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EPA (/TAG/EPA)

EPA Adopts Fringe Science Claim That Small Doses of Pollution Are Healthy

(//ecowatch.com/community/ecowatch_contributor)

Guest Contributor (//ecowatch.com/community/ecowatch_contributor)

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA (<http://www.ecowatch.com/tag/epa>)) in April 2018 proposed relaxing standards (<https://www.ecowatch.com/radiation-exposure-limits-epa-2609738084.html>) related to how it assesses the effects of exposure to low levels of toxic chemicals (<https://www.ecowatch.com/tag/chemicals>) on public health.

Now, correspondence obtained by the LA Times (<https://www.latimes.com/local/california/la-me-secret-science-20190219-story.html>) revealed just how deeply involved industry lobbyists and a controversial, industry-funded toxicologist were in drafting the federal agency's proposal to scrap its current, protective approach to regulating toxin exposure.

The proposed change came just two weeks after a top EPA official contacted toxicologist Ed Calabrese, whose claim that low doses of carcinogens and radiation are healthy stressors akin to physical exercise that activate the body's repair mechanisms has been panned by more mainstream researchers (<https://apnews.com/6a573b6b020e453c90ecd5e84aa23f57>).

"I wanted to check to see if you might have some time in the next couple of days for a quick call to discuss a couple of items ... " EPA deputy assistant administrator Clint Woods wrote to Calabrese.

The EPA's proposed regulation, signed by then-Administrator Scott Pruitt and published in the U.S. Government's Federal Register (<https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2018/04/30/2018-09078/strengthening-transparency-in-regulatory-science>), copied Calabrese's recommendations to Woods almost verbatim.

Calabrese, who was also quoted in the EPA's press release (<https://www.epa.gov/newsreleases/epa-administrator-pruitt-proposes-rule-strengthen-science-used-epa-regulations>) for the proposal, celebrated the announcement in an email to former coal and tobacco lobbyist Steve Milloy, who served on President Donald Trump's EPA transition team.

"This is a major big time victory," Calabrese wrote. Milloy, who is also a Fox News commentator, replied that it was "YUGE."

The EPA's proposal is a departure from its long-time "linear no-threshold" approach to regulating the study of toxins: once a substance is found to be harmful at one level, the danger applies at all levels. In other words, there can be no safe level of radiation exposure (<https://www.ecowatch.com/grand-canyon-radiation-exposure-2629386611.html>).

Calabrese argues this approach is overly cautious and a financial detriment to industry. The new rule would require that regulators look at "various threshold models across the exposure range" for pollutants.

Low doses of otherwise toxic chemicals can be beneficial to human health in specific clinical situations, the LA Times noted, but experiments have produced mixed results and experts say it would be a risk to apply the findings to regulation for the general public.

"There is no way to control the dose a person gets from an industrial or agricultural chemical," David Jacobs, a professor of public health at the University of Minnesota, told the newspaper. "It's not being doled out in pills and monitored by a physician who can lower it if the patient isn't responding well."

The EPA has not announced a date for when it will make a decision on the rule proposal.

Health experts believe that if the EPA does adopt the rule, it could lead to wholesale changes to the agency's standards for regulating toxic waste, pesticides (<http://www.ecowatch.com/tag/pesticides>), and air and water quality.

"Industry has been pushing for this for a long time," George Washington University professor of environmental and occupational health David Michaels told the LA Times. "Not just the chemical industry, but the radiation and tobacco industries too."

Calabrese has long been connected to these industries and has received funding from tobacco firm R.J. Reynolds, Dow Chemical, Exxon Mobil and others, the LA Times reported.

Calabrese's role in the EPA's proposal

(https://www.umass.edu/newsoffice/sites/default/files/attachments/calabrese_testimony.pdf) illustrates how the Trump administration has pursued environmental policy recommendations from industry lobbyists based on research running counter to mainstream science.

According to the LA Times, Calabrese first emailed Milloy about whether it would be possible to get the EPA to abandon the linear no-threshold model in September 2017, not even nine months after Trump was sworn into office.

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By Healthline (/community/healthline)

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Allison Achauer / Moment / Getty Images

By Jillian Kubala, MS, RD (https://www.healthline.com/health/about-us#link-an_page)

Carrots are tasty vegetables that come in a variety of colors.

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Catherine Falls Commercial / Moment / Getty Images

By Jennifer Still

You hear it all the time: You should be drinking more water (<https://www.healthline.com/health/how-much-water-should-i-drink>). How much depends on the person, but generally speaking, staying well hydrated offers a host of health benefits (<https://www.healthline.com/nutrition/7-health-benefits-of-water>). That includes higher energy levels and better brain function, just to name a few.

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An invasive *Amyntas* worm, also known as a crazy snake worm, Asian jumping worm and Alabama jumper *Tom Potterfield*
Flickr

By Jason Bittel

My wife and I built a house two years ago on a few acres of woodland outside of Pittsburgh. The backyard is full of maples, poplars, briars and common spicebush. Two-lined salamanders and grumpy-looking crayfish wade among the rocks in the small stream that runs down the edge of the property. Deer, raccoon and opossum tracks appear regularly in the snow and mud. Sometimes, my trail-cam even catches a pair of gray foxes as they slink through the night.

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AleksandarNakic / Getty Images

By Kate Murphy

No matter the time of year, there's always a point in each season when my skin decides to cause me issues. While these skin issues can vary, I find the most common issues to be dryness, acne and redness.

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Google Honors Wildlife Conservationist Steve Irwin With Birthday Doodle (<https://www.ecowatch.com/steve-irwin-birthday-google-2629713345.html>)

By Olivia Rosane (</community/oliviarosane>)

(<https://www.ecowatch.com/steve-irwin-birthday-google-2629713345.html>)

Steve Irwin poses with a three foot long alligator at the San Francisco Zoo on June 26, 2002. *Justin Sullivan / Getty Images*

February 22 is the birthday of conservationist and beloved TV personality "Crocodile Hunter" Steve Irwin, who would have been 57 years old today.

Irwin's life was tragically cut short when the barb from a stingray went through his chest while he was filming in 2006, but his legacy of loving and protecting wildlife (<http://www.ecowatch.com/tag/wildlife>) lives on, most recently in a Google Doodle today honoring his birthday.

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