Female bighorn sheep. Photo by US Fish and Wildlife Service.

It's been a pretty bad week from an environmental perspective. The House Republicans have dominated the news, passing a continuing resolution for the rest of FY '11 that would gut environmental programs, block implementation of anti-pollution and species protection requirements, yet make essentially no dent in the national debt. (For commentary on the continuing resolution see Peter Lehner's post at NRDC's Switchboard blog.)

But it's not all doom and gloom out there. Aside from clinging to the hope that the Senate and the President will moderate the House majority's worst excesses, we can take some cheer from the reintroduction of bighorn sheep to the Pike National Forest in Colorado.

According to the New York Times story, the area was historically bighorn country, but the sheep had not been seen there since the 1960s. Fire suppression has been a problem for the bighorn, which requires rocky terrain adjacent to mountain meadows. The 2002 Hayman fire, the largest in Colorado's recorded history, was tragic by several measures. It cost the government nearly $40 million and was a factor in six deaths (one elderly woman died from an asthma attack triggered by smoke inhalation, and five firefighters were killed in a car crash while heading to the fire). The silver lining of the Hayman fire is that it left the area once again suitable for bighorn sheep. Colorado wildlife officials introduced a dozen sheep last year, and a dozen more this month.