PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGNS AND ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY: LINKING PROMISE AND PERFORMANCE

by Travis Reid Glendenning

This paper reports on a comparative analysis of the environmental policy campaign promises and in-term performances of Ronald Reagan, George H.W. Bush, Bill Clinton, and George W. Bush. The study divides environmental policy promises into domestic and global issues, and evaluates presidential performance with campaign promises, categorizing performance into five categories: comparable action, partially comparable action, no action, mixed action, and contrary action. Results of the analysis reveal a markedly lower level of promise fulfillment for environmental promises, particularly promises concerning global environmental issues, than for campaign promises in general. The promise fulfillment disparity arises from the intergenerational and politically subordinate nature of environmental policy.
PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGNS AND ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY:
LINKING PROMISE AND PERFORMANCE

A Thesis

Submitted to the
Faculty of Miami University
In partial fulfillment of
The requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts
Department of Political Science
by
Travis Reid Glendenning
Miami University
Oxford, Ohio
2006

Advisor__________________________
Prof. Ryan J. Barilleaux

Reader__________________________
Prof. Bryan W. Marshall

Reader__________________________
Prof. Augustus J. Jones, Jr.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literature Review</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Design</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The 1980 Campaign: A Focus on Traditional Environmental Issues</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>President Reagan’s First Term</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The 1984 Campaign: A Fully Politicized Environmental Movement Emerges</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>President Reagan’s Second Term</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The 1988 Campaign: “The Environmental President”</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Bush Presidency</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The 1992 Campaign: “Up to Our Necks in Owls”</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>President Clinton’s First Term</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The 1996 Campaign: 1980 Revisited</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>President Clinton’s Second Term</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The 2000 Campaign: The Ozone Man and The Oil Man</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>President George W. Bush’s First Term</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The 2004 Campaign: The Orwellian Discourse</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>President George W. Bush’s Second Term</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empty Promises: The Environmental Policy Promise-Performance Gap</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. Analysis of President Reagan’s First Term Performance on Key Environmental Policy Promises ................................. 16

Table 2. Analysis of President Reagan’s Second Term Performance on Key Environmental Policy Promises ............................ 23

Table 3. Analysis of President Bush’s Performance on Key Environmental Policy Promises ................................................. 30

Table 4. Analysis of President Clinton’s First Term Performance on Key Environmental Policy Promises .......................... 37

Table 5. Analysis of President Clinton’s Second Term Performance on Key Environmental Policy Promises ................... 45

Table 6. Analysis of President George W. Bush’s First Term Performance on Key Environmental Policy Promises ............ 53

Table 7. Analysis of President George W. Bush’s Second Term Performance on Key Environmental Policy Promises .......... 60

Table 8. Breakdown of Presidential Performance (1980-2006) on Environmental Policy Promises ........................................ 62


Table 10. Breakdown of Presidential Performance (1980-2006 on Key Domestic and Foreign Policy Promises .................. 62
DEDICATION

For John Thompson, who inspired this project. And for his children, who inherit the environmental legacy of their father’s generation.
INTRODUCTION

United States presidents have engaged in environmental policy processes for much of the nation’s history. As the country expanded westward, the continent’s natural resources seemed endless, and federal natural resource policies sought to exploit the land, timber, and minerals. The government first attempted to protect aesthetically and ecologically valuable lands during the Lincoln administration by preserving parts of the Yosemite Valley as a scenic treasure. Beginning with President Grant signing into law the establishment of Yellowstone as the first national park, national conservation concerns, while competing with natural resource issues, emerged as a principle component of environmental policy. Conservation became a more significant issue when President Theodore Roosevelt focused tremendous attention on the public lands. Later, the Civilian Conservation Corps and Works Progress Administration, New Deal programs initiated by President Franklin D. Roosevelt, performed extensive conservation work during the 1930s. Also, public awareness of conservation issues grew during the highly publicized battles for Hetch Hetchy Valley and Dinosaur National Monument.

Near the middle of the twentieth century, non-point specific matters, such as water and air pollution, began rivaling traditional conservation for prominence among environmental issues. Presidents Truman and Eisenhower endorsed the precursors of the modern Clean Water Act and Clean Air Act respectively, and environmental legislation climaxed during the Nixon administration. While conservation was never a key policy issue for presidents, pollution, hazardous wastes, pesticides, climate change, and other contemporary environmental concerns have become significant issues for recent presidents. And since Earth Day 1970, the environment has been important in presidential elections. Now, candidates must articulate their positions on the core environmental policy issues while campaigning for the presidency.

Since developing a plan for environmental policy and outlining that plan for the public has become an established part of the campaign process, comparing a president’s campaign pledges about the environment with his environmental policy record while in office warrants further research. The present study aims to address this issue by investigating how presidents follow through on environmental policy campaign promises. Do presidents generally fulfill campaign promises about the environment? If the level of
fulfillment is different than for other promises, why? Does the level of achieving promises vary with the salience of environmental issues during the presidential election? Are presidents likely to use a particular method for accomplishing environmental policy goals? Determining how presidents Reagan, Bush (41), Clinton, and Bush (43) carried out their campaign promises about the environment creates a better understanding about an area that most presidency and environmental policy scholars have overlooked. Examining these four presidencies provides an opportunity to look into presidential performance in the modern, or global, era of environmental policy.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Although the professional literature fusing the presidency, campaign promises, and environmental policy is limited, a more substantial literature exists concerning presidential promises versus performance. Foremost is Jeff Fishel’s *Presidents & Promises* (1985). By examining the presidencies from Kennedy through Reagan’s first term, Fishel concludes that presidents typically attempt to follow through on campaign promises, especially specific promises. However, presidents also abandoned significant promises and several suffered serious backlashes as a result. Contrarily, presidents far less frequently uphold claims about achieving promises because of the influence of countless institutions, individuals, agencies, events, and interest groups in shaping policies. Presidents determine what policies to initiate and how to initiate those policies, but the multiple factors involved in successful or failed initiatives produce collective accountability for executing policies. Moreover, the political landscape constantly changes with national and global events while a president is in office, making keeping certain promises difficult or even irresponsible.

Gerald M. Pomper (1968) agrees with Fishel’s assertions. Pomper finds that “direct congressional or executive action” alone fulfilled over half the campaign pledges from the six presidencies studied, and through all actions or inactions nearly seventy-five percent of promises were fulfilled (1968: 185). Meanwhile, presidents entirely ignored only one in ten promises. Pomper hypothesizes that the campaign platform must be fulfilled to a reasonable extent or the pledges would be useless to the voters and interests who support a candidate, yielding decreased future support. Furthermore, campaign
promises provide a mechanism for assessing presidential performance. Parties want their presidents to uphold campaign pledges so they can avoid opposition party criticism and approvingly gauge their own performance.

While Fishel and Pomper suggest that presidents generally champion campaign promises through their agendas, Paul C. Light (1999) notes that campaigns are only occasionally the source of presidents’ domestic priorities. Just twenty percent of White House staff members surveyed by Light mentioned the campaign and platform as a starting point for agenda ideas. External sources easily outweigh campaign promises, with Congress and events and crisis most commonly cited by the staff members. As an identifiable case, Light references Jimmy Carter’s effort to compile and publish his campaign pledges as a guide for policy decisions; yet, Carter and his aides quickly realized the book had marginal value and they refocused on several precise promises.

The president’s role in environmental policy making has been another subject of professional analysis. Dennis L. Soden and Brent S. Steel (1999) suggest a reordering of the traditional roles of the president in the environmental policy arena. Historically, commander-in-chief has been considered the most powerful role followed by chief diplomat, chief executive, legislative leader, and opinion-party leader. In the area of environmental policy, Soden and Steel find the order from most to least powerful as chief executive, legislative leader, opinion-party leader, chief diplomat, and commander-in-chief. Also, Norman J. Vig (1994) proposes that presidents play four key roles in shaping environmental policy: agenda setting, policy formulation, policy implementation, and international leadership. At the implementation stage, the president possesses the greatest influence as the nation’s chief executive. He delegates the personnel and monetary resources necessary for policy implementation, performs bureaucratic oversight, makes appointments to agencies associated with environmental affairs, and utilizes direct action tools such as executive orders (West and Sussman, 1999).

The president sets the agenda through his position as legislative leader. Inaugural addresses, early messages to Congress and the public, and State of the Union addresses comprise the key mechanisms for influencing the environmental policy agenda. Generally, environmental issues are not the focus of agenda setting. Rather, presidents incorporate environmental policy into a larger legislative agenda (Sussman and Kelso,
1999). Recently, the president’s role as international environmental leader has expanded. Although presidents often feel constrained in international environmental policy by the number of issues on their diplomatic agendas and the importance of global security and economic concerns, attention to global environmental concerns has risen since the Reagan presidency (Soroos, 1994; Long, Cabral, and Vandivort, 1999). The increased attention, attributable in large part to evidence of ozone depletion and global climate change, led to United States involvement in the Montreal Protocol, Rio Summit, and Kyoto Conference.

