produced by the staff of E&E News. A late afternoon roundup providing coverage of all the breaking and developing policy news from Capitol Hill, around the country and around the world, E&E News PM is a must-read for the key players who need to be ahead of the next day's headlines. E&E News PM publishes daily at 4:30 p.m.



E&E News
122 C Street NW 7th Floor Washington, DC 20001
Phone: 202-628-6500 Fax: 202-737-5299
www.eenews.net

All content is copyrighted and may not be reproduced or retransmitted without the express consent of Environment & Energy Publishing, LLC. [Click here](#) to view our privacy policy.