Internal files add to evidence of an ExxonMobil climate deception campaign

In an interview, Adler rejected the argument that he was promoting climate denial. “I can’t speak to what API or Exxon’s motivations were,” said Adler, now a professor at William & Mary Law School. “What I can say is the work we did at CEI at the time was very much focused on what was accurate and correct and consistent with the principles the organization was founded on.”

He said it was natural for his organization to seek funding from companies and entities that also supported limited government regulation.

This year, Adler wrote a brief supporting Boulder in the case before the Supreme Court, arguing that its claims were not preempted by federal law and should be allowed to proceed in state court. He did not take a position on the merits of Boulder’s claims.

By 2005, when Exxon was facing public criticism for its support for groups that questioned climate science, a company spokesperson told Mother Jones magazine that Exxon believed “the scientific evidence on greenhouse gas emissions remains inconclusive and that studies must continue.” She also said Exxon had devoted large sums to university research programs, including a planned $100 million to Stanford University’s Global Climate and Energy Project.

The following year, documents from the Massachusetts case now show, a colleague arranged a meeting for the spokesperson with

two self-identified global warming skeptics.

By the 2010s, Exxon's public position on climate change had evolved. It was no longer questioning science, a position that became harder to maintain as scientists' conclusions grew stronger and the United States joined the Paris Agreement in 2015. In fact, following Sprow's advice, the company had one of its research scientists contributing to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.

Exxon was fending off concerns from shareholders that it was failing to prepare its business for the risks posed by climate change, so it began work on a "climate risk matrix," the documents show. In 2016, the Exxon scientist who contributed to the UN climate panel warned colleagues of the risk of climate tipping points, the probability of which were "poorly understood but probability is expected to rise with temperature change." He noted that failure to limit emissions would have a growing influence on temperatures beyond 2040 and cited concerns that the impacts of hitting tipping points "would be significantly larger" than the direct effects of heat.

And yet, the Massachusetts case shows, Exxon continued to promote solutions that its own scientists said were unlikely to reach commercial scale. The vast majority of its money instead went to oil and gas, the production of which Exxon plans to expand more than 15 percent by 2030.

Nicholas Kusnetz is a reporter for Inside Climate News. Before joining ICN, he worked at the Center for Public Integrity and ProPublica. His work has won numerous awards and citations, including from the Society of Professional Journalists, the Society of Environmental Journalists, the Overseas Press Club, the Society of American Business Editors and Writers, and others. His articles have appeared in more than a dozen publications including Wired, The Washington Post, Businessweek, The Nation, and The New York Times. Nicholas can

be reached on Signal at nkusnetz.15.

This story originally appeared on Inside Climate News.

https://arstechnica.com/tech-policy/2026/10/exxonmobils-own-scientists-doubted-climate-fixes-the-company-hyped/