



Oregon Lands Opened to Logging

The New York Times has a [story](#) this morning that tries to summarize Bush's environmental legacy. As the story points out, there are positive notes, like the diesel regulations and the last-minute designation of marine sanctuaries. Yet, the overall message is negative. The Bush Administration will largely be remembered as a time of environmental setbacks and lost opportunities.

One such wasted opportunity came early in the Bush Administration, when we seemed to be close to an agreement for a national cap-and-trade system covering three conventional pollutants plus carbon dioxide. The agreement foundered when the Administration refused to consider including CO₂, despite Bush's campaign pledge to regulate greenhouse emissions. EPA then tried to recreate the remainder of the system administratively, only to be told by the D.C. Circuit that the rule violated the Clean Air Act.

Similarly, the Administration seemed actively hostile to energy conservation, although conservation could have been a win-win in terms of environment, economics, and national security. This resistance to energy conservation, like the Administration's eagerness to promote logging on public lands, seemed to rest much less on hard-headed policy analysis than on favoritism toward extractive industries. Such suspicions are fed by the secretiveness of the policy process, including the insistence on suppressing information about Vice-President Cheney's energy task force. Notable efforts to suppress or distort scientific findings also marred the Administration's efforts.

The Times story also discusses the challenges that Obama faces in salvaging what he can from this legacy, abandoning the rest, and trying to move forward. Of course, reasonable people will differ on environmental policy issues. But we should all be able to agree that the policy process should be transparent, that scientific analysis should not be warped by politics, and that the touchstone should be the public interest rather than the welfare of particular industries.