

The Environment

1) Does the Bush Administration's "Clear Skies Initiative" improve air quality?

No. These changes to the 1970 Clean Air Act actually *increase* allowable pollution levels by 42 million tons of additional pollutants released by 2020, and allow three times more toxic mercury, 50 percent more sulfur emissions, and hundreds of thousands more tons of smog-forming nitrogen oxides annually. It is estimated that 100,000 premature deaths will result, and that Clear Skies-related health problems will cost taxpayers \$115 billion per year.

Sources: "2 Studies Contradict EPA on New Rules," John Heilprin (AP), *Washington Post*, Oct. 23, 2003, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A2549-2003Oct22.html>

Natural Resources Defense Council, <http://www.nrdc.org/air/pollution/qbushplan.asp#clearskies>

"Dirty Secrets," Osha Gray Davidson, *Mother Jones*, Sept.-Oct. 2003, p. 83.

2) In 2003, the Bush administration's EPA dropped active investigations into power plants for their violations of the Clean Air Act. How many power plant investigations were dropped?

Fifty. Bush administration changes in the underlying rules will allow the utility industry to avoid making pollution-control upgrades that directly affect our air quality. Representatives of the utility industry were among President Bush's largest campaign donors.

Sources: "Lawyers at E.P.A. Say It Will Drop Pollution Cases," Christopher Drew and Richard A. Oppel, Jr., *New York Times*, Nov. 6, 2003, <http://www.nytimes.com/2003/11/06/politics/06EPA.html>

<http://www.theblogproject.com/index.php?p=320&more=1>

3) How large is the untapped oil reserve in the environmentally pristine Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, which the Bush administration has repeatedly attempted to open to commercial drilling?

Estimated to be less than what we consume in 6 months — i.e., about 3.2 billion barrels of economically recoverable oil. Moreover, oil from the refuge would take about 10 years to begin reaching the market, and even when production peaks — in the distant year of 2027 — the refuge would produce less than 2% of the oil Americans are expected to use that year.

Sources: U.S. Geological Survey, <http://geology.cr.usgs.gov/pub/fact-sheets/fs-0028-01/>

"Arctic National Wildlife Refuge," U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, <http://arctic.fws.gov/issues1.html#section2>

"Oil and the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge," Natural Resources Defense Council, <http://www.nrdc.org/land/wilderness/arctic.asp>

4) How does the Bush administration's "Healthy Forests Initiative" (HFI) affect our national forests and old growth forests?

The HFI and other Bush administration forestry policies accelerate aggressive "thinning" of valuable trees across millions of acres of backcountry forests. Changes to the Sierra Framework increase logging rates in the Sierra Nevada by 300%. Weakening the "Roadless Area Conservation Rule" exposes up to 58.5 million acres of our most pristine national forests to logging and environmental disruption, including Alaska's Tongass rainforest — one of the rarest ecosystems in the world.

Sources: "New forestry bill has environmentalists worried," Glen Martin, *San Francisco Chronicle*, Nov. 2, 2003, <http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?file=/chronicle/archive/2003/11/03/MNGJJ2ORBS1.DTL>

“Debunking the ‘Healthy Forests Initiative’,” The Sierra Club, http://www.sierraclub.org/forests/fires/healthyforests_initiative.asp

“Learn About Wild Forests,” U.S. PIRG, <http://wildforests.com/wildforests.asp?id2=4070&id3=wildforests&>

5) Are there provisions in the Healthy Forests Initiative to ensure citizens have the opportunity to make public comments and evaluate the environmental impact of logging plans?

No. The HFI severely restricts public, environmental, and judicial review of logging plans made by administrators of the US Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management. The US Department of Agriculture’s Mark Rey, who for nearly 20 years was a top lobbyist for the timber industry, is now the chief administrator responsible for the stewardship of 155 national forests.

Sources: “New forestry bill has environmentalists worried,” Glen Martin, *San Francisco Chronicle*, Nov. 2, 2003, <http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?file=/chronicle/archive/2003/11/03/MNGJJ2ORBS1.DTL>

“Debunking the ‘Healthy Forests Initiative’,” The Sierra Club, http://www.sierraclub.org/forests/fires/healthyforests_initiative.asp

“Learn About Wild Forests,” U.S. PIRG, <http://wildforests.com/wildforests.asp?id2=4070&id3=wildforests&>

“Meet Mark Rey,” Native Forests Network, http://www.nativeforest.org/campaigns/public_lands/rey_5_30_02.htm

6) When the Bush administration took office, the EPA’s revised new safety standards set the allowable arsenic levels in drinking water at 10 ppb (parts per billion). Within how many months did the Bush administration roll the standard back to 50 ppb?

Two months.

Source: Environmental Protection Agency, <http://www.epa.gov/safewater/ars/implement.html>

7) How many years of research, consideration, and review went into the EPA’s establishing the new safety standards for reducing arsenic levels in drinking water from 50 ppb to 10 ppb?

Over ten years.

In 1993, the World Health Organization (WHO) set 10 ppb as the recommended limit for arsenic in drinking water. The 15-nation European Union adopted 10 ppb as a mandatory standard for arsenic in drinking water in 1998. The WHO reports that even at 10 ppb there is an increased risk of cancer and other diseases. Pending further study, the 50 ppb standard — which is five times the international standard — remains in effect in the US, to the economic benefit of the mining industry.

Sources: Environmental Protection Agency, <http://www.epa.gov/safewater/ars/implement.html>

“Bush Mandates Arsenic in Your Tap Water,” Rachel Massey, Organic Consumers Association, <http://www.organicconsumers.org/corp/arsenic.cfm>.

