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## BUSH AIDE EDITED CLIMATE REPORTS

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A White House official who once led the oil industry's fight against limits on greenhouse gases has repeatedly edited government climate reports in ways that play down links between such emissions and global warming, according to internal documents.

In handwritten notes on drafts of several reports issued in 2002 and 2003, the official, Philip A. Cooney, removed or adjusted descriptions of climate research that government scientists and their supervisors, including some senior Bush administration officials, had already approved. In many cases, the changes appeared in the final reports.

The dozens of changes, while sometimes as subtle as the insertion of the phrase "significant and fundamental" before the word "uncertainties," tend to produce an air of doubt about findings that most climate experts say are robust.

Mr. Cooney is chief of staff for the White House Council on Environmental Quality, the office that helps devise and promote administration policies on environmental issues.

Before going to the White House in 2001, he was the "climate team leader" and a lobbyist at the American Petroleum Institute, the largest trade group representing the interests of the oil industry. A lawyer with a bachelor's degree in economics, he has no scientific training.

The documents were obtained by The New York Times from the Government Accountability Project, a nonprofit legal-assistance group for government whistle-blowers.

The project is representing Rick S. Piltz, who resigned in March as a senior associate in the office that coordinates government climate research. That office, now called the Climate Change Science Program, issued the documents that Mr. Cooney edited.

A White House spokeswoman, Michele St. Martin, said yesterday that Mr. Cooney would not be available to comment. "We don't put Phil Cooney on the record," Ms. St. Martin said. "He's not a cleared spokesman."

In one instance in an October 2002 draft of a regularly published summary of government climate research, "Our Changing Planet," Mr. Cooney amplified the sense of uncertainty by adding the word "extremely" to this sentence: "The attribution of the causes of biological and ecological changes to climate change or variability is extremely difficult."

In a section on the need for research into how warming might change water availability and flooding, he crossed out a paragraph describing the projected reduction of mountain glaciers and snowpack. His note in the margins explained that this was "straying from research strategy into speculative findings/musings."

Other White House officials said the changes made by Mr. Cooney were part of the normal interagency review that takes place on all documents related to global environmental change. Robert Hopkins, a spokesman for the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy, noted that one of the reports Mr. Cooney worked on, the administration's 10-year plan for climate research, was endorsed by the National Academy of Sciences. And Myron Ebell, who has long campaigned against limits on greenhouse gases as director of climate policy at the Competitive Enterprise Institute, a libertarian group, said such editing was necessary for "consistency" in meshing programs with policy.

But critics said that while all administrations routinely vetted government reports, scientific content in such reports should be reviewed by scientists. Climate experts and representatives of environmental groups, when shown examples of the revisions, said they illustrated the significant if largely invisible influence of Mr. Cooney and other White House officials with ties to energy industries that have long fought greenhouse-gas restrictions.

In a memorandum sent last week to the top officials dealing with climate change at a dozen agencies, Mr. Piltz said the White House editing and other actions threatened to taint the government's \$1.8 billion-a-year effort to clarify the causes and consequences of climate change.

"Each administration has a policy position on climate change," Mr. Piltz wrote. "But I have not seen a situation like the one that has developed under this administration during the past four years, in which politicization by the White House has fed back directly into the science program in such a way as to undermine the credibility and integrity of the program."

A senior Environmental Protection Agency scientist who works on climate questions said the White House environmental council, where

Mr. Cooney works, had offered valuable suggestions on reports from time to time. But the scientist, who spoke on the condition of anonymity because all agency employees are forbidden to speak with reporters without clearance, said the kinds of changes made by Mr. Cooney had damaged morale. "I have colleagues in other agencies who express the same view, that it has somewhat of a chilling effect and has created a sense of frustration," he said.

Efforts by the Bush administration to highlight uncertainties in science pointing to human-caused warming have put the United States at odds with other nations and with scientific groups at home.

Prime Minister Tony Blair of Britain, who met with President Bush at the White House yesterday, has been trying to persuade him to intensify United States efforts to curb greenhouse gases. Mr. Bush has called only for voluntary measures to slow growth in emissions through 2012.

Yesterday, saying their goal was to influence that meeting, the scientific academies of 11 countries, including those of the United States and Britain, released a joint letter saying, "The scientific understanding of climate change is now sufficiently clear to justify nations taking prompt action."

The American Petroleum Institute, where Mr. Cooney worked before going to the White House, has long taken a sharply different view. Starting with the negotiations leading to the Kyoto Protocol climate treaty in 1997, it has promoted the idea that lingering uncertainties in climate science justify delaying restrictions on emissions of carbon dioxide and other heat-trapping smokestack and tailpipe gases.

On learning of the White House revisions, representatives of some environmental groups said the effort to amplify uncertainties in the science was clearly intended to delay consideration of curbs on the gases, which remain an unavoidable byproduct of burning oil and coal.

"They've got three more years, and the only way to control this issue and do nothing about it is to muddy the science," said Eileen Claussen, the president of the Pew Center on Global Climate Change, a private group that has enlisted businesses in programs cutting emissions.

Mr. Cooney's alterations can cause clear shifts in meaning. For example, a sentence in the October 2002 draft of "Our Changing Planet" originally read, "Many scientific observations indicate that the Earth is undergoing a period of relatively rapid change." In a neat, compact hand, Mr. Cooney modified the sentence to read, "Many scientific observations point to the conclusion that the Earth may be undergoing a period of relatively rapid change."

A document showing a similar pattern of changes is the 2003 "Strategic Plan for the United States Climate Change Science Program," a thick report describing the reorganization of government climate research that was requested by Mr. Bush in his first speech on the issue, in June 2001. The document was reviewed by an expert panel assembled in 2003 by the National Academy of Sciences. The scientists largely endorsed the administration's research plan, but they warned that the administration's procedures for vetting reports on climate could result in excessive political interference with science.