

A few days ago, the *New York Times* [cancelled](#) its “Green Blog,” dedicated to environmental and energy news. The *Times* told readers to look for environmental policy news on the “[Caucus](#) blog,” dedicated to politics, and energy technology news on the “[Bits](#) blog,” dedicated to the business of technology. The demise of the Green Blog came less than two months after the *Times* eliminated its environment desk – created in 2009 – and reassigned the writers and editors to other units.



Reactions to the elimination of the Green Blog and environmental desk have been mostly [negative](#), with [critics](#) noting the importance of specialized environmental reporting, individualized content, and a dedicated forum for environmental and energy topics. For years, the *New York Times* has been a leader in mainstream environmental coverage. For example, *Times* environmental reporter Justin Gillis won the 2011 John B. Oakes Award for Distinguished Environmental Journalism with a 10-part series, “[Temperatures Rising](#),” showing the consequences of global warming through a blend of narrative storytelling, scientific information, and reader-friendly graphics.

And while budget cuts may be behind the elimination of the Green Blog and environmental desk, the *Times* still has a veritable plethora of [blogs](#) for other niches: Baby boomers, the Red Carpet, automobiles, and ten different sports blogs.

However, some see this as a potentially positive change that will make environmental stories more mainstream by connecting them business, economic, and political stories. Dean Baquet, the paper’s managing editor for news operations, has [said](#) that environmental stories “are more complex. We need to have people working on the different desks that can cover different parts of the story.”

In other words, as long as the *New York Times* remains committed covering environmental stories, environmental and climate change coverage should continue to permeate its reporting and may spread into other beats and genres more often.

Andrew Revkin of the *Times*’ “Dot Earth” blog, which remains active, [called](#) the Green Blog

“an excellent aggregator of environmental news and analysis.” He also [pontificated upon](#) potential gains from interdisciplinary reporting, stating: “I’ve long thought, for example, that it’d be better in Washington to have reporters cover risk and regulation instead of having single reporters cover particular agencies (think of cross-cutting issues like genetically modified foods, the health impacts of pollution...).” Revkin also assembled a list of former Green Blog reporters to follow on [Twitter](#).

I can see some potential benefits to making environmental coverage more mainstream, rather than keeping some stories isolated in the blog. However, time will tell whether eliminating the environmental desk and the *Green Blog* will lead to better interdisciplinary reporting, or whether it will simply reduce coverage and further marginalize environmental stories. Of course, specialized outlets like *Climate Central*, *Mother Jones* and several others continue to provide good coverage of these topics. And [Legal Planet](#) itself is a reliable source for environmental law and policy news (author bias duly noted).

The end of the *Green Blog* came just days after Berkeley Law’s [Center for Law, Energy & the Environment](#) hosted a panel on “Environmental and Energy Journalism” with three leading reporters in the Bay Area: David Baker, energy reporter for the *San Francisco Chronicle*; Kiera Butler of *Mother Jones*; and Edwin Dobb, freelance reporter for national publications including *National Geographic*. Dobb’s new [feature article](#) on fracking in North Dakota’s Bakken oil shale is an engaging look into life in the new fracking frontier, with thoughtful attention paid to larger environmental issues. Let’s hope that we see more stories like this from the *Times* and mainstream publications going forward.