

There's lots of news coverage about the federal government shutdown. Here's an environmental angle to the impact of the shutdown. Most of the employees for the various environmental agencies are "non-essential" personnel - including many of the enforcement personnel. Here's a local example from the Bay Area. It seems a bunch of folks are [taking advantage of the absence of federal enforcement personnel to do some extra fishing without permits](#). It's unclear how broad a problem this is: Some bloggers have said that [now is the time for industries that want to do some extra air and water pollution discharges to do so, while EPA is mostly shut down](#). But laws like the Clean Air and Water Acts have citizen suit provisions that allow non-federal employees to go after illegal dischargers (of course, you would have to wait until the shutdown ends to go to court, but you could still get penalties for past violations). So here's another (relatively small) benefit of citizen enforcement provisions - they are exempt from the vagaries of our dysfunctional federal budgeting process.