

In most ways, 2014 was a good year for environmental protection, with progress on several fronts. True, there are warning signs for 2015 — primarily the Republican sweep of the mid-terms and the Supreme Court's puzzling decision to review toxics regulations for coal-fired power plants. And of course, there were losses as well as victories, or partial victories where there might have been greater successes. But overall, developments were very positive. Here are ten positive developments:

1. The Supreme Court upheld EPA's cross-state air pollution rule, setting the stage for important reductions in air pollutants with big health benefits.
2. The Court also upheld most of EPA's permitting requirements for greenhouse gas emissions from new sources, striking down only the regulations applying to a minority of sources that do not emit major amounts of any other air pollutant.
3. The IPCC issued AR5, a comprehensive review of the scientific literature relating to climate change, its impacts, and ways to limit emissions. We know more now than ever before about how bad climate change will be and how to limit the damage.
4. The Supreme Court declined to hear claims that California's low-carbon fuel standard is unconstitutional on its face.
5. The Council on Environmental Quality resumed its effort to craft guidelines for discussion of climate change in environmental impact statements. The current version is a significant improvement over its predecessors.
6. EPA proposed an ambitious plan to address carbon emissions from existing power plants under section 111(d) of the Clean Air Act.
7. The Supreme Court turned away BP's effort to escape from its own settlement agreement, paving the way to billions of dollars of compensation to victims of the BP Deepwater Horizon spill.
8. In Lima, the world's nations made significant progress in negotiations toward a new international agreement on climate change.
9. The courts upheld use of the Endangered Species Act to provide vitally needed water for endangered fish during California's drought.
10. To nearly everyone's surprise, the U.S. and China reached an agreement to take joint action regarding climate change.

So long 2014! Let's hope that 2015 sees similar progress.