

Climate Attribution Timeline

- **February 2003:** Oxford climate expert Myles Allen writes an [op-ed](#) about the prospect of suing certain parties for damages wrought by global warming.
- **Spring 2003:** Friends of the Earth (FOE) commissions two studies to establish ExxonMobil's contribution to climate change since 1882.
 - **December 2003:** Richard HEEDE, at the time with Climate Mitigation Services, publishes FOE commissioned [study](#) approximating ExxonMobil's emissions from 1882-2002.
 - **December 2003:** Using HEEDE's findings, New Zealanders Jim Salinger, Greg Bodeker publish a [study](#) estimating these emissions' past and future contribution to atmospheric GHG concentrations, increases in global average surface temperature, and sea level rise.
- **January 2004:** FOE releases five-part briefing, "[Exxon's Climate Footprint](#)," based on the two studies it commissioned.
- **December 2004:** Myles Allen and his colleagues publish what is widely considered the first attribution [study](#) on the 2003 European heat wave.
- **September 2011:** HEEDE, Naomi ORESKES and Greg Erwin establish CLIMATE ACCOUNTABILITY INSTITUTE.
- **June 14–15, 2012:** The Union of Concerned Scientists (UCS) and the CLIMATE ACCOUNTABILITY INSTITUTE host a [Workshop](#) on Climate Accountability, Public Opinion, and Legal Strategies in La Jolla, California.
 - As an outcome, "several participants agreed to work together on some of the attribution work already under way, including efforts to help publicize attribution findings in a way that will be easy for the general public to understand, and build an advocacy component around those findings."
- **2013:** Richard HEEDE establishes the Carbon Majors Database.
- **January 2014:** Richard HEEDE publishes a [study](#) claiming to show the carbon dioxide attribution of energy producers, titled "Tracing anthropogenic carbon dioxide and methane emissions to fossil fuel and cement producers, 1854–2010."
- **March 9, 2015:** PAWA sends memo to group "[founded and fund\[ed\]](#)" by activist donor Tom STEYER, citing to HEEDE attribution paper as providing "reliable measure of each company's contribution":
 - "With the investigations of the state attorneys general underway, Mr. PAWA next promoted his La Jolla strategy to California municipalities, as potential plaintiffs in tort litigation that would be filed against energy companies, including ExxonMobil. Mr. PAWA sent a memo outlining this strategy to NextGen America, the political action group funded by political activist Tom STEYER. The memo "[summarize\[d\] a potential legal case against major fossil fuel corporations," premised on the claim that "certain fossil fuel companies \(most notoriously ExxonMobil\), have engaged in a campaign and conspiracy of deception and denial on global warming."](#) (Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law, Exxon Mobil Corporation, Petitioner, Cause No. 096- 297222-18, District Court of Tarrant County, TX, April 25, 2018, ¶¶ 23, 24, citing to memo published at [Alana Goodman, "Billionaire Democratic donor funding \\$10 million campaign to impeach Trump is linked to national lawsuits against oil companies through memo to his environmental nonprofit group", Daily Mail, November 13, 2017; full memo here](#)).
 - PAWA emphasizes that "simply proceeding to the discovery phase would be significant" and "obtaining industry documents would be a remarkable achievement that would advance the case and the cause."

- **September 22, 2015:** Commission on Human Rights of the Philippines announces [investigation](#) targeting 50 “Carbon Majors,” identified as such in Richard HEEDE’s 2013 database, for contributions to global emissions of greenhouse gasses. [Public records](#) show same US parties assisting with attribution argument.
- **Fall 2015:** Washington State Attorney General’s office [considers but decides against pursuing climate litigation against “the six largest investor-owned fossil fuel companies,”](#) citing “concerns” that attribution advocates “can’t link individual events to climate change.”¹
- **February 16, 2016:** [PAWA sends email](#) re his “Global Warming Legal Action Project,” stating that “we are faced with a unique opportunity on global warming liability and are doing everything we can to seize this moment,” noting he is “deeply engaged” on the “Exxon Knew” issue and mentioning that he is partnering with Sharon EUBANKS, who participated with PAWA at the January 8, 2016 meeting at Rockefeller Family Fund “[t]o delegitimize” ExxonMobil, and in the April 2016 [“secret meeting at Harvard”](#) to encourage “state-based investigations and litigation”, addressing “**attribution**” (see below).
- **April 20, 2016:** [FRUMHOFF tells Oregon State Prof. Phil MOTE](#), “I’ve made in previous talk to AG staff the following point” re “connect[ing] **attribution** to specific characterization of costs.”
- **April 25, 2016:** Union of Concerned Scientists and Harvard Law School hold [a closed-door meeting for funders and state attorneys general, titled “Potential State Causes of Action Against Major Carbon Producers: Scientific, Legal and Historical Perspectives.”](#) Participants made the case for state-based investigations and litigation” to participating AG offices. FRUMHOFF co-chairs, presents on panel, “**Attributing Impacts to Climate Change and Carbon Producers**”, which is one of the three agenda items, also addressed by MOTE and MUFFETT. ORESKES addresses “the question of climate responsibility.
- **August 25, 2016:** “Secret meeting” presenter MUFFETT [is quoted](#) saying “Rick’s work for the first time identifies a discrete class of defendants.”
- **July 10, 2017:** Carbon Disclosure Project, in partnership with CLIMATE ACCOUNTABILITY INSTITUTE, releases a [report](#) claiming 71% of all global greenhouse gas emissions since 1988 can be traced to just 100 fossil fuel producers.
- **September 7, 2017:** UCS’s Brenda Ekwurzel and Peter FRUMHOFF and CLIMATE ACCOUNTABILITY INSTITUTE’s Richard HEEDE and others publish a [study](#) that ties individual fossil fuel companies and their products to its percentage impact on climate change.
 - At the time, only San Mateo County, Marin County, the City of Imperial Beach had filed suit. ““This is a very important study that further confirms key elements of the lawsuits against many of these fossil fuel companies,” [said](#) Vic SHER, partner in SHER EDLING, the law firm representing the three California communities. “The science is clear that these companies have caused a substantial portion of the sea level rise that is damaging San Mateo County, Marin County, the City of Imperial Beach, and communities like them around the country.””
 - Back at [La Jolla](#), “Naomi ORESKES suggested that some portion of sea level rise could be **attributed** to the emissions caused by a single carbon-producing company. In essence, she suggested, “You might be able to say, ‘Here’s Exxon’s contribution to what’s happening to Key West or Venice.’” (p. 19)
- **October 2017:** UCS releases a pamphlet-style [highlight sheet](#) of their study released the month prior, “Tracing Fossil Fuel Companies’ Contributions to Temperature Increase and Sea Level Rise.”

