



*The Wood Yard at Georgia Pacific Cellulose Mill, a Koch investment. (photo: Stephen B. Morton/WP/Getty Images)*

## Former Koch Staffer With Chemical Ties Appointed to Key EPA Position

By E.A. Crunden, ThinkProgress, 02 October 18

*The agency is stocked full of industry insiders.*

The Environmental Protection Agency has hired a former Koch Industries staffer who worked on water and chemical policy to fill a key role within the agency, continuing a Trump administration trend of appointing company insiders to oversee the industries they are meant to regulate.

David Dunlap, a former Koch chemical engineer who has served as director of policy and regulatory affairs with the right-wing corporation since 2010, is joining the EPA as deputy assistant administrator for research and development. Prior to his eight years with Koch, Dunlap [worked](#) for the Chlorine Institute overseeing health and environmental safety, in addition to

roles with both the Uniform and Textile Service Association and Ogden Environmental.

“As a chemical engineer, Mr. Dunlap has worked on environmental issues for nearly 30 years with a focus on assessing risk,” read a statement from EPA chief of staff Ryan Jackson. “His extensive experience on regulatory issues will be pivotal in our mission to protect human health and the environment.”

[Koch Industries](#) is a massive conglomerate overseen by the Koch brothers, major conservative donors who have spent decades undercutting U.S. climate and environmental policies — the brothers’ fortune was made largely from fossil fuels but has since expanded to chemicals and manufacturing.

In April, Senate Democrats [indicated](#) that they would probe the influence of the brothers on Trump administration policies, specifically with reference to the EPA and the Department of the Interior. The Kochs have appeared to take credit for the rollback of the Clean Power Plan, among other Obama-era initiatives targeted by the Trump administration.

A spokesperson for Koch Industries [told](#) Courthouse News on Monday that Dunlap is “not working for Koch Industries in any capacity” at this time, indicating that he has officially left his prior position with the company.

Dunlap’s predecessor, Richard Yamada, left the EPA in September after only 15 months in the position. Yamada was largely seen as one of the chief drivers behind a [deeply controversial “secret science” policy proposal](#) attempting to limit the use of private data in scientific studies. Such efforts have been a pet cause of retiring Rep. Lamar Smith (R-TX); Yamada previously had a role working with Smith to draft similar legislation prior to interest from the Trump administration.

And during former EPA administrator Scott Pruitt’s tenure, the [Heritage Foundation](#) — which has received numerous donations from the Koch brothers over the years — [hosted a closed-door meeting](#) with Pruitt and others to discuss the policy.

In his new role, Dunlap will help to oversee a number of crucial programs. The risk assessment program that produced a health study linking formaldehyde to cancer, for instance, falls under the EPA’s research and development arm. Trump administration officials [have blocked that report](#), seemingly due to pressure from the chemical industry. Formaldehyde is a prevalent chemical throughout the United States and is often found in items like particle boards and crease-resistant fabrics.

Georgia-Pacific Chemicals LLC, a Koch Industries subsidiary, is one of the largest formaldehyde producers in the country, and has lobbied against the study’s release [according to Politico](#). As a former Koch employee, Dunlap will now be in a position to direct the study’s future, amid a heavy industry lobbying effort.

The EPA is in the midst of a controversial streamlining effort; last week, the agency announced that the Office of the Science Advisor will be closing. Meanwhile, Dunlap’s appointment [will provide a measure of political leadership](#) within the EPA while allowing the Trump administration to avoid a Senate confirmation hearing.

Recent battles over agency nominees with industry backgrounds have proven bruising for the White House, although the administration has largely succeeded in its efforts to appoint officials [with strong ties to the companies and sectors](#) they now oversee. That includes acting EPA administrator Andrew Wheeler, who [previously served as a coal lobbyist](#).

Green groups and advocates argue that revolving door between industry and the federal government has taken a toll on environmental regulations. The Trump administration has overseen an onslaught of environmental regulation rollbacks, many directly benefiting fossil fuel industries, chemical companies, and corporate interests more broadly. Most recently, the EPA has indicated [that it will propose easing limitations on the toxic chemical mercury](#), in a victory for the coal industry.