Clearing Itself, EPA Again Weakens Public's Trust

By Nicholas Staropoli — August 27, 2015

As an American and an environmentalist, I feel somewhat betrayed by the Environmental Protection Agency's behavior of late.

It's main duty is to protect, yes, you guessed it, it's right there in the name. To achieve that, the agency is supposed to be at the forefront of science and policy, to make sure no one in America is acting maliciously towards our planet, while working towards reducing emissions by promoting clean energy sources and punishing those who pollute our air, land, rivers, streams, oceans etc.

That's what they are supposed to be doing. Instead, they have been buddying up with anti-science groups like Sierra Club and the Natural Resources Defense Council.

Last year, EPA Administrator Lisa P. Jackson resigned amid controversy, after it was learned that she illegally used personal email and a pseudonym to hide communications from Freedom of Information Act requests (FOIA). Earlier this year, U.S. District Judge Royce C. Lamberth blasted the EPA for suspicious dealings related to FOIA requests from the conservative group Landmark Legal Foundation. The agency did not receive sanctions because no one could prove the activity was meant to destroy or delete documents. These instances and others (particularly the mining spill catastrophe it just caused in Colorado [1]) has damaged the credibility of the department.

Because of ethical failures, officials have vowed to work on transparency. However, it's tough to believe them when earlier this week the EPA announced that its own internal investigation clearing itself of wrongdoing. "We did not find any indications of political interference or delay," the agency said, "in the release of FOIA documents."

This self-absolution happened in the face of a Competitive Enterprise Institute [2] (CEI) report that provided direct evidence to the contrary. CEI found that in 2013, 81 percent of fee waiver requests from conservative groups were rejected or ignored by the EPA, while the agency granted fee waivers for 92 percent of FOIA requests from major environmental groups (like the NRDC [3], or giving personal addresses for 80,000 farmers and ranches to Earth Justice [4], the militant wing of Sierra Club).

As Americans, we are demanding more transparency from our government and the EPA shouldn't be exempt from that. Furthermore, if the agency's policies are based on sound science, it shouldn't
have anything to hide.


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