

Media and Climate Change Observatory (MECCO)



University of Colorado **Boulder**

ISSUE 1, JANUARY 2017

act”². Stephen Mufson and Brady Dennis at *The Washington Post* reported on how the White House website’s energy pages, which went up within moments of Trump’s inauguration, removed references to combating climate change, a topic that had been featured prominently on the site under President Barack Obama.³ Betsy McKay from *The Wall Street Journal* reported that Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said it recently postponed a gathering it had planned to hold next month on the effects of climate change on health,⁴ and Coral Davenport from *The New York Times* reported on a freeze on federal grant spending at the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Departments of the Interior, Agriculture and Health and Human Services as well as other government agencies⁵.

Stories in January 2017 about Trump nominations for key posts in the administration – particularly for Secretary of State (former ExxonMobil CEO Rex Tillerson), EPA Administrator (Oklahoma Attorney General Scott Pruitt), Secretary of the Department of Interior (Montana Congressman Ryan Zinke) and Secretary of the Department of Energy (former Texas Governor Rick Perry) – focused mainly on worrisome dimensions of these appointments for those who care about climate and environmental protection, justice and human well-being among other things. Moreover, some media pieces also addressed cultural dimensions regarding how climate concerns were voiced in Women’s marches across the world on January 21st, and (mainly in US coverage) how ‘alt’ Twitter accounts cropped up from US National Park Services and other US agency spin-offs to communicate #climatefacts and dismay about Trump Administration plans for shifts in science, environment and climate policy engagements.

So as Barack Obama and his administration vacated the White House, media attention was paid to Donald Trump’s and his aides’ promises for swift and aggressive action to dismantle and block Obama’s climate-related policies and actions, such as incorporating the social cost of carbon to project planning and Clean Power plan regulations. Media treatments also covered how Trump administration behaviors served to embolden Republican legislative officials in the House of Representatives and in the Senate, where the elimination of regulations on coal mining near streams and rules to reduce methane emissions were said to be prioritized in the next Congressional sessions. On January 4, Chelsea Harvey from *The Washington Post* wrote “As a new Congress convenes this week, regulatory reform is the rage, and the upshot seems to be that at least a few of President Obama’s environmental regulations could be dismantled quickly by the Republican Congress, with President-elect Donald Trump’s approval”.⁶

² <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/01/25/world/canada/canada-justin-trudeau-keystone-xl.html>

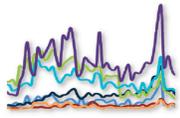
³ https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/energy-environment/wp/2017/01/20/on-white-house-website-obama-climate-priorities-vanish/?utm_term=.180aca85a6ee

⁴ <https://www.wsj.com/articles/cdc-postpones-meeting-on-climate-change-and-health-1485211145>

⁵ <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/01/25/us/politics/some-agencies-told-to-halt-communications-as-trump-administration-moves-in.html>

⁶ https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/energy-environment/wp/2017/01/04/republicans-can-tear-up-a-few-obama-environment-rules-but-theyll-have-to-choose-carefully/?utm_term=.0e2496acf972





Media and Climate Change Observatory (MECCO)



University of Colorado Boulder

ISSUE 1, JANUARY 2017

And a number of stories in January 2017 discussed how this destabilizing new stance on climate change in the US Trump administration would influence other key nations such as China and India, and how it would impact the implementation of the Paris Climate Accord (signed in December 2015 and entered into force in November 2016). For example, Alice Wu from *The South China Morning Post* said in an opinion piece, “The American retreat from the world will have irrevocable consequences. Within minutes of taking office, Trump's White House had removed minority initiatives and the threat of climate change from its website. President Xi Jinping had already made clear at Davos that China is ready to step up as the US relinquishes its global leadership roles in globalization and fighting climate change.”⁷

But January 2017 media attention to climate change and global warming wasn't merely focused on politics and policy. News about the science of climate change emerged mid-month focused on continued temperature increases in the US and around the world, with 2016 data just in. As examples:

- on January 10th, Doyle Rice at *USA Today* covered the announcement by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) that 2016 was the second-warmest year on record in the US data⁸;
- on January 18th, Damian Carrington at *The Guardian* covered the announcement of global data from the UK Meteorological Office, National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) and NOAA, noting that this set a new high for a third year in a row “with scientists firmly putting the blame on human activities that drive climate change”⁹

Together, January animated the emerging adage that ‘not all news is good news for climate change’.

While there are early signs and speculations that climate actions and media coverage of them will scale down to regional and local levels while widening out to climate leadership from other countries in the time of the new Trump administration, these tropes earned scant attention in these fifty media sources across twenty-seven countries around planet Earth in January.

**- report prepared by Max Boykoff, Kevin Andrews,
Gesa Luedecke, Meaghan Daly and Ami Nacu-Schmidt**

⁷ <http://www.scmp.com/comment/insight-opinion/article/2066011/insular-trumps-first-days-show-he-has-already-turned>

⁸ <http://www.usatoday.com/story/weather/2017/01/09/2016-usas-second-warmest-year-record/96355508/>

⁹ <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2017/jan/18/2016-hottest-year-ever-recorded-and-scientists-say-human-activity-to-blame>