8) How many acres of previously protected wetlands, lakes, and streams will be opened to development under the Bush Administration’s proposal to end federal oversight of “isolated waters”?

20 million acres, or up to 30%, of America’s wetlands will be opened to development, despite President Bush’s election campaign promises that there would be no net loss of wetlands under his administration.

Sources: “America’s Wetlands in Danger,” National Wildlife Federation, <http://www.nwf.org/wetlands/wetlandsatrisk.html>

“Statement of Senator Bob Graham (D-FL), Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Fisheries, Wildlife, and Water Hearing, June 10, 2003,” http://epw.senate.gov/108th/Graham_061003.htm

“The Bottom Line,” *Mother Jones*, Sept.-Oct. 2003.

9) What share of “Superfund” toxic waste site cleanup costs are to be paid by corporate polluters under Bush’s 2004 budget, and how does this compare to past budgets?

In 1996, corporate polluters responsible for creating toxic waste sites paid for 82% of Superfund cleanup costs while taxpayers paid 18%. The new 2004 Bush budget calls for corporate polluters to pay only 21% with taxpayers paying 79%. Because of inadequate funding, Superfund cleanups of toxic sites have decreased by 50% in the past two years.

Source: “Cleanup Slowdown: Superfund Sites Wait In Line For Cleanup,” U.S. PIRG, <http://www.pirg.org/enviro/superfund/superfund.asp?id2=9449&id3=superfund&>.

10) How many members of the 63-person Energy Task Force that President Bush and Vice President Cheney assembled to create our new National Energy Policy did *not* have ties to corporate energy interests?

Only one. Moreover, at the insistence of the White House, records of the Task Force’s behind-closed-doors proceedings remain secret despite repeated efforts to access them by the Government Accounting Office (GAO) and others. The GAO unsuccessfully sued the White House in an attempt to access the records, arguing that “allowing the Vice President to withhold basic factual information would also violate the principles of transparency and accountability that are essential elements of democracy.”

Sources: “Fact Sheet of GAO’s Access Case,” Government Accounting Office, <http://www.gao.gov/accessfs.pdf>

“Chronology of the GAO’s Attempts to Obtain Information from the National Energy Policy Development Group,” GAO, http://www.gao.gov/press/chronologynepdg.8.21.03_1.pdf

“The Bush-Cheney Energy Plan: Players, Profits and Paybacks,” National Resource Defense Council, <http://www.nrdc.org/air/energy/aplayers2.asp>

“Getting the Ear Of Dick Cheney,” Michael Weiskopf and Adam Zagorin, *Time Magazine*, Feb. 3, 2002, <http://www.time.com/time/nation/article/0,8599,198862,00.html>

11) How many countries strongly disagree with the Bush Administration’s claim that global warming is not a real threat?

The European Union, Japan, and more than 100 countries.

The National Academy of Sciences last year warned that global warming could trigger “large, abrupt and unwelcome” changes in our climate. The 2,500-member Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change says average earth temperatures could rise as much as 10 degrees over the next century, the fastest rate in 10,000 years. Announcing that 2001 was the second hottest year on record, the World Meteorological Organization recently confirmed that “temperatures are getting hotter, and they are getting hotter faster now than at any time in the past.”

The Bush administration’s position is to take no action to curb CO2 and other greenhouse gasses pending additional study. Further, the administration has stated that the US would not participate in the Kyoto Protocol, which is intended to implement the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

Sources: <http://yosemite.epa.gov/oar/globalwarming.nsf/content/NewsandEventsSpeechesBush-7-13-01.html>

“Do the Math: White House Global Warming Plan Cooks the Books,” National Resource Defense Council, Feb. 14, 2002, <http://www.nrdc.org/media/pressreleases/020214a.asp>

12) Using the new “SUV tax break,” how much can a small business deduct from its taxable income for purchasing one or more luxury SUVs?"

Up to \$100,000 per year.

Source: “Businesses Jump on an SUV Loophole,” Jonathan Weisman, *Washington Post*, Nov. 7, 2003, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/ac2/wp-dyn/A10045-2003Nov6?>

13) What steps did the Bush administration take to increase the fuel efficiency standards for automobiles and to encourage consumers to purchase more fuel-efficient vehicles?

None. America's average fuel efficiency for passenger vehicles is now at its lowest point in 21 years.

Sources: "Fuel Economy Guide," US Department of Energy, Oct. 2003, <http://www.fueleconomy.gov/feg/FEG2000.htm>

"Bush Fuel Economy Numbers Show No Improvement At Best," Sierra Club, Oct. 3, 2003, <http://www.sierraclub.org/pressroom/releases/pr2003-10-23a.asp>

"Bush Fuel Economy Increase a Mere 'Drop in the Barrel'," Alliance To Save Energy, Dec. 2002, <http://www.ase.org/media/newsrel/CAFE1213.htm>

14) What grade did President Bush receive on the League of Conservation Voters 2003 presidential report card?

F. Even lower than the D- he received on the 2002 presidential report card. According to the League of Conservation Voters, "Bush's dismal Report Card is dominated by a disturbing trend: time after time, Bush favors corporate interests over the public's interest in a clean, safe and healthy environment."

Source: "LCV Releases the 2003 Presidential Report Card," League of Conservation Voters, <http://www.lcv.org/alerts/AlertsMain.cfm?AlertID=22>

15) Open: Do you feel it's important to protect the environment? What do you think would happen if there were no government restrictions on corporate use of the environment?