¹ March 17, 2016 email from Watson to Inslee Policy Director Keith Phillips, Tom Young of OAG, and two other aides each from Inslee’s Office and the Department of Biology, discussing “3/29 Climate Change Meeting Agenda”. These discussions, while not actually privileged, were withheld in nearly completely redacted form by the Washington State Office of Attorney General <https://climatelitigationwatch.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Redacted-WA-OAG-Gov-concessions-re-climate-nuisance.pdf>.

- **October 23, 2017:** Richard HEEDE [presents](#) at the Institute for New Economic Thinking conference in Edinburgh, Scotland about climate accountability/attribution.
- **November 7, 2017:** Plaintiffs' attorney Vic SHER gives a [presentation](#), "Suing Over Climate Change Damages: The First Wave of Climate Lawsuits," at UCLA Law School. In the presentation, SHER states that he worked directly with HEEDE to build his case stating: "So how do we link emissions to specific corporate emitters? You know, obviously if you can't tell who's doing it, you have a problem. Well, here, we've been working primarily with an expert named Rick HEEDE who is with an outfit called the Climate Accountability Project in Colorado... Now when Rick and I started talking, his original article went back to, uh, I think 1850, and maybe it was 1874, and I asked him how many companies that are either US companies or do sufficient business in the United States that we can sue them here, would it take to get to 25% of all of the global emissions, globally (did I mention that?) in the world between 1965 and 2015. We were having this conversation in 2016. And Rick identified 28 such companies that are by themselves, using his methodology, responsible for 25 percent of global CO2 and methane emissions – 1965 to 2015." (at 15:26 – 15:45; 17:30 through 18:10)
- **December 13, 2017:** UCLA faculty discuss plans for UCS's FRUMHOFF to present at UCLA Law School on "[attributing particular harms to particular companies](#)". Faculty discuss that Prof. Ann CARLSON is "working with the group strategizing around some of these cases".
- **January 24, 2018:** UCS's FRUMHOFF [discusses](#) climate attribution science on *Got Science?* Podcast.
- **January 25, 2018:** UCS's FRUMHOFF presents attribution claims derived from HEEDE to UCLA Law School event, "[Holding Fossil Fuel Companies Liable for Climate Change Harms in California: Law, Science, and Justice](#)."
- **January 25, 2018:** At same conference UCLA Law School Prof. and SHER EDLING consultant Ann CARLSON presents company-specific attribution claims and other arguments [obtained from climate- nuisance plaintiffs' attorney Vic SHER](#).
- **February 20, 2018:** An [article](#) by The Verge details how climate attribution science will help current climate litigation and likely lead to more suits.
- **October 20, 2018:** Geetanjali Ganguly, Joana Setzer, Veerle Heyvaert publish a [paper](#) arguing for climate change litigation, using HEEDE's past work as support. "I think plaintiffs' attorneys are playing a long game," Glicksman says. "I think they realize they may lose some cases initially, but they're hoping some trial court judge will endorse the causal link they're trying to prove, and the likelihood of that happening will increase as the science gets more sophisticated."
- **April 5, 2019:** Researchers from Columbia University, including Michael BURGER, the executive director of the Sabin Center for Climate Change Law, publish a [study](#) about the relationship between climate attribution science and litigation.
- **June 25, 2019:** Peter FRUMHOFF and Michael BURGER [appear](#) on *Energy Policy Now*, the Kleinman Center's podcast series, to discuss climate attribution science as it relates to litigation.
- **September 30, 2019:** Richard HEEDE [publishes](#) "Carbon Majors: Updating activity data, adding entities, & calculating emissions: A Training Manual," in which he thanks UCS "who encouraged" him to write the training manual, specifically mentioning Peter FRUMHOFF, Kathy Mulvey, Greenpeace International, Wallace Global Fund and Rockefeller Brothers Fund for their assistance and support. Makes no mention of Vic SHER determining the baseline year for use in building climate nuisance case.
- **October 9, 2019:** The Guardian [launches PR campaign](#) with news, legal, opinion and video items promoting HEEDE attribution claims.
- **October 9, 2019:** ClimateLitigationWatch.org publishes [first revelation about origins of attribution push](#).