

They say that history never repeats itself, but it often rhymes. As in many sequels, there will be many things we've seen before. Much of that consisted in an all-out attack on environmental law. If you hated the original, you won't enjoy watching the same thing the second time around. But there are a few additions to the cast and some new backdrops on the set. Today, I'm going to talk about some areas of continuity.

Early Presidential actions. Trump will hammer us with a series of executive orders in the first weeks of his presidency. He'll withdraw from the Paris Agreement again, expunge the social cost of carbon, reinstitute changes in regulatory review that block new rules, and tell agencies to wipe out a lot of Biden rules. He could well go further on some or all of these, such as leaving not only the Paris Agreement but also the underlying treaty signed three decades ago.

Regulatory rollbacks. The Trump Administration rolled back around a hundred environmental regulations during his previous term in office, including almost everything relating to climate change. He's expressed every intention of doing the same thing again.

Assaults on clean energy and environmental agencies. Last time around, Trump proposed crippling budget cuts for EPA, parts of DOE, and other agencies. We can expect he'll try them again, with support from the DOGE crew. He and his appointees also conducted open warfare against career staff and tried to gag government scientists. We'll be seeing that again too, again with a boost from Elon Musk's DOGE initiative.

Expanding fossil fuels. Trump has vowed to make America rich again riding a tsunami of oil. It's not clear how much production can actually be increased in four years, but Trump will try to put us on the track of much greater production, use, and export of coal, natural gas, and oil. This will include eliminating barriers to permitting, opening more areas like ANWR to exploration and production, and encouraging as much domestic use as possible at the expense of renewables. Trump's appointees at EPA and Interior are likely to support this trend. Same as Trump's last term, only more so.

The upshot. All of this adds up to a repeat of Trump's previous term but maybe at an even greater scale. That's typical of sequels. If the original movie included ten cars exploding, the sequel needs to have twenty plus an a big airplane. More noise, more destruction, more chaos — the typical action-movie sequel, and the Trump sequel we can expect.

But not everything will be a retread. My next post will discuss some new twists that we might see in the years ahead.