Various scholarly projects address significant environmental issues from campaigns, elections, and presidencies since 1980. As expected, President Reagan receives the greatest attention because of his regulatory reforms and controversial environmental record (Kraft and Vig, 1984; Vig and Kraft, 1984; Fishel, 1985; Durant, 1987; Short, 1989; Shanley, 1992; Durant, 1992; Durant, 1993; Vig, 1994; Sussman and Kelso, 1999). While not as intensely scrutinized as the Reagan presidency, researchers also have studied the other presidents and their presidential campaigns from an environmental perspective (Lanoue, 1993; Shanley, 1993; Ross, 1994; Vig, 1994; Daynes, 1999). Although President George W. Bush’s environmental policies have attracted media attention and energized numerous authors, relatively few political scientists have fully examined his environmental policies (Rosenbaum 2003; Lowry 2006).

Finally, in “Opinion Leadership: Elections, Campaigns, Agenda Setting, and Environmentalism,” Raymond Tatalovich and Mark J. Wattier (1999) most closely approximate the objectives of the present research. Tatalovich and Wattier focus specifically on the mention of environmental issues in published party platforms from 1956, when the Democratic Party first mentioned water pollution in its platform, to 1996, and they measure action on platform pledges through executive action and legislation. The authors find an insignificant relationship between platform coverage of environmental issues and presidential initiatives. However, when presidents do introduce environmental initiatives they are likely to use unitary executive actions to meet the desired ends, creating achievements they can use later to appease the public. When assessing legislative results, Tatalovich and Wattier note that while environmental
legislation occasionally traces back to the party platform, momentous environmental statutes typically result from competition among politicians who learn of environmental problems through increased media scrutiny and environmental interest groups. Also, rather than directly relating to promises made in the party platform, the environmental agenda a president pursues frequently results from the influence of outside forces.

RESEARCH DESIGN

Case studies are employed to assess how presidents follow through on environmental campaign promises. All the presidential campaigns and subsequent presidencies since the Carter-Reagan contest of 1980 serve as cases, producing seven elections and four presidencies for examination. Several criteria guide case selection: the cases provide a complete record of recent campaigns and presidencies by covering the last quarter century of environmental policy; Presidents Reagan, Bush (41), Clinton, and Bush (43) have run for election and governed in a period of heightened awareness about global environmental concerns, highlighted by fears of global climate destabilization and ozone deterioration; and the selection of cases creates an adequate and reasonable number of samples that can be sufficiently detailed.

Distinct environmental policy goals characterize each presidency, making evaluating enacted policies against campaign promises unique and significant for each case. Ronald Reagan sought regulatory reforms and limits on what he perceived as excessive bureaucratic power that protected the environment at the cost of the economy. The cost-benefit analysis became central to President Reagan’s environmental policy. In 1988, George Bush ran for president proclaiming he would be the most environmentally conscious president in American history. After experiencing successes and failures during his term, Bush considered a similar strategy in 1992, hoping to capitalize on Bill Clinton’s inconsistent environmental record as Arkansas’ governor. When Clinton chose Al Gore as his running mate, President Bush altered his strategy and instead attempted to portray the Clinton-Gore ticket as environmentally extreme. Although Bush hoped to become the environmental president, among these four cases many Americans would ascribe that title to his successor, President Clinton. The perception of Clinton as environmentally friendly results from his liberal late-term use of executive direct actions
to achieve environmental objectives and from Vice President Al Gore’s record as possibly the United States’ strongest pro-environment Vice President. Gore made some attempts at capitalizing on his environmental reputation in his 2000 campaign against George W. Bush. However, Bush emerged victorious and his environmental policies have since elicited disapproval from many environmental advocates. But critics must remember that some of President Bush’s policies came in response to dramatic increases in environmental standards by President Clinton through executive actions near the end of his second term, and that Bush operates within a fundamentally different political arena than previous presidents due to the September 11, 2001 terror attacks.

When comparing campaign promises to actual environmental policy, party platforms, the centerpiece of Tatalovich and Wattier’s work, constitute only one aspect for investigation, and often voters are more aware of campaign pledges that come from other sources. In addition to published platforms, candidates’ statements from presidential debates, available in written transcripts, are examined, as candidates frequently articulate important campaign pledges during debates. The American Presidency Project at the University of California, Santa Barbara supplies both of these sources. Promises made in speeches during primary and presidential campaigns, analyzed through written records and coverage in major national news publications, comprise an essential third element for study. Furthermore, the salience of environmental issues must be considered when comparing promises to performances. If the environment is especially noteworthy during a campaign that should affect the nature of a candidate’s promises and yield greater attempts when in office to accomplish what is promised.

Legislation and executive orders serve as the primary indicators of presidential environmental policy performance. While the president is not solely responsible for enacting legislation, the executive branch works closely with Congress in setting the policy agenda, particularly early in the president’s term. When Congress perceives that the president has an electoral mandate from the people the president is most influential in filling the policy agenda with issues from his campaign. Moreover, legislation holds special significance in measuring performance because the public sees crafting legislation as central to fulfilling campaign pledges.
Executive orders allow the president to accomplish policy goals without relying on congressional assistance. Often, executive orders offer a more appealing alternative for accomplishing campaign promises than going through the arduous process of passing an acceptable bill through both the House of Representatives and Senate. Via executive orders the president directs executive branch officials and agencies to “take an action, stop a certain type of activity, alter policy, change management practices, or accept a delegation of authority under which they will henceforth be responsible for the implementation of law” (Cooper, 2002: 16). Over the past several decades many of these orders have been directed at major environmental issues.

While significant and widely publicized, legislation and executive orders do not account for all the ways in which the president implements proposals from his campaign. Other executive direct actions, such as proclamations and signing statements, merit consideration as means for allowing presidents to fulfill promises. Also, examining significant presidential appointments as well as the tone of presidential rhetoric throughout a presidency helps in assessing the extent to which presidents accomplish or fail to accomplish campaign pledges.

Directly comparing specific campaign promises to subsequent actions, both legislative and executive, allows for a straightforward analysis of promise versus performance. However, general pledges about environmental issues are more difficult to evaluate. Performance is evaluated as either largely consistent or inconsistent with these broader promises by examining language in major news publications that suggests if the performance coalesces with or departs from campaign promises. For both general and specific promises inclusion in this study requires that candidates developed at least a minimal level of policy information in the proposal, eliminating statements such as “I will improve the condition of our environment”. Specific promises clearly lend themselves more easily to objective analysis, which should help determine if Fishel’s (1985) assertion that presidents regularly attempt to fulfill specific promises translates to environmental policy in particular. Additionally, inaction may indicate an abandonment of earlier assurances. Conversely, it may satisfy a pledge to maintain the status quo or block new environmental regulations, so evaluating inaction varies by case. Ultimately, measuring performance necessitates reliance on a slightly adapted form of Fishel’s (1985:
37) categories for presidential performance. The five modified categories used are: completely comparable action, partially comparable action, no action, mixed action, and contrary action.

- **Comparable action** – The action taken is entirely or nearly entirely consistent with campaign promise(s).
- **Partially comparable action** -- the action meets some of the expectations of the campaign promise(s), but not to the extent pledged. Or, a proposed, but not fully implemented, action meets the expectations of the campaign promise(s).
- **No Action** -- No proposed or enacted legislative or executive action corresponds with the promise(s). As noted, this does not necessarily include presidential inaction.
- **Mixed Action** -- Parts of a single action or proposal (or parts of a package of actions or proposals) meet the conditions of the campaign promise(s), while others run contrary to those conditions.
- **Contrary Action** -- The action or proposed actions signifies the opposite of what was promised.

The executive and legislative actions occurring within a presidency then fall into one of these categories based on how the action compares with the president’s campaign promises. After placing presidential actions relating to campaign promises into these categories for each administration, hopefully more transmissible conclusions can be applied to the relationship between campaign promises and environmental policy performance.

To evaluate environmental policy against campaign pledges and presidential performance in all areas, one key campaign theme from the area of domestic policy and one key foreign policy theme are examined with reliance on scholarly analyses of presidential performance. Moreover, to develop greater historical context, the fulfillment of environmental policy promises by Presidents Reagan, George H.W. Bush, Clinton, and George W. Bush is compared against results of the Pomper (1968) and Fishel (1985) studies. Because of the intergenerational rather than immediate nature of most
environmental policies, it is posited that presidents are more faithful to campaign promises as a whole than specifically to environmental policy promises.

Intergenerational issues create a collective action problem, as future generations receive the benefits of present actions. Moreover, certain issues exhibit a higher or lower intergenerational characteristic than other issues. Social Security qualifies as intergenerational, but workers who pay into the Social Security system eventually receive some benefits in the form of a guaranteed pension. Most environmental issues are more intergenerational than Social Security because the advantages of immediate action typically benefit generations of individuals not yet born at the time of action. For this reason, William R. Lowry (1998) focuses on public land preservation in his study of the provision of intergenerational goods. Lowry notes the failure of both markets and governments in addressing intergenerational concerns.

The period examined within this study corresponds with the new era of global environmental problems. In 1979, the World Meteorological Organization and the United Nations sponsored the inaugural World Climate Conference. Since the Conference, awareness of the complex, and often seemingly intractable, global environmental concerns has dramatically increased among politicians and constituents. It is theorized that presidents have been less successful in carrying out promises related to global environmental issues.

