

Bowing to fascist-led witch-hunt, EcoHealth Alliance fires Peter Daszak, the scientist who warned of pandemic dangers

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22 January 2025

Bowing to pressure from the political witch hunt led by the fascist movement headed by US President Donald Trump, nonprofit health research organization EcoHealth Alliance has fired its longtime leader and president, Dr. Peter Daszak.

The firing of Daszak was followed just 10 days later by the announcement on January 17 that Biden’s US Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) cut off all funding and formally debarred EcoHealth Alliance Inc. for five years.

According to a conspiracy theory invented by the fascist ideologue Steve Bannon and his associates, Daszak and fellow scientists created SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19, at the Wuhan Institute of Virology.

Despite its being invented from whole cloth and being contradicted by a growing mountain of evidence, the Biden administration and dominant sections of the US media have given credence to this conspiracy theory.

Daszak has been made a central target of the fascist right for his outspoken defense of scientific truth and international collaboration. For decades before the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic, he has been a leading voice warning about the dangers of zoonotic spillovers—dangers which are once again being demonstrated in real-time by the spillover of H5N1 into the human population.

In 2004, Daszak effectively predicted the COVID-19 pandemic on “60 Minutes,” saying, “What worries me most is that we’re going to suddenly find a SARS virus that moves from one part of the planet to another, wiping people out as it moves along. ... That’s something to be keeping you awake at night.”

Instead of being praised as a hero who sought to ring the alarm about a pandemic that has killed millions worldwide, he has been smeared and persecuted—not only by the fascists but also by their accomplices within the media and political establishment.

Whatever the motivations of EcoHealth in firing Daszak—perhaps the leaders of the organization told themselves they could avoid being targeted if they threw their leader to the wolves—this cowardly action only gives further ammunition to Trump’s campaign against science and scientists.

There has been no serious dispute among principled scientists about where COVID-19 came from since the publication in *Nature Medicine* of the March 2020 analysis, “The Proximal Origins of SARS-CoV-2,” by Kristian G. Andersen et al. Every piece of evidence, like the DNA from raccoon dogs held in a stall showing high levels of SARS-CoV-2 DNA, has pointed to a natural spillover from the wild animal trade centered on the Wuhan wet market, miles from the Wuhan Institute of Virology, where unrelated research on bat coronaviruses was being conducted. Additionally, epidemiological data from bats throughout the regions has underscored the diversity of SARS-CoV-2 and SARS-CoV-1 like viruses that exist in the region. Furthermore, even US intelligence agencies have confirmed that the pathogen was not a “manufactured virus,” and reports of a lab leak have been of “low confidence.”

Not only did the World Health Organization’s 2021 study of the origins of SARS-CoV-2 implicate the Huanan Seafood Wholesale Market as the epicenter of the original COVID-19 outbreak, multiple studies by reputable scientists and institutions across the globe

have repeatedly confirmed this finding. These facts have been intentionally ignored in the frenzied political attack on Daszak, despite every effort on his part to provide the subcommittee investigating the origins of COVID-19 with an exhaustive detailed account of all of EcoHealth Alliance's work and communications.

Daszak, with hundreds of high-impact publications to his credit, has been one of the foremost scientists at the heart of pandemic preparedness with decades of experience. He has devoted his life to public health as a global unified effort (one of the reasons why fascist ultra-nationalists hate him) and to protecting the world from the threat posed by numerous pathogens. His talents and ability have been thrown on the scrap heap, while the perpetrators of this social crime against science and health of millions celebrate in the White House.

Indeed, the witch-hunt against Daszak, even before Trump's ascent to the presidency, is a dire warning against scientists whose collaborative work on an international basis is more and more deemed a national security threat to the interests of the oligarchs, who are preparing to carve up the world and all its social vital resources for their own enrichment.

In congressional testimony in May 2024, Professor Peter Hotez, a molecular virologist and dean of the National School of Tropical Medicine at Baylor College of Medicine in Houston, stated:

The chilling message from both GOP and Democrats in the US Congress to young Americans: "Scientists are enemies of the people, you have options in life, don't throw your opportunities away by becoming a scientist, at least not in America." Honestly, I'm beyond disgusted.

Furthermore, Hotez said in an interview with the *Los Angeles Times*,

We now have zoonotic threats emerging at an accelerating cadence. This is the time when we need to be doubling down and expanding our global virus surveillance networks. By making

up allegations, [the subcommittee is] ... undermining the work of EcoHealth and other organizations committed to understanding how viruses are jumping from animals into humans.

Daszak is a victim of the fascist-led witch-hunt against science. The working class must come to his defense and to the defense of principled scientists who work tirelessly to make life tolerable and better for humanity. Daszak must be reinstated and given his full salary and benefits. He should be allowed to continue his work, and must be defended against the reaction that sees science as a threat.



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