It is, of course, absurd that the House, Senate, and White House are even negotiating about budget cuts in the midst of the Great Contraction. But it does seem that the environmental community has gotten something of a win — at least if you believe the Senators most closely involved in the negotiations:

> Under intense pressure from green groups and their members, Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (Nev.) announced Friday that Republican proposals to gut the Clean Air Act and Clean Water Act were off the table in budget negotiations.
>
> "Neither the White House nor Senate Leaders is going to accept any EPA riders," Reid said.

In plain English, this means that the appropriations bills governing the EPA will not forbid the Agency for spending funds on, say, climate regulation authorized by the Clean Air Act.

But even assuming it is true, it leaves two questions, one short-term and one long-term:

First, what will the level of EPA funding be? If Congress and the White House agree to serious cuts that starve the agency of necessary personnel, then the absence of a rider is a Pyrrhic victory.

Second, what caused the victory? As little as three days ago, the Associated Press reported that the White House was ready to cave on waivers, and Reid also seemed to show grudging flexibility regarding them. It's possible that the early reports were never true. Or it is also possible, as Glenn Hurowitz reports at Grist, that the notoriously-weak environmental lobby *finally* was able to organize the grass roots.

We'll know the answer to the first question within a relatively short time: even if (as I suspect) the government will shut down, eventually there will be some kind of deal, and we will see the budget numbers.

As for the second, that will take some more investigative reporting: lots of people are telling lots of stories, and only a few of them are true.