**Trump’s war on science and facts is harmful**

By Debra Wines

Last week, Donald Trump gave a speech announcing he and his administration’s successes in protecting and improving our country’s environment. According to Mr. Trump, America has the cleanest air and crystal clean water. Those annoying things, like facts, tell a different story.

We all know Donald Trump’s opinions regarding former President Obama are not warm and fuzzy. He has shown America and the world what his true “feelings” for anything and everything President Obama and his administration accomplished has been a prime motivation for undoing policies associated with Barack Obama. It doesn’t matter if those polices, treaties, regulations, etc. may have been good for our country and the world at large. Mr. Trump is determined to put an end to them. His administration, under his direction, are more than happy to accommodate his demands. To do anything different, they know they could be gone from the administration and they have too much to lose themselves to worry about doing the best job they can for the American public.

The focus of Trump’s speech was EPA’s “successes”. Positive environmental outcomes require scientific research, study and data. That kind of information should be used to determine every aspect of the EPA’s functions. The Trump administration has tended to ignore scientific data if it doesn’t coincide with what they want it to say. If too much information, from various sources, supports data not to this administration’s liking, they either ignore the information completely or just make up their own “facts”. Many programs have been reduced or shut down, vital personnel positions have been eliminated, under the guise of “budget reductions”. The EPA has been hit with the loss of almost 1,600 people since Donald Trump took office. Mr. Trump’s budget proposals would reduce the workforce for the EPA by a minimum of 20%.

In order to achieve the level of environmental improvements, Donald Trump bragged about, the EPA’s budget would have had to have been increased greatly, including the retention of 1,600 former employees and possibly the hiring of more staff. The EPA, under Scott Pruitt and currently under Andrew Wheeler, a former coal lobbyist, have rolled back 49 EPA rules and regulations, and are currently in the process of adding 34 more to that number. That would make a total of 83 rules and regulations that Trump’s administration is responsible for cutting or eliminating, not just from the Obama era, but as far back as 1990.

According to National Geographic, The New York Times and several other publications who have writers investigating and reporting on our environment, science and the global climate change, the policies the Trump’s administration have put forth are putting people and our planet in danger faster than originally anticipated. Pulling the United States out of the Paris Climate Agreement, in June of 2017, broadcast to the world that Mr. Trump was not interested in our future environment or the planet’s. Remember, Donald Trump declared more than once that “Climate Change” was all a hoax promoted by the Chinese.

In October of 2017, Trump’s EPA proposed a repeal of the Clean Power Plan. This plan originally set a reduction of carbon emissions by 32% by 2030. Trump claimed it was a “war on coal” that he would end. The CPP didn’t just affect coal plants but also included gas-fired power plants. This past April, a replacement plan, developed by the EPA was given to the White House. Their plan would allow individual states to set their own carbon emission regulations.

There are several other changes that will affect what Trump referred to as America’s clean air. The EPA has canceled the requirement for oil and gas companies to report their methane emissions. They revised and partially repealed the limiting of methane emissions on public lands which affected “intentional venting and flaring from drilling operations”. Toxic emissions from major industrial polluters were also relaxed. They stopped enforcing a 2015 rule that prohibited the use of hydrofluorocarbons along with repealing a requirement that state and regional authorities collect data on tailpipe emissions from vehicles using federal highways. Any rule or regulation that Trump and the EPA director felt put an unfair burden on businesses was also on the chopping block. The EPA re-instating lower pollution standards, from 2009, for new power plants and expansions; changing how refineries monitored pollution in surrounding communities; stopping the use of an “Obama-era calculation” of the social cost of carbon, that had been used to determine the long-term economic benefits of carbon dioxide emission reductions; they also lifted the ban on the use of E-15 blend of gasoline during the summer months, even though E-15 in hot weather increases the amount of smog. In all, the EPA has overturned 10 regulations completely and they are still in the process of reducing or eliminating 12 more regulations that affect the air we all breathe.

As for our water, there are 4 things the EPA has successfully changed. They revoked a rule that prevented coal companies from putting mining debris in local streams; they eliminated a proposed rule that would have reduced pollutants at sewage treatment plants; eliminated the proposed rule protecting groundwater from certain uranium mines and continue to rollback federal rules pertaining to the disposal and storage of coal ash waste from power plants.

There are also 3 more proposals that are in the works to be changed regarding our water. Under Obama’s Clean Water Act, protections for certain tributaries and wetlands will be rolled back; a 2 year delay limiting toxic discharge into public waterways which would include mercury and finally evaluating whether individual states can reject or delay federal projects that would include pipelines, and fossil fuel facilities, if they don’t meet local water quality standards.

This is just an overview of the changes Trump has allowed to the environmental rules and regulations governing our water and air. Scientific facts do not support Trump’s claim of America having the “cleanest air and water”.