

# If you care about climate change, you have to embrace fracking

By ACSH Staff — July 15, 2015



[1]When it was [announced](#) [2] a few years ago that American

carbon dioxide emissions were back at 1990s levels, the Obama administration gave credit to his control of the Environmental Protection Agency. His critics contended emissions were lower because so many people were out of work due to his economic policies.

They were both wrong. Emissions were lower because we had replaced coal with natural gas. Lost in the flurry of pundits laying blame and taking credit was the fact that CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from coal, used to generate energy, had dropped back to early 1980s levels. Coal was on the run and we had natural gas to thank for that.

This should have been a cause for celebration by environmental groups. Instead, they changed their minds, and began to insist that the same natural gas they had lobbied for decades was all of a sudden bad for us. Unless we went cold turkey on all fossil fuels, they said, we were still doomed.

Since these groups were now, in fact, effectively dooming us, it was hard to take their new concerns seriously. Because natural gas was a good thing.

## Global warming was caused by environmentalists

There is a reason France can object to giant plumes of pollution wafting in from Germany now that Deutschland is shutting down nuclear plants and burning even more fossil fuels: France is overwhelmingly nuclear, so they have done their part to produce clean energy.

In America, that has not been possible. In 1994 a war that had been waged for decades by environmentalists was finally won and President Bill Clinton and Democratic Senator John Kerry killed the future of nuclear power in America. That left us with increased reliance on coal (and therefore more CO<sub>2</sub> emissions) unless we wanted to return to a culture where energy was reserved only for the wealthy elitist hypocrites who could afford to donate to environmental groups.

Environmentalists had made the perfect the enemy of the good.

But science outmaneuvered doomsday prophets once again. Hydraulic fracturing had been around

since the 1940s but government scientists declared it would never be viable. Until it was, thanks to a wildcatter who was convinced older, played out wells still had life in them.

A Texas oilman named [George P. Mitchell used 3-D seismic data and came up with a mixture of sand and water that safely released gas from the shale](#) [3]. He was such a fan of the scientific method and the power of energy to boost the fortunes of all people that even Stephen Hawking eulogized him after his death.

And it turns out Mitchell helped save the environment too, because natural gas has now surpassed coal as the main source of U.S. electrical power generation. In April, [natural gas accounted for 31 percent of the U.S. total while coal is at 30 percent, according to U.S. Energy Department statistics](#) [4]. That's good for us, and good for the world.

Despite the success created by natural gas and science and the free market, the Obama administration has created new arbitrary rules that set national limits on carbon dioxide coming from existing power plants, which threatens the legacy of making energy affordable for rich and poor alike.

Solar is not ready yet and wind never will be, so penalizing natural gas seems capricious, if not downright foolish. Nuclear power is still in third place for American energy production, at 20 percent, but with the Nuclear Regulatory Commission being run by people who were chosen because they are against nuclear energy, continuing that legacy of John Kerry, there isn't much chance for new plants to be approved until at least 2017, when perhaps a team more friendly to science might be in charge.

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**Links**

[1] <http://acsh.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/Hydrofracking.47c1aab.jpg>

[2]

<http://yosemite.epa.gov/opa/admpress.nsf/6424ac1caa800aab85257359003f5337/063fe033474948048525787600647>

[3]

[http://www.science20.com/science\\_20/stephen\\_hawking\\_eulogizes\\_father\\_fracking\\_and\\_fan\\_science\\_george\\_p\\_mitchell/118155](http://www.science20.com/science_20/stephen_hawking_eulogizes_father_fracking_and_fan_science_george_p_mitchell/118155)

[4] <http://www.ajc.com/ap/ap/top-news/natural-gas-surpasses-coal-as-biggest-us-electricity/nmxxY/?source=science20.com>