Exactly forty-two years ago, President Richard M. Nixon signed the National Environmental Quality Act into law on January 1, 1970. Among other remarks, he had this to say:

> [A] major goal, when you talk about New Year's resolutions, I wouldn't say for the next year but for the next 10 years–and I don't mean that I intend to run for a third term–for the next 10 years for this country must be to restore the cleanliness of the air, the water, and that, of course, means moving also on the broader problems of population congestion, transport, and the like.

These remarks turned out to be prescient. NEPA was the first in a slew of new federal environmental statutes — an era that came to an end almost exactly ten years later with the election of President Ronald Reagan.