2025 has been a dark time for Americans who care about the environment. Rather than being a repeat of his first term, which had been bad enough , Trump's second term has been an all-out, brutal assault on the environment.. Major environmental rollbacks are on the way, as they were in his first term,although the rollbacks are more sweeping this time. But regulatory rollbacks can be fought in court. Other Trump actions are even more damaging.

The biggest damage has been structural. First, the Administration has ignored the law to cancel or even claw back billions of dollars in spending for the environment and clean energy. Congress chimed in by repealing most of the Inflation Reduction Act, eliminating future funding and phasing out key tax credits. The Administration has also tried to eliminate research grants to universities on energy and climate. Second, the Administration has declared war on the public servants who are responsible for implementing and enforcing environmental laws. Key agencies have been left in tatters. Lower courts have tried to push back against much of this. Their effort to rein in the Administration have been hampered by Supreme Court rulings on the shadow docket, which have made getting into court and obtaining an adequate remedy more difficult.

The structural damage has been accompanied by a host of other assaults on the environment. As expected, Trump withdrew from the Paris Agreement. He also bludgeoned other countries into postponing carbon limits on international shipping. In the domestic sphere, Trump has torn down the regulations that have guided environmental reviews for almost fifty years. He has canceled permits for clean energy projects and used claims of emergency powers to accelerate production and use of fossil fuels. The federal government now seems to be moving in the wrong direction with great speed and determination.

Yet all is not gloom and doom for the environment. Globally, clean energy is continuing to grow very quickly. The U.S. is increasingly out of the mainstream. Here at home, lower courts have continued to push back against Trump's executive overreach. The oral argument in the tariff case suggests that the Supreme Court may also do so. State governments have continued to pursue their own environmental and energy policies regardless of Trump. And Trump seems not to have won broad popular support for his approach to governance.

In short, it's been a "dark and stormy night,"as the clichéd story beginning goes. But rays of moonlight are peeking through the clouds. Let's hope for the best in 2026.