

Biden's coming war on farmers

Team Biden will reassert that PM2.5 kills hundreds of thousands annually and that there's no safe level of exposure



Illustration on Biden's war on farmers by Linas Garsys/The Washington Times more >

By Steve Milloy - - Monday, May 31, 2021

ANALYSIS/OPINION:

A new study claims that air emissions from farms kill 17,000 Americans per year. It's the first shot in a second try by the Biden administration's Environmental Protection Agency to control American farms through junk science-fueled air pollution regulations.

The study is funded by a \$10 million grant awarded by the Obama administration's EPA, and pretends to examine fine dust and soot emissions (called "PM2.5") from all farm operations — including machinery, tilling, fertilizer use, field burning, livestock movement, waste management and more.

It's a silly study. For example, it estimates that total air emissions associated with U.S. apple production kill about 3.8 people per year somewhere in the general population.

Before the Trump administration came to town, the regulation of PM2.5 was a potent weapon used by the Obama administration to eviscerate the Republican-supporting coal industry as a political power.

In 2011 congressional testimony, then-EPA administrator Lisa Jackson told a House committee that PM2.5 was responsible for one-in-five deaths in the U.S. annually. PM2.5 didn't make you sick, she said, it just killed you.



Based on that premise, the EPA issued several major PM2.5-based regulations that, combined with the coincidental availability of cheap natural gas from fracking, wound up destroying 95% of the market value of the coal industry and sending all the major coal companies into bankruptcy.

The Trump EPA reversed course on PM2.5. A panel of independent air quality experts convened by the Trump EPA determined that the Obama administration's EPA previous claims about PM2.5 were not based in science. This determination came too late to save the coal industry.

Fortunately, the farmers still have time to save themselves.

Why would the Biden administration target farmers in the first place? Well, do you know any farmers who are Democrats?

Farmers are not only strongly conservative and Republican; they also tend to be strong Trump supporters. Although there are only about two million farms in the United States, they are primarily in rural Midwestern states, and so are able to project disproportionate political power in Congress.

For example, the Obama administration tried to give farmers the coal industry treatment with PM2.5 in 2011. The manure hit the fan immediately when Administrator Jackson mused out loud about regulating farm dust. By the end of 2011, the House had passed a bill 268-150 banning EPA from regulating farm dust, with 30 Democrats joining a unanimous Republican caucus.

The Biden administration is apparently hoping things will go better this time. Unlike 2011, Democrats now control Congress. So, there will be no bill passing anywhere banning EPA from doing anything.

As to the inconvenient reality of the Trump EPA expert panel totally trashing the notion that PM2.5 kills, the Biden administration is "fixing" that.

At the end of March, President Biden's EPA administrator Michael Regan fired all of EPA's independent science advisors and rolled back conflict of interest rules issued by the Trump administration's EPA. The rules barred current recipients of EPA grants from serving on advisory committees, which are required by law to be independent and balanced. The goal was to prevent political cronyism.

Now, Mr. Biden's EPA will be free to restock the "independent" boards with very same cronies who rubberstamped the Obama EPA's wanton and junk science-fueled destruction of the coal industry.

Their first task will be to erase the conclusion of the Mr. Trump's panel with respect to the science of PM2.5. Team Biden will no doubt reassert that PM2.5 kills of hundreds of thousands annually and that there is no safe level of exposure. This will give the EPA arbitrary and total control over state economies via PM2.5 regulation, as states that fail to meet EPA air quality standards can have federal funds withheld from them.

The Biden administration and its EPA is coming for its political foes. The study falsely claiming that farming kills 17,000 people per year is the opening salvo against farmers.

• *Steve Milloy publishes JunkScience.com and is the author of "Scare Pollution: Why and How to Fix the EPA."*

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How many people are killed by starvation each year? I feel like that number would be higher without food being raised/grown. It's always good to look at safer ways to farm, but there need to be solutions, not punishments.

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H

Maybe farmers should stop polluting.

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