

As Dan Farber [just pointed out](#), President Trump [announced minutes ago via Twitter](#) that Scott Pruitt is (finally) stepping down as Administrator of the US Environmental Protection Agency. Deputy Administrator Andrew Wheeler, a former lobbyist for the coal industry, will serve as Acting Administrator pending confirmation of a new Administrator. I have a few quick thoughts.

Pruitt's resignation comes after [months of scandals](#) in which his ethics have been questioned over large and small matters. There are [at least 14 federal investigations](#) into [his conduct](#) pending.

Even GOP Congressman Trey Gowdy ([appearing on Fox News](#)) has ridiculed Pruitt. More recently, conservative commentator Laura Ingraham [called for his resignation](#).

While Pruitt's resignation appears to have been prompted by these scandals, his anti-environmental policies have put him in the crosshairs of advocates for public health and the environment, and he has been criticized for breaking longstanding regulatory strategies, [misleading the public](#) about the agency's work and mandate, letting industry [lobbyists have a hand in writing policy](#), and [violating the statutes](#) his agency is charged with enforcing. Pruitt's EPA has been starting rollbacks of major public health and environmental protections, many of which—like the recent attacks on California's auto emissions standards—[have little to no legal support](#). His agency has also been [dramatically weakening the agency's commitment to science](#). (I [blogged about the Trump EPA's new messaging against environmental protection, its anticipated policy rollbacks, and its anti-science agenda in detail](#) last March, highlighting the signs that the administration already was acting to dismantle EPA.) His [disrespect for agency staff, and resulting dysfunction in the agency](#), were widely reported.

The policy changes and backsliding from EPA's mission were inevitable from the moment the transition began, when [Myron Ebell](#)—well known for his opposition to climate science and to environmental regulation generally—was tapped to lead the EPA transition. Pruitt's replacement (at least for now), Andrew Wheeler, [is certain to continue](#) the anti-regulatory, [anti-science](#) slant of Trump's EPA. In addition to being a coal industry lobbyist, Wheeler was chief of staff for many years for Sen. James Inhofe, who was been the Senate's strongest voice against climate science and environmental protection. His views [in opposition to strong environmental and public health protection](#) are widely known. At the same time, Wheeler has a reputation for being more careful than Pruitt, and also for understanding the workings of the agency. This should mean that he will be less likely to break agency norms and alienate staff. But from a policy perspective, Wheeler's ascension to this role will surely continue the path Pruitt has been on since he was confirmed, and

possibly be even more effective. Regardless, it's sure to be an interesting time at EPA.

The full [text of Pruitt's resignation letter is here](#).

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