

JAMES TAYLOR'S DECEPTIVE ATTEMPT TO DISCREDIT NCA EXPERTS

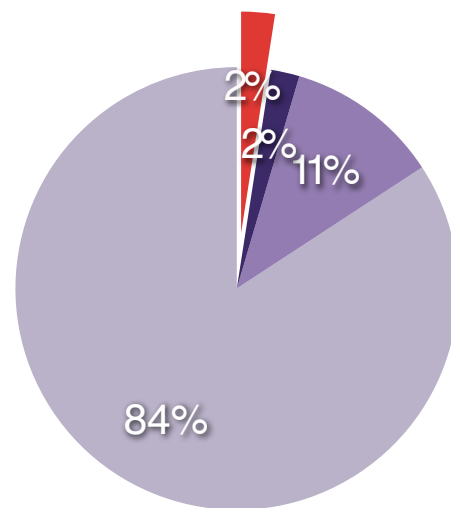
In a new [Forbes op-ed](#), James Taylor denigrates the validity of the National Climate Assessment (NCA) on the grounds that seven of its directors have past connections to groups he considers to be biased. His accusations are thoroughly misleading and dishonest in that they ignore the great extent, diversity, and stature of NCA authors and the consensus nature of the NCA process.

The context:

- The 13 scientists that Taylor mentions compose the Chair, Vice-Chairs, and Executive Secretariat ([full list](#)). He uses just seven to show the "extremism" of the group while ignoring the other six, several of whom have deep ties to industry or the GW Bush administration. These 13 are just a fraction of the high-ranking scientists involved in the NCA. The Development and Advisory Committee alone contains an additional 32 committee members, and the report itself has over 240 lead authors ([full list](#)).
- By design, the leaders of the NCA represent a variety of backgrounds, including those from green groups, but also from business, industry, consulting, and academia. The report is the result of a consensus between all of these diverse voices.
- The seven scientists that Taylor criticizes are all leaders in their fields, with thousands of papers between them published in the top peer-reviewed journals. Their connections to nonprofits are of a scientific nature and do not invalidate their significant body of work.
- If Taylor believes that connection to an agenda-driven non-profit destroys the authority of a speaker, he should first look to himself. He is a [Senior Fellow](#) at the [Heartland Institute](#), an organization self-described as promoting free-market solutions for social and economic problems. The Heartland Institute has been credited with climate change denial efforts such as the [now-notorious](#) billboard campaign comparing those who believe in climate change to serial killers like Ted Kaczynski and Charles Manson.

The claim:

Taylor calls attention to the top 13 scientists on the NCA Development and Advisory Committee. He lists seven of them as having past connections to what he calls "environmental activist groups," namely the World Wildlife Fund (WWF), the Union of Concerned Scientists (UCS), and Second Nature. He uses these connections as grounds to dismiss the entire assessment report as "a farcical group of agenda-driven activists... passed off as authoritative science."



- Criticized by Taylor
- Rest of Secretariat
- Development and Advisory Committee
- Lead Authors

The facts:

NCA's Executive Secretariat incorporates many scientists with conservative or corporate backgrounds of which a free-market advocate like Taylor would approve. All are high-ranking voices that fully participate in the NCA consensus process. For example:

- [Sharon Hays](#), who served in the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy during the Bush administration.
- [David Gustafson](#), who is currently a senior fellow at the major agribusiness, Monsanto.
- [Lindene Patton](#), who is currently Chief Climate Product Officer for reinsurance giant Zurich Financial Services.

The Advisory Committee contains more such representatives, most notably:

- [Arthur Lee](#), who is a Chevron Fellow at Chevron Services Company.
- [Jan Dell](#), who is a Vice President in the Energy and Water Division of engineering and construction company CH2M HILL.

Furthermore, the "activist connections" that Taylor criticizes are so tenuous as to be absurd. The scientists involved in NCA are established experts and as such are frequently consulted on scientific questions by many different groups. This is not the same as advocacy for a group. For example:

- Chairman Jerry Melillo assisted UCS with a [regional climate impacts report](#). He was invited to review the report based on his expertise in climate science, not to be a spokesperson for the report or UCS itself.
- Vice-Chair Gary Yohe's "involvement" with the WWF was as a [reviewer](#) to the Climate Witness interview series. His role was to give his professional judgment on whether the scenarios described in the interviews were representative of global climate change. This was science-based and not a promotion of the WWF.

Overall, the NCA has [long stated its goals](#) of facilitating an inclusive, broad-based process for communicating the state of scientific knowledge. It achieves this through a large, robust, consensus process featuring top experts with a wide variety of backgrounds.