

“Climate Lies? Exxon and New York Attorney General Butt Heads”

A recent *New York Times* article explores the fraud investigation by New York Attorney General Eric T. Schneiderman of Exxon Mobile’s past research and current contradictory claims. The September 2015 story illustrates that in the mid-1970s Exxon executives commissioned climate scientists and outfitted a ship with state of the art tools to measure the impact of fossil fuels on atmospheric carbon increases around the world. According to a climatologist hired by Exxon to do the research, company executives sought objective data about atmospheric warming. The results of Exxon’s sailing lab were clear. Oil and gas extraction and use were dramatically increasing climatic warming from a greenhouse gas effect.

By the 1980s the Exxon corporate leadership reportedly had changed and was no longer interested in objective scientific measurements that assessed the relationship between fossil fuel use and climate change. The new management team cancelled the research ship and retreated from the discoveries of their own scientists. Instead of going public with their costly and well-documented findings, according to investigative journalists, Exxon Mobile allegedly began investing in disinformation, hiring faux scientists to “educate” state legislators and sow uncertainty about the claims by climate scientists that widespread use and extraction of fossil fuels were altering nature’s balance and heating planet Earth.

The *New York Times* reported that rather than focus on Exxon’s past, Mr. Schneiderman is examining claims the company has made more recently. Exxon Mobile executives claimed in congressional testimony in 2010 that it is unclear to what degree human activity impacts climate change. While a 2014 company report claims that global efforts to curb greenhouse gas emissions does not mean that the industry’s huge underground oil and gas

reserves need to remain untapped, climate scientists insist that the majority of these reserves must remain in the ground if life is to continue on Earth.

Mr. Schneiderman is conducting an investigation by reviewing hundreds of thousands of company documents to determine whether Exxon Mobile is committing fraud. At issue is whether what Exxon Mobile knows in private is contrary to what it says in public. For example, Exxon is reassuring legislators that no credible studies exist to show that drilling and extraction of fossil fuels pose a threat. However at the same time the company is raising the decks of offshore drilling platforms (in anticipation of rising sea levels?) and seeks to drill in the Arctic (now that the warming climate is melting glaciers?). "Even if Exxon is wrong in saying that it expects to be able to use all its reserves, the question is whether they know that they are wrong and are therefore lying to investors,".

Summary of August, 20, 2016 *New York Times* article, ["Exxon's Forecasts, Not Past Views, Are at Core of Climate Investigation"](#)