Measuring presidential performance within the environmental policy arena requires the categorization of specific environmental policy types. For the purposes of this study, policies are divided into domestic and global policies. Principally global issues include climate change, ozone depletion, and biodiversity, while domestic concerns include land use, public land management, and air and water quality. Certainly, the line between these groups is blurry, as exemplified by the significance of domestic sulfur dioxide regulations in affecting acid rain deposition in Canada, and pollution policies in general are the most difficult to classify within this dichotomy. However, policies and promised policies are categorized on a case-by-case basis dependent on the primary intent of the policy, and, for pollution emissions, the nature of the pollutant. For example, a heavy metal such as mercury presents a unique domestic dilemma, whereas emissions of greenhouse gasses like carbon dioxide have international ramifications.
When applied to the domestic and global categories of environmental policy, Fishel’s criteria for presidential performance produce even greater insights into how presidents fulfill campaign promises.

THE 1980 CAMPAIGN: A FOCUS ON TRADITIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

After a decade of landmark environmental legislation and executive actions, the modern environmental movement lost some of its momentum at the end of the 1970s and beginning of the 1980s. Consistent with the cyclical nature of social policy attentiveness, public interest in environmental politics, particularly at the federal level, waned in the months and years before the 1980 presidential election (Downs, 1972; Dunlap, 1989). Just weeks before the election, The New York Times suggested the environment was playing only “a bit part” in the campaign. Even energy, one of the most salient issues of the Carter presidency, lost significance leading up to the election. An October 1980 New York Times/CBS News Poll noted that only three percent of voters considered energy the biggest problem facing the nation, as opposed to thirty-one percent just over a year earlier (Dionne Jr., 1980). Moreover, in his summary and assessment of the 1980 presidential election and its impact on the environment, Michael E. Kraft (1984: 42) noted that “explicit discussion of environmental issues was absent from the campaign.”

Although limited in scope and attention, several important environmental issues attracted focus during the 1980 campaign. The legacies of Presidents Johnson, Nixon, Ford, and Carter influenced the direction of environmental policy in 1980, as air and water pollution and conservation were the dominant campaign topics. Despite President Jimmy Carter’s prescient assertion that “coming to grips with problems of truly global significance, such as destruction of forests, increasing acid rain, carbon dioxide buildup, and nuclear proliferation” would develop into the most important environmental concerns of the future, these issues failed to constitute a primary part of the campaigns or the candidates’ policy proposals (Gendlin, 1980).

John Anderson, a ten-term Republican Representative from Illinois, was the first candidate to make a substantial conservation proposal. While running for the Republican nomination, Representative Anderson proposed a fifty-cent tax per gallon of gasoline as a
“dramatic way to immediately reduce demand” (Dewar, 1979). After failing in his bid for the Republican nomination, Anderson continued his campaign as an independent candidate, making the excise tax on gasoline a central policy proposal and using his presidential debate with Republican nominee Ronald Reagan as a platform for sharing the idea with voters (Anderson, Sept. 21, 1980).

President Carter concentrated much of his campaign’s environmental policy discussion on the achievements of his presidency and the perceived weaknesses of Governor Reagan’s environmental record. Specifically, Carter focused his assault on comments Reagan made suggesting that trees and volcanoes caused the nation’s pollution problems, while juxtaposing Reagan’s statements with Carter’s accomplishments in signing a reforestation bill and supporting acid rain research (Carter, Oct. 22, 1980; Carter, Oct. 29, 1980; Carter, Oct. 31, 1980). Wall Street Journal’s Albert Hunt (1981: 165) observed that in a campaign speech in Steubenville, Ohio, Governor Reagan indeed claimed:

The volcano on Mt. St. Helens produced more sulfur dioxide than all automobiles had emitted over the previous ten years. He even suggested that the oil slicks off the coast of Santa Barbara, California, were once considered healthy in battling infectious diseases. In addition he talked about some dangerous health hazards coming from trees.

President Carter hoped highlighting these comments would connect with a wide spectrum of undecided voters and translate into votes.

Although Carter avoided explicit proposals for the future during his campaign speeches, he unveiled some of his plans in an interview with Sierra magazine. President Carter cited permanent protection of the Alaska National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR) as a top environmental priority, and indicated that he would urge Congress to pass legislation protecting the Alaska National Wildlife Refuge or, if necessary, use executive action. Moreover, he proposed a series of economic incentives for conservation and alternative energy programs, including solar and biomass tax credits, conservation and solar loan subsidies, and conservation grants for schools and hospitals (Gendlin, 1980). During the presidential debate with Governor Reagan, President Carter further explained these positions. He recommended using “the windfall profits tax as a base…to expand rapidly the production of synthetic fuels [and] to expand rapidly the production of solar energy.”
Also, Carter pointed out that his Alaska lands proposal would keep offshore lands open for oil exploration, and he would seek to increase coal extraction while maintaining Occupational Safety and Health Administration standards (Carter, Oct. 28, 1980).

Much of the 1980 Democratic Party Platform coalesced with President Carter’s campaign rhetoric. Past achievements and general objectives for energy conservation and production comprised a significant portion of the platform’s environmental sections. However, several policy promises related to the otherwise overlooked international environmental issues:

We support strict adherence to automobile pollution standards. We will support policies to eliminate acid rain pollution from power plant emissions…To defend against environmental risks that cross national frontiers, international cooperation must be extended to new areas, such as acid rain, deforestation and desertification, buildup or carbon dioxide in the atmosphere, thinning of the ozone shield, air and water pollution, oil spills, chemicals in the environment, and disposal of radioactive waste.

Furthermore, the Democratic Party advocated a government and industry financed superfund program (Democratic National Convention, 1980).

Governor Reagan’s campaign mirrored President Carter’s in its tendency to avoid specific environmental policy proposals. Regulatory reform and increased private sector access to public lands for development served as overarching environmental policy themes for Reagan, and he stressed these issues throughout the campaign. Reagan staff member Kenneth Towery delivered the core of Governor Reagan’s plans in a position paper:

The Federal Government has lost its sense of balance in this area. To achieve sound environmental policy we should re-examine every regulatory requirement with a commitment to simplify and streamline the process. Moreover, we should return to the states the primary responsibility for environmental regulation (Shabecoff, 1980).

In speeches leading up to the election, Reagan used suggestive language to delineate his general environmental positions. He mentioned that the threat of air pollution in America had been “substantially controlled,” derided the Environmental Protection Agency for its overregulation, and identified with the Sagebrush Rebels, a coalition of Western
politicians and businessmen who hoped to gain state control of Federal lands for natural resource extraction (Kraft, 1984; Short, 1989).

The presidential debates were an opportunity for similar discourse. Governor Reagan criticized government efforts to remove lands, particularly in Alaska, rich in oil, natural gas, and coal from circulation, and proposed the creation of new nuclear power plants (Reagan, Sept. 21, 1980; Reagan, Oct. 28, 1980). When combined with his statements in Steubenville, these attitudes indicate the Reagan administration’s environmental priorities.

Yet, the Republican Party Platform supplied the strongest evidence that a distinct change from the environmental policies of the 1970s was imminent, and Ronald Reagan was unambiguous in his allegiance to the platform: “I ran on the platform; the people voted for me on the platform. I do believe in the platform, and I think it would be very cynical and callous of me now to suggest that I’m going to turn away from it” (Drew, 1981). The Republican Party aimed to effect widespread and specific changes, including developing “a comprehensive program of regulatory reform, improved incentives, and revision of cumbersome and overly stringent Clean Air Act regulations,” accelerating production and use of nuclear energy, opening federal lands for energy production, and employing cost-benefit analyses in implementing environmental regulations (Republican National Convention, 1980).

Despite Governor Reagan’s evasion of specific environmental policy promises during the campaign, his speeches and the party platform manifested the guiding principles for his presidency. As president, Ronald Reagan would not be expected to tackle difficult global environmental issues. Rather, voters expected him to pursue regulatory reform, EPA contraction, and aggressive development of public lands.

**PRESIDENT REAGAN’S FIRST TERM**

The election of Ronald Reagan ushered in a new era of environmental policy making. President Reagan’s appointments of James Watt and Anne Gorsuch, who became the nemeses of environmentalists, epitomized the abrupt shift in policy. Watt, Reagan’s Interior Secretary, and Gorsuch, Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency, instituted sweeping changes founded on the campaign themes of deregulation,
decentralization, and reliance on the private sector. Watt and Gorsuch were such significant actors, in part because they held policy beliefs that much of the public considered oppositional to the mission of their agencies, and also as a result of President Reagan’s administrative approach to environmental policy. Facing a Congress that was unaccommodating on environmental issues, Reagan consolidated environmental policy control within the executive branch, using his chief executive role in shaping policies. Under these conditions, Watt and Gorsuch, lawyers who had previously fought against environmental regulations, wielded substantial influence.

Early in his presidency, a reliance on executive action appeared unnecessary for Ronald Reagan. The Congress promptly passed President Reagan’s cornerstone piece of legislation, the Economic Recovery Tax Act of 1981, dramatically cutting spending for environmental programs (Vig, 2006). Through a single act, Reagan achieved a great deal toward his general environmental objectives of reform and contraction. However, a coalition of politicians who passed the environmental regulations of the previous decade remained in Congress, and many were intransigent when confronted with the President’s environmental agenda. Several months into the Reagan administration, members of Congress united against Reagan’s plan to eliminate the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ).

