

Nation

# Environmentalists take aim at Bush record

As elections near, green groups push their concerns back into the spotlight

By Tom Kenworthy and Traci Watson  
USA TODAY

Several contentious environmental issues are returning to the national agenda as the political unity that grew out of the trauma of Sept. 11 fades.

In a flurry of assessments of President Bush's first year in office, environmentalists largely quiet since the terrorist attacks are trying to set the stage for the 2002 elections by condemning the White House as a captive of industry and unremittably hostile to environmental protection.

"On the major issues most Americans care about, their record is 100% bad," says Phil Clapp, president of the National Environmental Trust. "They are systematically gutting key protections."

At the same time, senior administration officials are issuing score cards of their own as both sides jockey for public support in anticipation of key legislative and regulatory fights. Among the issues on which major decisions are likely to be made soon are global warming and drilling for oil in Alaska's Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.

## Administrations, environmental groups' positions on key issues

	Status	Bush administration view	Environmentalists' view
<b>Global warming</b>	House approved; Senate to vote in February.	Will create jobs, reduce dependence on foreign oil.	Will threaten fragile environment and wildlife, yet provide little energy independence.
<b>Aging power plants</b>	White House pulled out of international treaty to slow warming last year. It's now devising its own plan. Clinton administration barred roads and other development on 58.5 million acres.	Wants to address problem without costing jobs or damaging economy.	Nation needs a plan to quickly cut emissions tied to warming.
<b>Clean water</b>	Administration last year blocked Clinton rules to clean up the 40% of rivers and lakes nationwide that don't meet pollution standards.	Revising rules to better reflect views of local residents and industry.	Administration undermining protections by failing to defend them in court and letting agencies bypass them.
<b>Snowmobiling in Yellowstone National Park</b>	Review due on rules requiring additional pollution controls when old, dirty power plants are upgraded.	Wants rules that don't threaten energy supplies.	Favors clearer version of previous rules that led to cleanup at many plants.
<b>Waterways should be cleaned up promptly and thoroughly.</b>	Administration last year blocked Clinton rules to clean up the 40% of rivers and lakes nationwide that don't meet pollution standards.	Wants more flexible rules that would give states more authority than they had under Clinton rules.	Waterways should be cleaned up promptly and thoroughly.
<b>Phase out snowmobiles to protect wildlife and reduce air and noise pollution.</b>	Administration last year blocked Clinton rules to clean up the 40% of rivers and lakes nationwide that don't meet pollution standards.	Wants more flexible rules that would give states more authority than they had under Clinton rules.	Waterways should be cleaned up promptly and thoroughly.
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Source: USA TODAY research by Tom Kenworthy, Traci Watson

testimonial to her first-year accomplishments with her sprawling department, which manages a quarter of the nation's landmass.

Norton says the hallmarks of her record are "communication, consultation and cooperation," particularly with state officials who felt "federal agencies seldom listened." The philosophy is "to make these kinds of decisions with less of a Washington, D.C., knows best" approach," adds Agriculture Undersecretary Mark Rey.

With control of both the House and Senate at stake in November, the White House has been laboring to moderate its image on the environment. The administration endured a public relations debacle

last year after initially moving to allow higher arsenic levels in drinking water, a position it subsequently reversed.

In recent weeks, President Bush has traveled to Florida to complete an agreement with Florida to protect the Everglades and to Pennsylvania to sign legislation on cleaning up contaminated industrial sites. Also, the administration recently announced that it would move ahead with the cleanup of PCBs in the Hudson River and continue pressing lawsuits against power plant owners who upgrade old generating plants without installing better pollution controls.

mental opponents on Capitol Hill. "There are some things that give me hope," said Sen. Jim Jeffords, the Vermont independent whose defection from the Republican Party last year cost the GOP control of the Senate.

Election-year pressures, Jeffords predicts, will likely bring more White House moderation. "I would expect, knowing this is a critical year for control of the House and Senate, that we'll see some moves for getting more votes."

Leaders of major environmental groups give Bush little credit, however. They point to a lengthy list of decisions during the first year, de-

tion regulations on mining on public lands that would have given the government veto power over projects deemed harmful to nature.

has made is showing more finesse in disguising its anti-environmental agenda. He cites recent directives undermining an earlier pledge to uphold Clinton's protections for roadless areas in national forests. Another issue: a low-key announcement promising review of a conservation plan for California's Sierra Nevada one day after high-profile endorsement of it plan. "This is their half-and-switch philosophy," he said.

With major issues surfacing the next few months and "w" worries over terrorism easing, "the environment could be the sleep issue of the 2002 election," predicts Daniel Weiss, former political director of the Sierra Club.