

No, we are not living in the Anthropocene, scientists conclude

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We are living in the Anthropocene, scientists have been telling us for years. No, we're not, at least not officially. A scientific panel that is responsible for delineating the past 2.6 million years of geologic history – the Subcommittee on Quaternary Stratigraphy – decided that the “Age of Humans” should not be defined as a new geological epoch.

Monday, this scientific panel rejected a proposal to call the period starting around 1950 the Anthropocene, and ended a debate that started in 2009.

The proposal was drawn up by a working group that stated that the human impact on the planet increased dramatically around 1950, and that this impact would last for thousands of years. For example, it would take tens of thousands of years for atmospheric carbon concentrations to return to preindustrial levels, even if humanity were to disappear from the planet today.

The rejection of the proposal is not yet final, it could be reversed by a congress of geologists this summer. But if the congress does not reverse this rejection, we are not living in the

Anthropocene. At least not for another 10 years: the rules of geologic timekeeping are that another Anthropocene proposal cannot be submitted for at least 10 years.

Source: The Washington Post, May 5 2024. Have humans started a new geologic epoch? Scientists say no.