But President Reagan responded administratively by reducing the CEQ staff from 50 to 16 and isolating the remaining staff members, a bellwether for future environmental policy decisions (Shabecoff, 1981). Reagan then directed many of the Council’s duties through the newly created Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs (OIRA), a product of the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1980, and the Task Force on Regulatory Relief led by Vice President Bush. These entities focused on reviewing, repealing, and analyzing the costs of regulations (Friedman, 1995).

James Watt devoted his tenure as Interior Secretary to opening public lands for development and to transferring vast tracts of public land to local and private interests. Both efficient and polarizing, Watt ran the Department of Interior almost single-handedly under virtual free reign given by the President. Within his first six months, Watt halted federal land purchases, planned to approve energy exploration off the California Coast, broke all working ties with mainstream environmental groups, and embarked on a public
speaking tour, espousing natural resource policy reform as the foundation of the Reagan Revolution (Short, 1989). By the end of 1981 preservationists, conservationists, and many in the press had demonized Watt. Yet, he continued expanding the reach of his programs in 1982, reorganizing the Office of Surface Mining and focusing his energy on land sales (Short, 1989). That summer, *Time* magazine ran a cover story about planned public land sales totaling over 35 million acres (Stoller, 1982). Watt’s influence reached its zenith in 1982, and by the end of the year his allies were turning against him and his enemies were waging increasingly public campaigns. Finally, in October 1983, Watt resigned after losing much of his support and making insensitive remarks at a gathering of lobbyists. But before he left, James Watt succeeded as President Reagan’s primary instrument for restructuring federal environmental policy.

While less effective than Watt, Anne Gorsuch (later Anne Burford) was also a lightning rod for public scrutiny. Gorsuch inherited an Environmental Protection Agency that incurred an 11 percent staff cut and 12 percent budget cut before her appointment confirmation. She quickly acted to slow the implementation of new regulations and weaken enforcement capabilities. Meanwhile, EPA budget cuts continued, resulting in a 44 percent reduction in air, water, hazardous wastes, and toxics regulatory programs under Gorsuch (Andrews, 1984). President Reagan’s Executive Order 12291, instituting cost-benefit analyses for federal regulations, guided the EPA and other agencies (Reagan, 1981). Gorsuch and others at EPA used the President’s directive as the basis for essentially crippling the agency’s regulatory powers. In 1983, Congress held Gorsuch in contempt and forced her to resign for refusing to turn over documents that may have revealed lucrative insider deals for businesses and political interests (Vig, 2006). Ultimately, Anne Gorsuch pursued the rollbacks and reforms Reagan desired, but her mismanagement and poor tactics led Richard N. L. Andrews (1984: 174) to assert that by 1983 the administration’s regulatory program for EPA “had become [the] single most total policy failure and [the] most glaring political embarrassment.”

In part, Andrews’ criticism of Gorsuch and the administration stems from their inability to pass new Clean Air Act legislation. After claiming that Clean Air Act reform was a top priority, President Reagan was peculiarly slow in developing a legislative proposal. Moreover, the vague drafts composed by the administration met with fierce
opposition from the public and Congress. The President eventually failed to construct a specific proposal and his strongest advocates in the House of Representatives introduced a bill that never emerged from the House Committee on Energy and Commerce (Tobin, 1984). As with many other environmental policies, President Reagan then moved to achieve reforms administratively through the EPA. While far less sweeping than the changes originally envisioned by Reagan, EPA delayed the implementation of several Clean Air Act provisions approved during the Carter administration. These provisions included new source performance standards and automobile diesel particle emissions standards (Tobin, 1984).

ASSESSMENT

As Table 1 exhibits, President Reagan performed particularly well on the key environmental promises of his first term. An overwhelming electoral mandate, combined with the Republican takeover of the Senate and substantial gains in the House of Representatives, aided Reagan in achieving his campaign goals within the first two years of his Presidency. By 1983, Republicans had suffered congressional setbacks and the public had largely repealed its support of Reagan’s environmental agenda. However, within two years in office Reagan had already implemented many of his desired environmental reforms.

Table 1. Analysis of President Reagan’s First Term Performance on Key Environmental Policy Promises

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Promise</th>
<th>Performance</th>
<th>Assessment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Regulatory reform and decentralization</td>
<td>Streamlined executive agencies and abdicated authority on many environmental issues to state, local, and private interests.</td>
<td>Comparable Action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development of public lands</td>
<td>Granted almost unlimited powers to Interior Secretary James Watt who aggressively advanced development projects throughout his department.</td>
<td>Comparable Action</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Revision of the Clean Air Act
Proposed only vague drafts, which yielded a failed bill in the House of Representatives. Implemented several provisions through administrative action.

Employment of cost-benefit analyses in evaluating environmental regulations
Issued Executive Order 12291, establishing cost-benefit analyses for regulatory decisions.

**Assessment of Major Domestic and Foreign Policy Promises**

Environmental deregulation served as one piece of Reagan’s principal domestic policy promise in 1980. He pledged private sector economic stimulation through tax reform, budget cuts, and deregulation. Jeff Fishel (1985) provides a detailed analysis of President Reagan’s performance on these issues in *Presidents & Promises*. He notes the Economic Recovery Tax Act (ERTA) of 1981 as the centerpiece of the President’s commitment to fulfilling his campaign promises. Moreover, Fishel cites significant reductions in budget appropriations for social and economic programs during the first three years of the Reagan administration. By 1984, congressional opposition made continuing the deep expenditure cuts impossible, but Reagan had succeeded in acting consistently with his campaign rhetoric. As previously noted, Reagan also actively pursued deregulatory policies comparable with his 1980 pledge. Reagan partially contradicted his campaign position when he signed the 1982 Tax Equity and Fiscal Responsibility Act, a tax increase, but the increase constituted only 24 percent of the amount cut by ERTA, and, in sum, Reagan’s actions qualify as comparable with his campaign promise for private sector economic stimulation.

Fishel (1985: 178) discusses “strengthening the American defense posture and regaining superiority” as a central foreign policy focus of the 1980 Reagan campaign. While Reagan never suggested the specific increases in defense spending necessary for meeting his promise, the budget figures mentioned by Fishel reveal cohesion between promise and performance:
Reagan’s 1981 defense budget called for 12.4 percent and 14.6 percent real increases in defense spending during FY 1981 and 1982. Congressional opposition reduced these increases after 1981, but the White House was still projecting an increase in real budget outlays averaging 9.4 percent annually from 1982 to 1984 (1985: 178).

Additionally, military and defense considerations played a vital role in shaping the President’s policies in Latin America and the Middle East. Ultimately, Reagan exhibited comparable action on his campaign promise for foreign/defense policy.

THE 1984 CAMPAIGN: A FULLY POLITICIZED ENVIRONMENTAL MOVEMENT EMERGES

Prior to the 1980 presidential election, leaders of some of the leading mainstream environmental groups stepped into the political arena to endorse President Jimmy Carter for reelection. More organizations followed this blueprint for the 1982 mid-term elections as a response to President Ronald Reagan’s environmental policies. But the movement’s politicization culminated in 1984 when its oldest and most widely recognized organization, The Sierra Club, endorsed Democratic candidate Walter F. Mondale (Perrault, 1984). Never before had The Sierra Club expressed its public support for a presidential candidate, and its Mondale endorsement formally ushered in a new era of political activism for environmental interest groups.

The environmental record of President Reagan contributed as much as former Vice President Mondale’s own environmental policy proposals in earning Mondale The Sierra Club’s endorsement. In fact, much of Walter Mondale’s environmental campaign focused on criticizing President Reagan rather than formulating specific promises for the future. He referred to the Reagan administration as having “the lousiest environmental record in modern American history,” and used similar rhetoric throughout the campaign, invoking the names of Reagan appointees James Watt and Anne Gorsuch (Burford) in hopes of overcoming a large deficit in pre-election polls (Weinraub, 1984). Mondale was so confident in his attacks on President Reagan that he suggested holding six televised debates, including one solely devoted to the environment (Roberts, 1984). However, in the two debates that eventually took place, the former Senator and Vice President failed to deliver any meaningful statements about environmental policy.
With less public attention and fanfare, Walter Mondale also proposed several major environmental policy initiatives during his 1984 presidential campaign. Foremost, Mondale promised a return to pre-1980 spending levels for the EPA as well as an acid rain plan, calling for a fifty percent reduction in sulfur dioxide emissions from smokestacks. Furthermore, he appealed for the restoration of funds to the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) and a $10 billion increase in Superfund appropriations over five years (Grier, 1984).

Just as Reagan tightly intertwined his 1980 campaign with the Republican Party Platform, Walter Mondale’s environmental policy positions reflected many of the basic tenets of the 1984 Democratic Party Platform. The second paragraph of the platform’s preamble addresses President Reagan’s environmental policies and his appointment of James Watt, constituting the earliest mention of the environment in any party platform from 1980 to 2004. Shortly thereafter, the Democrats assailed Reagan’s performance on public land sales and toxic waste cleanup. Mondale’s policies for sulfur dioxide emissions reduction, Superfund, and wilderness protection appear in the platform, and increased recycling programs and an expanded Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA) were among the additional outlined proposals (Democratic National Convention, 1984).

