With the partial exception of Mitt Romney, all of the Republican presidential candidates are negative about EPA. According to the NY TImes,

> Opposition to regulation and skepticism about climate change have become tenets of Republican orthodoxy, but they are embraced with extraordinary intensity this year because of the faltering economy, high fuel prices, the Tea Party passion for smaller government and an activist Republican base that insists on strict adherence to the party's central agenda.
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> But while attacks on the E.P.A., climate-change science and environmental regulation more broadly are surefire applause lines with many Republican primary audiences, these views may prove a liability in the general election, pollsters and analysts say. The American people, by substantial majorities, are concerned about air and water pollution, and largely trust the E.P.A., national surveys say.

In the past, attacking environmental protection has not been a political winner for the GOP. But support for environmental protection has softened in the past decade. As this graph shows, the public is giving higher priority to energy than in the past:

This graph suggests that the Republicans aren't taking as much of a risk as they would have been taking five years ago. But a closer look at the data provides less comfort for them. Republicans one-sidedly favor energy development (by about 3 to 1). But independents lean in favor of the environmental side of the balance.

Moreover, all environmental issues are not created equal. The public is most worried about the pollution and toxics issues that fall under EPA jurisdiction, less worried about preserving nature, and not too worried about climate change, according to a 2009 Gallop poll:

This means that GOP candidates may not suffer much for advocating more oil and gas development offshore and in protected areas. But attacking EPA air pollution

and water pollution regulations may not go down very well with the public. Judging from recent developments in the House of Representatives, the party's base doesn't feel the same, so there's a classic tension between what you need to say to win the nomination and what you want to say to the general electorate. As mentioned earlier, Romney seems to be more willing than the other candidates to resolve this tension in favor of positioning himself for the general election.