

Younger people today probably know about George Herbert Walker Bush (R) as the father of George W. Bush and (perhaps) as the architect of the first Iraq War. But he also had some notable environmental achievements to his credit. Here are some of his accomplishments:

1. **Air Pollution Law.** The 1990 Clean Air Act Amendments were a massive revamp of the statute. The Act established a successful cap-and-trade system for cutting acid rain. Bush had to engage in considerable arm-twisting to keep congressional Republicans on board. The Act also contained important new provisions on toxic chemicals, cleaning up areas with dirty air, and preserving areas that already had clean air.
2. **EPA Leadership.** Today we have a coal lobbyist in that job, but William Reilly came to the job from being head of the World Wildlife Fund. He was the leading voice for the environment in the Administration.
3. **Oil Spills.** The 1990 Oil Spill Act's passage followed on the heels of the Exxon Valdez oil spill. The Act is still the framework for recovering damages due to oil spills such as the BP Deepwater Horizon.
4. **Climate Negotiations.** During his presidential campaign, Bush said "Those who think we are powerless to do anything about the greenhouse effect forget about the 'White House effect'; as president, I intend to do something about it." Bush signed, and the Senate ratified, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. Bush said, "We must leave this Earth in better condition than we found it, and today this old truth must be applied to new threats facing the resources which sustain us all, the atmosphere and the ocean, the stratosphere and the biosphere. Our village is truly global." The UNFCCC remains the framework for international climate negotiations today — and so far not even Trump has tried to withdraw from it."
5. **National Climate Assessments.** It was under Bush that the statute requiring these assessments was established. The 2017 Assessment angered Trump by telling the truth about climate change.
6. **Wetlands.** During his 1988 campaign, Bush spoke about preserving wetlands: ""Much of the loss comes from inevitable pressure for development, and many of our wetlands are on private property, but I believe we must act. We must bring the private and public sectors together at the local and state levels to find a way to conserve wetlands." Bush established a policy of "no net loss" for wetlands, though implementation of the policy was tepid. The contrast with Trump is dramatic, since Trump aims to slash legal protection for wetlands.
7. **Oceans.** Bush created six new marine sanctuaries. He also signed the reauthorization for the marine sanctuary system. (On land, he created fifteen new National Wildlife Refuges). Trump has never lifted a finger to protect a single acre of land or water.

I'm certainly not proposing Bush 41 for environmental sainthood. His support for environmental protection ebbed and flowed, and he was often influenced by conservatives such as his chief of staff, John Sununu. But the comparison with today's Republicans is like night and day.