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HEADLINE: With White House Approval, E.P.A. Pollution Report Omits Global Warming Section

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BODY:

For the first time in six years, the annual federal report on air pollution trends has no section on global warming, though President Bush has said that slowing the growth of emissions linked to warming is a priority for his administration.

The decision to delete the chapter on climate change was made by top officials at the Environmental Protection Agency with White House approval, White House officials said.

"Some people at pretty high levels in my organization were saying, 'Take it out,' " said an E.P.A. official outside Washington who helped prepare the report. Others at the agency confirmed his account.

Agency officials say the decision was made for two reasons: the agency has issued two other reports on climate this year, and the annual report is mainly meant to track pollutants that directly threaten people or ecosystems -- substances like lead, carbon monoxide and sulfur dioxide, which causes acid rain.

The report, released early this month, is an overview intended for the public that draws on more detailed E.P.A. data on air pollution trends. Most emissions have been sharply reduced in the last decade, but not carbon dioxide, the heat-trapping gas that most scientists say is the main contributor to global warming. Most carbon dioxide comes from burning fossil fuels.

Industry lobbyists are praising the decision. Coal, oil and car companies say carbon dioxide, which occurs naturally, should not be labeled a pollutant. But environmental groups say the omission reflects the administration's close ties with industry.

"White House censors may have made global warming disappear from this report, but that won't make it disappear as a serious threat to our environment," said Jeremy Symons, an authority on climate policy at the National Wildlife Federation.

Mr. Bush said last year that carbon dioxide appeared to be linked to rising temperatures, and he has since said that voluntary measures should be taken to slow emissions but that the evidence is not yet clear enough to require reductions.

The new report, "Latest Findings on National Air Quality: 2001 Status and Trends," is online, with those from previous years, at: epa.gov/airtrends/reports.html.

Published since the 1970's, the reports have focused on air pollution restricted under the Clean Air Act as directly harming human health or ecosystems. But starting in 1996, the report also included sections on emissions that affect the global atmosphere, including chemicals that damage the ozone layer and carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases.

The latest report has a section on the ozone-depleting chemicals, which are rapidly being reduced under the 15-year-old Montreal Protocol. But there is no section on climate change.

Global warming is mentioned twice: once in a note in fine print at the bottom of the table of contents, listing agency Web sites with climate data, and once in a paragraph that refers, apparently by mistake, to the omitted section on climate.

"Although the primary focus of this report is on national air pollution," the paragraph says, "global air pollution issues such as destruction of the stratospheric ozone layer and the effect of global warming on the earth's climate are major concerns and are also discussed."

Environmental and conservative groups have accused the administration of sowing confusion on the climate issue.

In late May, the White House approved a climate report that was then submitted by the State Department to the United Nations, though it contained far more dire projections of harm from global warming than Mr. Bush had publicly accepted. The president quickly distanced himself from the report, saying it was "put out by the bureaucracy." New copies of the report have been changed to emphasize scientific uncertainty about the effects of global warming. Some officials at the E.P.A. said the handling of that State Department report heightened concern about climate documents, prompting the changes in the new report.

"There's a complete paranoia about anything on climate, and everything has to be reviewed widely," an agency official said.

Other officials said the report was changed to avoid redundancy with earlier documents and to draw a line between carbon dioxide and pollutants that fall under air quality rules.

The annual report focuses on pollutants "that pose a local and regional threat to human health and the environment," said Joe Martyak, a spokesman for the agency. "The whole issue of climate change doesn't fall under that category."

The change in the document was welcomed by Myron Ebell, an authority on climate policy at the Competitive Enterprise Institute.

"After such a long string of disasters on climate, this is the first glimmer of good news," he said. "If they have now gotten clear with the E.P.A. that they're not in the business of regulating CO2, that's a hopeful sign."

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