

# HOW CAN CLIMATE SCIENTISTS SPEND SO MUCH MONEY?

by *Climatequotes.com*



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Until a few days ago I knew that the US government spent an excessive amount of taxpayer money on climate change research. It was just a general notion; I had read occasional articles showing the funding of certain agencies like NASA but I didn't know many specifics. Then on New Years Day, I wrote a very [quick article](#) where I randomly picked a document from a Google search showing funding for climate change. The numbers astonished me. I decided to take a closer look.

The document is the The American Association for the Advancement of Science's report:

AAAS REPORT XXXV

RESEARCH AND  
DEVELOPMENT  
FY 2011

## Climate Change in the FY 2011 Budget

NOAA	\$437 million
NSF	\$480 million
NASA	\$438.1 million
DOE	\$627 million
DOI	\$171 million
EPA	\$169 million
USDA	\$159 million

*US Federal government spending on climate change research in 2011*

The entire report is [here](#), but I am only looking at chapter 15 which is [here](#). The report is basically a snapshot of US Federal spending on research, including budgets for 2011 and how these numbers compare to previous years. The chapter on climate change is short and easy to read. It shows that all US agencies that conduct climate change research are expected to have larger budgets for 2011. Remember, these numbers are not set in stone, but they will not be drastically different from the actual numbers. I also need to make a caveat. Just because this funding has been labeled 'climate change research' does not mean it is necessarily not linked to another field as well. For example, some of the costs associated are for satellites, which are important in more than just climate research. This is not entirely frivolous spending. Even so, the numbers are staggering. Let's look at some agencies and their budgets.

### **NATIONAL OCEANIC AND ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION (NOAA).**

NOAA's total budget request is \$5.6 billion, which would be an increase of 17.0 percent. Of this, **\$437 million would be for climate research funding**, which is an increase of \$77 million.

\$437 million spent on climate change research in one year, in one agency. Here's another:

#### NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION (NSF).

NSF would receive \$7.4 billion in FY 2011, an increase of 8 percent relative to the FY 2010 appropriation. **The request includes \$370 million under the USGCRP framework, which is an increase of 16.0 percent.** The Geosciences Directorate would receive \$955 million (a 7.4 percent increase) in FY 2011 with **\$480 million going to Atmospheric and Earth Sciences. NSF's Science, Engineering, and Education for Sustainability (SEES) program would receive \$765.5 million.** This is intended to promote discoveries and capability needed to inform societal actions in ways that contribute to environmental and economic sustainability. NSF's request also includes \$19 million for RE-ENERGYSE, a joint program with the Department of Energy intended to promote education in clean energy research. An additional **\$10 million would fund Climate Change Education**, which seeks to increase understanding of climate among the next generation of Americans.

\$480 million here, \$765.5 million there, throw in another \$10 million for climate education and you've got \$1.25 billion dollars spent on climate change research just at the NSF, just in ONE YEAR! Next is NASA:

#### NATIONAL AERONAUTICS AND SPACE ADMINISTRATION (NASA).

NASA's FY 2011 budget request is \$19.0 billion. NASA Earth Science is a relatively small fraction of this total, \$1.8 billion or 9.5 percent, but would increase substantially relative to the FY 2010 appropriation (up 26.8 percent). NASA Earth Science funds climate change R&D through several programs. Two of particular note are **Earth Science Research, which would receive \$438.1 million (an increase of 14 percent)...**

It seems like the \$450 million mark is a common budget for climate research among these agencies. NOAA's funding, the NSF's atmospheric science funding, and NASA's Earth Science research are all around \$450 million. It may be an interesting coincidence. Next is the Department of Energy:

#### DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY (DOE).

The President's budget request for DOE in FY 2011 is \$28.4 billion. This includes \$4.6 billion for R&D in the Office of Science (an increase of 3.8 percent), and \$2.4 billion for energy R&D (an increase of 6.8 percent). **Within the Office of Science, the Office of Biological and Environmental Research (BER), which supports basic research in atmospheric sciences, terrestrial ecosystems and climate modeling, would receive \$627 million (an increase of 3.8 percent).** BER's request includes \$28.6 million for the **Terrestrial Ecosystem Science (TES) program, which examines the impact of climate change on biological systems and land-surface carbon cycle feedbacks to climate change.**

\$627 million taken from a taxpayer or borrowed from a future taxpayer, spent in one year. Next the Department of the Interior:

#### DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR (DOI).

**DOI requests \$171 million (an increase of 26.0 percent) for its Climate Change Adaptation initiative**, which seeks to identify areas and species most vulnerable to climate change and implement coping strategies. Of this, the **United States Geological Survey (USGS) would receive \$77.9 million for climate science (an increase of 15.5 percent)**.

How many jobs could be created in 2011 if \$171 million were still in the hands of US taxpayers, instead of being spent on climate studies which have been done many times before? Studying areas vulnerable to climate change? That's already been done by every agency, twice. Next is the EPA:

#### ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY (EPA).

**EPA requests \$169 million to reduce greenhouse gas emissions (an increase of 1 percent). Of this, \$43.5 million is new funding for regulatory efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions through the Clean Air Act. EPA requests \$22 million for its Global Change Research Program**, which assesses the impacts of global change on air and water quality, ecosystems, human health, and socioeconomic systems in the United States with a primary goal of promoting adaptation efforts.

I don't even understand what this means. How does giving the EPA \$169 million reduce emissions? Also, does it really cost \$43.5 million a year (more) to regulate greenhouse gases? Lastly, the USDA:

#### U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE (USDA).

**USDA requests \$159 million for climate change research, an increase of 42.0 percent**, and \$179 million for renewable energy, an increase of 41.0 percent. USDA's climate change efforts (and those of the U.S. Forest Service which is part of USDA) center on helping farmers and land owners adapt to climate change impacts (e.g., enhanced fire stress, insect outbreaks, droughts, floods, and heat stress) and promoting carbon storage in soils and forests.

A 42% increase in climate change research? \$159 million spent in a single year, by the USDA? Crop yields are up! CO<sub>2</sub> helps crops! Imagine spending \$159 million in 2011 to research things that actually help people.

The amount of money being spent on climate change research this year is astounding. I urge you to read the document yourself. Here is the question to take away: what are we getting for the billions of dollars we've spent? When 2011 is over will we look back at the published research and be satisfied with how our billions have been spent? This type of spending has occurred for some time, and what do we have to show for it? Multiple federal agencies having multi-hundred million dollar budgets in the same (controversial) field is wasteful. Let's make sure 2011 is the last year these budgets increase.



Cover photo from [2.bp.blogspot.com](http://2.bp.blogspot.com).



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