President Reagan directly confronted his critics during the 1984 campaign, asserting that his adversaries had distorted his environmental record. The President called his environmental successes “one of the best kept secrets in Washington,” and in a July 12, 1984 speech to the National Campers and Hikers Association, Reagan espoused his record as a conservationist, citing a number of policies from his first term (Smith, 1984). Seeing the environment as a more salient issue than in 1980, Reagan dedicated two other campaign speeches in July 1984 to environmental issues (Reagan, July 10, 1984; Reagan July 11, 1984). Each of the speeches focused on Reagan’s four years in office, rather than the future, and he maintained this theme in his first debate with Walter Mondale, pointing out the administration’s efforts in national parks and wilderness areas (Reagan, Oct. 7, 1984).

As in the Reagan campaign, continuing the goals of the 1980 campaign dominated the themes of the 1984 Republican Party Platform. Both frequently
referred the party’s foremost conservationist, President Theodore Roosevelt, in promising to carry on the environmental legacy of President Reagan’s first term. But the President and his party also developed new environmental policy goals. In his limited discussion of new policies, President Reagan adamantly opposed Mondale’s Superfund appropriations plan and, on the grounds of its costs, a proposal instructing the United States government to compensate victims of hazardous waste dumping (Grier, 1984).

The Republican Party Platform recognized the complexity of emerging global environmental concerns and pledged to mitigate the threat of acid rain “while at the same time preventing economic dislocation.” Yet, Reagan would only commit to continued acid rain research, angering critics who claimed the problem’s source was apparent and demanded urgent action (Clines, 1984). Moreover, the platform emphasized completely eliminating the Department of Energy, a position the President championed, noting that President Reagan needed to “complete the job” he began by weakening DOE and reducing its number of bureaucrats. The platform also prioritized new programs aimed at minimizing raw sewage dumping (Republican National Convention, 1984). The traditional concepts of streamlining the Clean Air Act and Clean Water Act as well as increasing natural resource extraction complemented these new ideas.

**PRESIDENT REAGAN’S SECOND TERM**

President Reagan’s second term produced far less intrigue than his first term. His administration no longer included James Watt or Anne Gorsuch (Burford), and most of the second term environmental policy goals simply extended projects from the first four years. The controversies and missteps of Reagan’s first term exponentially increased the number of Americans who joined conservation organizations and significantly weakened Reagan’s ability to vigorously pursue his original environmental goals.

The acid rain debate highlighted the 1984 campaign, as the Republican Party pledged a cost-effective solution while President Reagan only promised future funding and research. For nearly four years Reagan followed his planned course. Then, in the final weeks of his presidency, he agreed to an international agreement freezing nitrogen oxide emissions at 1987 levels. Under intense pressure from the American public and Western allies, the President entered into the nation’s first binding international
agreement concerning the reduction of acid rain (Shabecoff, Nov. 2, 1988). Also in 1987, the Reagan Administration joined with the Montreal Protocol nations in agreeing on the eventual elimination of chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs), a major contributor to ozone pollution. Although Reagan did not concentrate his efforts on this endeavor during either of his campaigns, the Montreal Protocol deserves mention as a watershed agreement in global environmental relations. In many respects, Montreal serves as a harbinger of change for future presidents and environmental politics. After the momentous 1987 CFC compact, global concerns became a critical aspect of environmental policy.

President Reagan made a glaring policy reversal on his promise to abolish the Department of Energy. In his first term, Reagan helped slash the DOE budget. Both the President and his advisors indicated that the department was nearing its complete elimination. But the Department of Energy survived the Reagan administration, and, remarkably, President Reagan proposed a double-digit increase in DOE spending in his final budget (Blustein, 1988).

Reagan struggled with another energy-related promise. Following the 1979 Three Mile Island incident, the construction of new nuclear power sources slowed in the United States. Although several plants came online in the 1980s, Reagan failed to significantly expand the nation’s dependence on nuclear energy as he had pledged in 1980. The 1986 Chernobyl disaster amplified the public’s distrust of nuclear power, making an end of term push for new plants difficult. Still, Reagan issued an executive order easing the licensing process by allowing the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to implement emergency plans for nuclear power stations. Granting FEMA this authority created the opportunity for an override of local and state planning processes, which local opposition frequently stalled (Reagan, 1988; Wines, 1988).

Superfund and sewage dumping policies frustrated Reagan as well. Calling Mondale’s $10 billion plan far too expensive, President Reagan declared during the 1984 campaign that he opposed any proposal on a comparable scale. Just over a month into his second term, Reagan proposed a $5.3 billion Superfund extension over the same five-year period as suggested by Mondale (Friendly, 1985). However, after a bitter debate lasting nearly two years, President Reagan signed a $9 billion Superfund extension, including a large industry tax against the President’s wishes (Shabecoff, 1986). Reagan found solace
only in a $1 billion cut and slightly weakened language from the original House of Representatives proposal in 1985. On sewage projects, the President vetoed a key piece of legislation then signed another. In 1987 Congress authorized approximately $2 billion a year for sewage treatment, a smaller amount than Reagan had previously supported, and the President vetoed the legislation, deeming the amount excessive. Congress promptly overrode the veto. In response, Reagan proposed large appropriations cuts for sewage projects in his 1989 budget (Shabecoff, Mar. 17, 1988). Later, President Reagan signed the Ocean Dumping Ban Act, legislation more in line with the President’s early position, prohibiting sludge and sewage dumping in U.S. territorial waters.

Without their predecessor’s flair, William Clark and Donald Hodel perpetuated many of James Watt’s successes as Interior Secretary. Deregulation and multiple use policies remained the department’s central themes, and Reagan’s chief appointees helped institutionalize a top-down policy implementation approach, empowering policy makers over career bureaucrats and scientists. Moreover, Clark, Hodel, and their assistants pushed policies aimed at opening federal lands and increasing resource extraction and development through the top-down apparatus (Durant, 1992). Accordingly, despite the backlash from Watt’s actions and limitations created by the political environment, the Department of Interior continued to advance Reagan’s campaign goals throughout the post-Watt era. In the end, the gains made were more modest than both Reagan’s allies and foes contended, but the results certainly indicated a profound shift in public lands policy. And within the area of land-use policy, President Reagan achieved his greatest accomplishment in carrying out an environmental policy promise.

ASSESSMENT

President Reagan, capturing the electoral votes of 49 states, won the presidency by an even greater margin in 1984 than 1980, and the composition of the 99th Congress (1985-1987) closely resembled his first term. Yet, the public response to Reagan’s first term environmental policies and the Democratic Party retaking control of the Senate following the November 1986 mid-term elections made executing second-term environmental policy objectives more challenging. Reagan and Secretary Watt had effectively developed a framework for developing public lands, making land policy the
one promise the administration completely fulfilled. On other issues, Reagan encountered significant obstacles. Whereas President Reagan carried out 75% (3 of 4) of his first-term promises with comparable action, only 17% (1 of 6) of his second-term promises, as displayed in table 2, evolved into comparable action. Also, for the first time, Reagan had the opportunity to act on a global environmental promise. He repeatedly presented himself as a proponent of acid rain research rather than action, fearing the economic consequences of emissions reductions. However, after years of research, Reagan agreed to mandatory nitrogen oxide emissions limits—a move that benefited the global environment, but contradicted his earlier promises and actions.

Table 2. Analysis of President Reagan’s Second Term Performance on Key Environmental Policy Promises

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Promise</th>
<th>Performance</th>
<th>Assessment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Continuation of funding for acid rain research (without planned action)</td>
<td>Supported research efforts, then agreed to international limits on nitrogen oxide emissions.</td>
<td>Mixed Action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abolition of the Department of Energy</td>
<td>Failed to eliminate the Department of Energy, and, at the end of the term, proposed large budget increases for DOE.</td>
<td>Contrary Action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expansion of domestic nuclear energy programs</td>
<td>Issued Executive Order 12657 to ease nuclear plant permitting. However, nuclear energy reliance decreased.</td>
<td>Partially Comparable Action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limited funding for Superfund</td>
<td>Signed $9 billion Superfund plan after proposing $5.3 billion legislation.</td>
<td>Partially Comparable Action</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Assessment of Performance on Major Domestic and Foreign Policy Promises

As in 1980, Reagan’s proposed domestic agenda during the 1984 campaign focused on the general theme of economic expansion. More specifically, claiming he would maintain the tax cuts achieved through ERTA, Reagan vehemently opposed Walter Mondale’s proposed tax increases. Also, Reagan announced a plan for reforming and restructuring the tax code. Although Reagan agreed to tax increases in the Consolidated Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1985 and Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1987, the increases primarily addressed excises and closing tax loopholes. Moreover, as in the 1982 tax increase, the revenue generated by the second term tax increases totaled only a fraction of the cuts generated by ERTA. In 1986, Congress passed the Tax Reform Act, simplifying the tax code, reducing the number of tax brackets, and cutting rates for top bracket taxpayers to 28 percent. In his assessment of Reagan’s economic policies, Andrew E. Busch (2005: 29) observes that this act fulfilled the intent of Reagan’s 1984 tax reform pledge. Overall, President Reagan exhibited action comparable to his 1984 economic promise.

