Mitch McConnell hates the environment. When I say McConnell hates the environment, I mean that he's an environmental disaster. The environment would be in better hands if he were replaced as the Senate Republican leader by Ted Cruz or Rand Paul.

Here's a fun fact: Mitch McConnell's environmental record is twice as bad as Ted Cruz's, according to their lifetime League of Conservation Voters (LCV) scores. In fact, McConnell's 2013 LCV score was a big fat zero. That put him seventeen points below the average Senate Republican. He was even eight points below Jim Inhofe, which is no mean feat. But the most relevant comparison may be with his fellow Kentuckian and Tea Party darling, Rand Paul. Rand Paul's environmental record is considerably better than McConnell's. Paul's lifetime LCV score is 11%, while McConnell's is only 7%.

So what's going on here? Is this a reflection of McConnell's personal views, or is something else going on? You wouldn't expect any Senator from Kentucky to be an environmentalist. Alison Grimes, McConnell's current Democratic opponent, is also careful to pay homage to the importance of the coal industry. But McConnell is more extreme on environmental issues than his fellow Senator from Kentucky or the Kentucky House delegation as a whole. So something additional seems to be in play.

It's instructive to look at his earlier history. The evidence suggests that he was never very environmentally inclined, but that he became much less so after 1992. Until 1992, he often had two or three pro-environmental votes a year, giving him an average LCV score just below 2. But after 1992, he *never* had more than a single pro-environmental vote per year, and he often had none. His post-1992 LCV score is 0.3. That was just around the time of the "Gingrich revolution" in the Republican Party. Something similar may have happened to Trent Lott, a previous member of the Republican leadership; although his pre-1993 voting patterns were somewhat erratic, there was only one year after 1993 in which Lott *ever* voted on the pro-environmental side of an issue.

Regardless of the reasons, there's no doubt that McConnell now sits with the least environmentally friendly cluster of Republicans in the Senate. From an environmental point of view, it would be a clear improvement to replace him with Allison Grimes, despite her pro-coal views, or even just to replace him in the Senate leadership with a more typical member of the Republican caucus.