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Environmental News Home Green Investing Green Business Green Technology **Politics** Climate Change Policies Recycling & Waste Economy Wind **US Carbon Emissions Down More Than Any** Other Country Hvdro 20 June 2012, 09:47 BST Solar Tweet Like 🖂 EMAIL 📇 PRINT 🔝 RSS Biofuel Geothemal In May, we reported that the world's greenhouse gas emissions rose to record Tidal

levels in 2011, rising 3.2%, because China's jumped a treacherous 9.3% But there's a positive side to the story. Emissions in the US and EU dropped,

1.7% and 1.9% respectively. The warm winter helped, and the sluggish economy was certainly a factor, but the biggest change was the drop in coal use in favor of

"The replacement of coal by shale gas is a key factor and what happened in the U.S. could very well happen in China and other countries and could definitely help in reducing CO2 emissions," says International Energy Agency (IEA) chief economist Fatih Birol.

Shale gas, of course, is loaded with problems - water and air pollution, and the current practice of letting methane vent into the atmosphere - but let's look at the impact of reducing coal.

Since 2006, the US has reduced carbon emissions more than any country or region, falling 7.7%, says the IEA. This is equal to taking 84 million passenger vehicles off the road, and is primarily attributable to using less coal.

Coal provided a full 50% of US electricity 10 years ago, now it's down to 33%, bringing the average American's carbon footprint to 1965 levels! And the reduction in coal puts the US on track to meet or even beat President Obama's goal of cutting US carbon emissions 17% by 2020. And that's without any energy plan.

"Americans should be heartened by the report. This significant milestone is a testament to the hard work of thousands of volunteers around the country, who are working city by city to retire dirty, outdated coal-burning power plants. While we still have a lot more work to do, it's clear that the work of the Sierra Club and other grassroots organizations is helping our nation make real progress in reducing dangerous pollution and mitigating the climate crisis," says Michael Brune, executive director of the Sierra Club.

The Sierra Club is responsible for blocking construction of 153 coal plants in its Beyond Coal campaign. NYC Mayor Bloomberg personally donated \$50 million to the campaign last year. The goal is shut down all US coal plants.

Besides being the leading source of US greenhouse gas emissions, coal's pollution contributes to four out of the five leading causes of mortality - heart disease, cancer, stroke, and respiratory illness. It emits almost half of all mercury pollution, which causes developmental problems in babies and young children, and is a major contributor to asthma. Coal pollution causes \$100 billion in health costs annually.

As part of the GOP's relentless attack on environmental laws - seeking to overturn or prevent every single one of them - the Senate will vote tomorrow on Senator Inhofe's (R-OK) resolution to stop the EPA's Mercury and Air Toxics Standard, which severely restricts emissions of mercury, lead, arsenic, and other toxic pollutants from coal plants

Inhofe has received \$688,417 in contributions from electric utilities and mining companies.

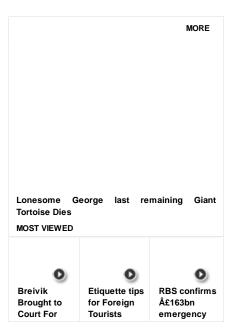
It took the EPA 20 years to deliver those rules (and finally did under court order), which simply require the biggest polluters in the US - coal- and oil-fired power plants - to install pollution prevention technology like every other industry has. It has already forced the dirtiest coal plants to close.

Source: Sustainable

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