During the 1984 campaign, President Reagan committed his administration to containing the Soviet Union’s global communist influence and spreading democracy as a mechanism for assuring domestic security. Wall Street Journal and Washington Post journalist David Ignatius (1988) writes in his analysis of Reagan’s foreign policy that, “arms control with the Soviet Union proved to be the crowning achievement of the Reagan administration.” The arms negotiations, conducted by Reagan and Mikhail Gorbachev, helped thaw Cold War tensions and advanced American security interests. However, in fighting against anti-democratic regimes Reagan suffered possibly the greatest setback of his second term. The Reagan administration authorized arms sales to Iran as a means for financing the Nicaraguan Contra rebels fight against the ruling Sandinista government. Furthermore, the administration hoped the exchanges would lead
to the release of American captives in Lebanon, violating Reagan’s promise not to trade arms for hostages. The Iran-Contra affair, as the event later became known, raised ethical and constitutional questions, limiting the President’s ability to carry out his campaign promise of global democratic expansion. Reagan’s actions, a mélange of successes and failures, qualify as partially comparable with his campaign promise.


During the 1988 campaign, Vice President George H.W. Bush sought to distance himself from the environmental policies of President Reagan and portray himself as a friend of the environment. As both Bush and Massachusetts Governor Michael S. Dukakis jockeyed for votes from the environmental community, Bush declared that he would serve the nation as “the environmental president” (Holusha, 1988). Although some observers questioned the Vice President’s commitment to such a statement, the environmental presidency developed into a campaign theme, and most environmental activists championed either Bush or Dukakis as a welcome alternative to the Reagan presidency (Shabecoff, 1988). Both candidates focused tremendous energy on the environment, marking a steady increase in environmental issue salience throughout the presidential campaigns of the 1980s.

Unlike the 1980 and 1984 campaigns, 1988 featured a focus on the future and multinational environmental issues. And though Governor Dukakis denounced Vice President Bush for his connection to President Reagan’s environmental record, the absence of a presidential incumbent led to policy goals overshadowing past performance. A series of Dukakis campaign speeches in late September and early October 1984 addressed two key environmental issues: offshore drilling, and radioactive waste dumping. Speaking in San Francisco with the Golden Gate Bridge behind him, Dukakis declared that he would designate Santa Monica Bay and the entire California coast north of Big Sur as marine sanctuaries off limits to oil drilling. Also, the Massachusetts Governor laid out a national oceans policy, opposing any effort to dispose of hazardous wastes off America’s coasts and expediting the end of oceanic sewage sludge dumping (Bradlee Jr., 1988).
In the days before the November election, Governor Dukakis published his most thorough public statements on environmental policy in a *Sierra* magazine article. He considered an array of issues, both domestic and global, ranging from fisheries to fuel economy. Dukakis mentioned the Alaska National Wildlife Refuge and desert lands in California as immediate targets for preservation and wilderness status. He also noted that he would implement a new trust fund, as recommended by the Report of the President’s Commission on Americans Outdoors, allowing for the acquisition of park land and creation of new recreational areas and protected habitats. More significantly, Governor Dukakis focused much of his energy on tackling global concerns. His global proposals featured a global ban on CFCs. Furthermore, Dukakis presented national standards for sulfur dioxide and nitrogen oxide emissions reductions to alleviate the ills of acid rain, a problem blurring the lines of domestic and global policy. To complete his troika of major international initiatives, Dukakis called for an “international environmental and conservation summit to bring together world leaders and confront” issues like acid rain, global warming, pollution, and deforestation (Dukakis, 1988).

Meanwhile, George Bush worked hard to reconcile his vision of an environmental presidency with his less environmentally friendly record as a member of the Reagan administration. Shortly after receiving his party’s nomination, Bush detailed his planned environmental policies at an August 31, 1984 campaign rally in Michigan. Environmentally sensitive language peppered Bush’s speech as he proclaimed, “I am an environmentalist” and asserted that his White House would be guided by a “conservation ethic.” When addressing specific policies, Vice President Bush separated himself from President Reagan by announcing a comprehensive plan for reducing sulfur dioxide emissions by “millions of tons” by the year 2000 and declaring his support for a multinational protocol for curbing nitrogen oxide emissions. In his discussion of domestic issues, Bush promoted a “no net loss” of wetlands initiative, expanding the national park system, and spreading the costs of acid rain reduction among all states (Chinlund, 1988; Peterson, 1988). A day later, the Vice President entered enemy territory and blasted Governor Dukakis while visiting Boston Harbor, with the slow and expensive clean up of human waste in the harbor as a primary target (Toner, 1988).
Vice President Bush did not discuss offshore drilling during the Michigan and Massachusetts visits. Initially a proponent of new offshore drilling projects, he altered his position during a June 1984 trip to California. In front of a small crowd in Los Angeles, Mr. Bush pledged a deferral of drilling permits for the Northern California coastline (Dowd, 1988). Bush attempted to end speculation about his position when, like Dukakis, he wrote a pre-election article for *Sierra* magazine. Again he supported a permitting moratorium for “many of the tracts off the coast of California.”

The Vice President devoted the bulk of his *Sierra* writing to promoting his ideas for acid rain reduction and highlighting his environmental accomplishments, calling his interest in the environment, “no recent development, but rather a life-long commitment.” However, he also outlined several more proposals: gradually eliminating CFC production, continuing, and expanding, the Land and Water Conservation Fund past its 1989 expiration date, an ocean dumping ban, and, as previously announced, convening a “global conference on the environment” with global warming and deforestation central to its agenda. Then, George Bush ended his piece with the same theme that had guided his campaign for months, writing, “I would be a Republican president in the Teddy Roosevelt tradition. A conservationist. An *environmentalist*” (Bush, 1988).

Among the presidential campaigns of the 1980s, 1988 was unique in its emphasis on global issues as well as the amount of policy information shared outside of the debates and platforms. In the second Bush-Dukakis debate the candidates briefly shared their thoughts on the environment. But the exchange amounted to nothing more than a repetition of campaign banter, as Bush sought to support his record and distance himself from President Reagan while Dukakis assailed the administration’s environmental policies (Bush, Oct. 13, 1988; Dukakis, Oct. 13, 1988). Only the Republican Party’s promise of minimizing coastal erosion and protecting and restoring beaches and estuaries constituted a significant environmental policy proposal by either party platform that the candidates had not previously given great consideration (Republican National Convention, 1988). The 1988 election signified a re-emergence of the environment on the national agenda, and the campaign established lofty expectations for George Bush’s incoming administration.
THE BUSH PRESIDENCY

President Bush’s term commenced with several significant appointments, showing a commitment to a conservation ethic. Most notably, Bush named William Reilly, director of the World Wildlife Fund, as EPA administrator. The good will continued with the 1990 Clean Air Act Amendments—legislation so significant that it alone nearly fulfills the promise of an environmental presidency. Early in his presidency, Bush submitted to Congress a draft bill including reductions of sulfur dioxide emissions, urban air pollution, and airborne toxic chemicals. The centerpiece of the legislation was sulfur dioxide. During the Carter and Reagan administrations, scientists discovered that sulfur dioxide emissions directly cause acid rain. President Bush and Congress instituted emissions reductions of 10 million tons per year by 2000, employing a tradable emissions permit system that helped reduce acid rain while saving billions of dollars (Vig, 2006; Freeman, 2006).

The administration also quickly acted on CFCs and the ozone layer. The 1990 budget reconciliation bill included a tax on CFC manufacturers intended to price CFC out of the refrigerator cooling market (Weisskopf, Dec. 21, 1989). Then, Bush accelerated the phase out of CFCs, moving the deadline for ending production from sometime in the year 2000 to December 31, 1995. Moreover, the administration simultaneously expedited the reduction of hydrochlorofluorocarbons (HCFCs), a CFC replacement (Neuffer, 1992). President Bush addressed another ozone-destroying agent, methyl chloroform, through international diplomacy. Although not as destructive as CFCs, industries more commonly utilized methyl chloroform, and Bush initiated a methyl chloroform phase-down during a meeting with the Montreal Protocol parties (Weisskopf, Nov. 22, 1989).

Likewise, President Bush upheld his campaign pledge to defer offshore drilling permits. After taking office, Bush immediately postponed three offshore sales off California and Florida (Sullivan, 1989). In June 1990, the President took a more important step, issuing a ten-year moratorium on leases for offshore drilling off America’s coastlines with exceptions only in the Gulf of Mexico and a small portion of Alaska (Seib, 1990). President Bush never had the opportunity to act on his other major campaign oceans initiative, as President Reagan, while a lame duck, signed the Ocean Dumping Ban Act of 1988.
After his early successes, President Bush veered away from the principles of his environmental presidency rhetoric. The President appointed Vice President Dan Quayle as head of the Council on Competitiveness, a body that handled industry relations and regulatory analysis, in 1989. In 1991, Quayle’s council directly injected itself in the regulatory process, easing environmental regulations by secretly pressuring federal agencies. Additionally, the Council on Competitiveness played a key role in relaxing the criteria for wetlands protections and moving the administration away from the campaign promise of no net wetlands lost (Devroy and Broder, 1991; Teifer, 1994). Bush struggled with the wetlands issue, as he and his staff debated wetlands definitions and the proper balance between protection and development. Even though Bush backed off some of the original proposals submitted by Quayle and other advisors, he still failed to meet the no net loss pledge in his proposals, a point many journalists noted throughout the 1992 presidential campaign (Rebuffoni, 1992; Schneider, Oct. 12, 1992; Weisskopf, 1992).

President Bush also changed course on international diplomacy. After assuming a leading role on ozone depletion and endorsing the G-7 proposal for a climate treaty, Bush backtracked on his pledge to convene an international climate change conference during his first year in office. The climate conference ultimately took place at the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio De Janeiro, but the President threatened a boycott until he received assurances that any treaty negotiated would not contain compulsory emissions reductions (Schneider, May 13, 1992; Wines, 1992). Then, in spite of EPA chief Reilly’s efforts, Bush abstained from signing the biodiversity compact developed in Rio (Schneider, June 5, 1992). Consequently, President Bush’s environmental policy decisions in 1992 sparked heavy criticism from the international community.

Finally, Bush had a mixed record on public lands. He extended the Land and Water Conservation Fund, but continued the Reagan administration’s trend of minimizing funding (Mansfield, 1989; Mansfield, 1990). Congress created the Land and Water Conservation Fund in 1964, appropriating half of the fund for land acquisition by federal agencies and the other half for state matching grants. Bush’s appropriations for LWCF never approached the full funding amount of $900 million. Moreover, Bush increased National Park Service funding from Reagan administration levels and added land to the park system, such as a major expansion of Everglades National Park. But his
major public land initiative “America the Beautiful,” designed to add land to the public domain, actually included many already existing programs and provided negligible budget increases (Shanley, 1992).

**ASSESSMENT**

Although he faced a divided government with solid Democratic majorities in the House of Representatives and Senate, President Bush realized a major political and environmental accomplishment when he signed the 1990 Clean Air Act amendments. Bush’s support of sulfur dioxide emissions reductions fulfilled the chief global environmental promise from his 1988 campaign. As shown in Table 3, President Bush was less successful in carrying out his other major promises. Surprisingly, domestic issues caused the greatest difficulty for Bush, and typically his failure to fulfill domestic promises resulted from his own priorities rather than conflicts with the opposition-controlled Congress.

**Table 3. Analysis of President Bush’s Performance on Key Environmental Policy Promises**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Promise</th>
<th>Performance</th>
<th>Assessment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dramatic reduction of sulfur dioxide emissions to curb acid rain</td>
<td>Supported and signed the 1990 Clean Air Act Amendments, creating sulfur dioxide emissions restrictions.</td>
<td>Comparable Action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No net loss of wetlands</td>
<td>Advocated various wetlands definitions and policies that would have weakened wetlands protections. Excluded Alaska from the no net less requirement.</td>
<td>Contrary Action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moratorium on offshore drilling permits</td>
<td>Postponed three key land sales, then issued a ten-year moratorium on leasing permits.</td>
<td>Comparable Action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elimination of CFC production</td>
<td>Taxed CFC manufacturers and expedited the Montreal Protocol time scale for phasing out CFCs.</td>
<td>Comparable Action</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

30
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Convening, within the term’s first year, a global environmental conference with an emphasis on the global climate</strong></th>
<th><strong>After threatening a boycott, attended Earth Summit, upon receiving assurances of only voluntary actions, in the final year of the term.</strong></th>
<th><strong>Mixed Action</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Extension of the Land and Water Conservation Fund</strong></td>
<td><strong>Continued the LWCF program, but carried on the trend of slashing the fund’s appropriations.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Mixed Action</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Expansion of the national park system</strong></td>
<td><strong>Added land to park domain, but failed in making major advancements through the “American the Beautiful” program.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Mixed Action</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note:** Italicized promises and actions represent environmental issues classified as global in scope

**Assessment of Performance on Major Domestic and Foreign Policy Promises**

Governor Dukakis and Vice President Bush exchanged barbs about a number of social issues during the 1988 campaign, including ethics, drugs, and the infamous Massachusetts furlough program. Abortion received particular attention among the salient social issues, and Bush presented himself as a devoutly pro-life candidate who would pursue pro-life policies. Gerald M. Pomper (1989: 143) and Jean Bethke Elshtain (1989: 119-122) cite the significance of social issues, especially abortion, in the 1988 campaign. These issues were as much a part of the core of Bush’s campaign as his economic initiatives, although in retrospect his “no new taxes” promise receives greater consideration. Bush followed through on his pro-life promise by vetoing abortion counseling legislation as well as legislation ending the ban on federal funding for fetal tissue research (Hill, 1994). Moreover, Bush nominated Justices David Souter and Clarence Thomas. Both came to the Supreme Court with pro-life backgrounds, although Justice Souter’s position on abortion evolved into a less conservative position than many Republicans had hoped at the time of his appointment. When evaluated in total, Bush’s actions comparably reflect his campaign pledge.

The 1988 campaign featured few specific promises about foreign policy. Instead, the general theme of defense highlighted the campaign, and both candidates pointed out
their ability to produce a more efficient defense budget and effectively handle relations with the Soviet Union (Elshtain, 1989). As the Soviet Union devolved early in Bush’s term, the President and Secretary of State James Baker negotiated with Soviet leaders, producing arms reductions and normalized relations. While President Bush cannot claim complete credit for ending the Cold War and problems followed the Soviet Union’s collapse, such as instability in the Russian economy, Raymond A. Moore (1994) categorizes Bush’s Soviet Union policy as generally a success. Furthermore, Bush oversaw defense appropriations reductions from the Reagan era. On his campaign promises for United States defense, President Bush fulfilled his pledges with comparable action.

THE 1992 CAMPAIGN: “UP TO OUR NECKS IN OWLS”

When Arkansas Governor Bill Clinton emerged as the front runner for the Democratic presidential nomination in 1992, President Bush seemed poised to continue the rhetoric of his 1988 “environmental president” campaign. Armed with several key environmental policy accomplishments and Clinton’s mediocre performance on environmental issues in Arkansas, Bush’s attacks appeared imminent. Yet, the President’s own environmental record weakened as he neared the election. And while Bush frequently mentioned environmental conditions in Arkansas during the campaign, the tenor of his campaign radically shifted when Clinton named Tennessee Senator Al Gore as his running mate. President Bush portrayed Mr. Gore, a noted environmentalist while in the Senate who Bush repeatedly called “The Ozone Man”, as moving the Democratic ticket to the environmental extreme. As the economy faltered in 1992, Bush backed off his hard line approach of 1988, presenting himself as a responsible steward who would not jeopardize economic interests for the sake of environmental interests.

A highly publicized debate about the Northern Spotted Owl led to the Endangered Species Act (ESA) taking center stage in the 1992 campaign. Court orders under ESA protected the endangered owls’ habitat, typically old growth forests, beginning in the early 1990s. The old growth timbering restrictions, supported by Senator Gore, emerged as an exceptionally salient issue in the Pacific Northwest because lumber companies favored the high amount of wood, and accompanying profits, yielded by old growth trees.
President Bush used the owl dispute in painting Gore as an extremist, asserting, “this guy is so far off in the environmental extreme, we’ll be up to our necks in owls and out of work for every American. The guy’s crazy” (Bush, Oct. 29, 1992). Throughout his campaign, President Bush spoke of integrating economics and the environment to find solutions for both. While touring the Northwest, Bush said that use of the Endangered Species Act had overstepped the act’s original intent and that the balance between economics and the environment in the region had been lost. Then, in accordance with his campaign tradition, Bush invoked the memory of arch-conservationist Theodore Roosevelt in emphasizing this point: “wise forest protection does not mean the withdrawal of forest resources from contributing their full share to the welfare of the people”. Bush concluded his Pacific Northwest stop with a multi-pronged environmental policy plan, committing to not signing an extension of the ESA unless the act went through lengthy revisions for economic considerations, ending the Northwest timber injunctions and producing over 3 billion board feet of timber on Forest Service and BLM lands in the Northwest in 1993, and expediting the harvest of dead or dying timber by loosening logging restrictions (Bush, Sept. 14, 1992).

In connecting environmental issues with the economy, President Bush made Corporate Average Fuel Efficiency (CAFE) standards another significant campaign issue. Fearing job loss, Bush opposed any plan for major fuel efficiency increases, and he repeatedly criticized Governor Clinton’s Earth Day speech, which included a proposal for increasing fuel efficiency standards from 27.5 miles per gallon to over 40 miles per gallon by 2000 (Ifill, 1992). During campaign rallies, and in the third presidential debate, the President railed against Clinton’s proposal, citing job loss figures and automobile safety implications, while carefully injecting comments about his own environmental successes and Governor Clinton’s failures in Arkansas (Bush, Aug. 25, 1992; Bush, Sept. 14, 1992; Bush, Oct. 19, 1992; Bush, Oct. 29, 1992).

Beside his ideas for integrating economics and the environment, particularly in timbering, President Bush limited his new environmental initiatives in the 1992 campaign, focusing instead on his record. A proposed set of Clean Air Act changes, including modifications encouraging increased use of ethanol in hopes of reducing smog, received the most attention of the few other new policies presented by the President.
The global environmental issues Bush stressed in 1988 fell off his agenda—in part because of accomplishments, such as the Clean Air Act acid rain program—and Bush’s new approach coalesced with the Republican Party Platform of 1992. Many of the platform’s goals echoed Bush-Quayle campaign themes. The key additions: a renewed commitment to exploring oil sources in the Alaska National Wildlife Refuge, and a promised overhaul of Superfund (Republican National Convention, 1992).

CAFE standards increases comprised only one piece of a far-reaching “covenant for environmental progress” Governor Clinton made public in his Earth Day address at Drexel University in Philadelphia. Debt-for-nature swaps received particular attention from Clinton. These swaps allow relatively poorer countries to pay off their debts by setting aside lands for preservation. Also, Clinton emphasized passing a national recycling bill, which would require a refundable fee on recyclable bottles and cans, taxing vehicles with exceptionally low fuel efficiency as part of a tax policy designed to promote conservation, and shifting funds away from nuclear energy toward other renewable, alternative energy sources (Dionne Jr. and Kenworthy, 1992; Ifill, 1992).

Despite the breadth of these proposals, Clinton’s lack of successful environmental initiatives in Arkansas garnered more attention early in the campaign than his vision for the future. Clinton took responsibility for some of Arkansas’ poor environmental conditions during the 1980s while speaking at Drexel and also attributed some of the problems to Presidents Reagan and Bush. When Senator Gore joined the Democratic ticket, observers began more seriously considering Governor Clinton’s environmental policy goals. Gore had recently authored the best-selling book *Earth in the Balance: Ecology and the Human Spirit*, and he joined with Clinton in crafting an agenda for the environment soon after winning their party’s nomination.

In their co-authored campaign book *Putting People First* (1992: 93), Governor Clinton and Senator Gore lashed out against the Bush administration for presenting a “false choice between environmental protection and economic growth.” The false choice theme pervaded the 1992 election as Clinton and Gore used it to attack the incumbents while Bush and Dukakis attempted to spin the issue back against the challengers. Moreover, Clinton and Gore articulated four broad policy goals: reducing waste and
pollution, preserving the nation’s natural heritage, rewarding environmentally-friendly business practices, and taking a leadership role on global environmental politics. Improving America’s energy efficiency by at least 20 percent by the year 2000, reinstating funding for UN population stabilization endeavors, controlling carbon dioxide emissions by the year 2000 at the 1990 emissions levels, realizing President Bush’s no net loss of wetlands pledge, and preventing drilling in ANWR were among the specific policies mentioned in *Putting People First* (Clinton and Gore, 1992). Also, Governor Clinton reiterated the extensive set of proposals from his “covenant for environmental progress.” *Putting People First* and Clinton’s campaign speeches closely mirror the environmental policy section of the Democratic Party Platform of 1992. Global issues are prominent in the platform, as in the campaign, and only passing an international biodiversity treaty received considerably more attention (Democratic National Convention, 1992). Given the global environmental focus of Bill Clinton, Al Gore, and the Democratic Party in 1992, the Clinton Administration faced the same high expectations when taking office that the Bush administration had confronted four years earlier.

**PRESIDENT CLINTON’S FIRST TERM**

Bill Clinton entered office with an ambitious environmental policy agenda. He immediately appointed Vice President Gore as the White House’s environmental policy coordinator, and several noted environmentalists earned positions in executive office and cabinet positions. Observers heralded the Clinton’s advisory group as the “green team” because of their strong pro-environment bent (Vig, 2006).

But the administration’s initial momentum toward achieving campaign promises fizzled beginning in mid-1993. That June, in a widely acclaimed action, President Clinton signed the international biodiversity treaty previously sidestepped by President Bush (Daynes, 1999). However, the President never submitted the agreement for Senate ratification, making his signature essentially a symbolic gesture. Later, the President’s BTU tax floundered in Congress. Republicans and Democrats both opposed the proposed fossil fuels tax, designed to promote energy conservation and produce funding
for renewable energy, and the administration resorted to a compromise gasoline tax with a far smaller scope (Woodward, 1994).

As 1993 and 1994 passed by, Clinton let his opportunity for following through on his campaign promises slip away. His chief accomplishment came from a wetlands policy initiative. Clinton remained committed to his no-net-loss pledge, and the White House Office on Environmental Policy (1993) developed a blueprint for the future of wetlands that tightened some of the Bush administration’s regulations, making no net loss a realistic objective. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (2000) research shows that the wetlands package slowed wetlands losses by nearly 80% from rates a decade earlier, still falling short of the no-net-loss goal. Although President Clinton also signed several environment-related executive orders and proposed significant legislation, these actions primarily affected subordinate issues from the 1992 campaign or, more typically, environmental issues Clinton had not emphasized during the campaign. Then, powered by the “Contract with America,” the Republican Party gained a congressional majority in November 1994. Congressional Republicans sought environmental policy reforms, and President Clinton immediately lost the opportunity to advance the sweeping changes he and Vice President Gore had espoused in *Putting People First*. Instead, Clinton became a last line of defense against environmental rollbacks.

The President aborted some of his campaign promises to focus on fending off Republican efforts. His national bottle recycling bill never became part of Congress’ agenda, and the international debt-for-nature swap program slowed from its pace under President Bush as President Clinton attended to negotiating a redwood forest swap in California (Knickerbocker, 1993). Moreover, in 1995, Congress froze CAFE standards, eliminating any hope of meeting the ambitious fuel efficiency standards Clinton touted during his campaign (Knickerbocker, 1995). However, Clinton’s greatest success in opposing Congress on environmental issues came in December 1995. After months of political wrangling, President Clinton, as promised, vetoed a budget bill that included energy development in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (Purdum, 1995). Clinton’s Interior budget veto was one in a series of year-end vetoes resulting in a temporary shutdown of the federal government. Ultimately, Congress dropped the ANWR provision and the President signed an augmented budget bill four months later (Gray,
And though President Clinton rarely used the executive veto power during his first term, approximately one-third of his total vetoes protected the environment (Daynes, 1999).

Using his role as chief international diplomat, President Clinton brokered several climate initiatives. First, the United States joined in the Global Warming International Accords, an agreement cutting greenhouse gas emissions to 1990 levels by the year 2000. Then, 116 nations approved more rigorous standards at the 1995 Berlin Climate Conference (Daynes, 1999). However, Congressional opposition forced the administration to promote the agreements as only voluntary measures.

The political climate of Clinton’s first term made a binding climate change treaty unfeasible and pushed many of his 1992 environmental policy goals into the 1996 campaign. Given his circumstances, Clinton performed well on certain environmental issues, such as environmental justice--his 1994 executive order was the federal government’s first recognition of the disproportionate impact of waste and pollution on populations of color. Yet, in sum, President Clinton’s first term performance fell well short of the promises he made during the 1992 campaign.

ASSESSMENT

Many observers consider President Clinton a champion of pro-environment policies and environmental stewardship. But in his first term, Clinton’s actions promoting environmental protection were often unrelated with his campaign promises. As table 4 exhibits, Clinton carried out few of his core campaign promises, especially the global promises, even during his first two years in office when the Democratic Party controlled Congress. After the Republican Party won power in both chambers of Congress for the first time in four decades in 1994, Clinton depended on his veto to achieve the only entirely fulfilled promise from his campaign, thwarting drilling projects in ANWR.

Table 4. Analysis of President Clinton’s First Term Performance on Key Environmental Policy Promises

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Promise</th>
<th>Performance</th>
<th>Assessment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Significant increases in CAFE standards</td>
<td>Increase never proposed. Standards frozen at pre-1992 election levels.</td>
<td>Contrary Action</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

37
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Enlargement of the debt-for-nature swap program</strong></th>
<th><strong>Relied less on debt-for-nature swaps than President Bush.</strong></th>
<th><strong>Contrary Action</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>New national recycling legislation</td>
<td>Legislation never introduced.</td>
<td>No Action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased funding for renewable, alternative energy sources</td>
<td>Supported BTU tax, which failed in Congress. Included increased funding in first two budget proposals.</td>
<td>Partially Comparable Action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Controlling carbon dioxide emissions at 1990 levels by the year 2000</strong></td>
<td><strong>Entered into international emissions reductions pacts, but endorsed the requirements only as voluntary measures.</strong></td>
<td>Partially Comparable Action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No net loss of wetlands</td>
<td>Developed thorough wetlands plan, slowing the loss of wetlands.</td>
<td>Partially Comparable Action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No new drilling in ANWR</td>
<td>Vetoed 1996 Interior Department budget, which included a provision for the sale of drilling leases.</td>
<td>Comparable Action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Signing an international biodiversity treaty</strong></td>
<td><strong>Signed the treaty in June 1993, but never presented for Senate ratification.</strong></td>
<td>Mixed Action</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Italicized promises and actions represent environmental issues classified as global in scope

**Assessment of Performance on Major Domestic and Foreign Policy Promises**

The economy constituted Bill Clinton’s chief domestic concern in 1992. Charging President Bush with failing the American people on economic policies, Clinton introduced a specific recovery program designed “to tax the wealthy, increase public investment in job training and infrastructure, and reform the educational system” (Quirk and Dalager, 1993: 63). Clinton’s greatest accomplishment in meeting his campaign proposal was his 1993 economic package. The plan included a deficit reduction achieved through tax increases for members of the highest tax brackets. Later, while fighting Republican budget cuts, Clinton secured additional funding for education and job training
in a $700 million spending bill (Quirk and Cunion, 2000). However, while he championed the “Goals 2000” program for education, President Clinton failed in effecting systemic reform of education, which President George W. Bush would later achieve with No Child Left Behind. Clinton’s economic policies merit classification as partially comparable with his campaign promise.

Although Bill Clinton almost exclusively concentrated on domestic issues as he campaigned for the presidency, the issue of international trade repeatedly surfaced during the presidential debates. The North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) earned significant attention. Saying, “on balance it does more good than harm,” Clinton pledged his conditional support for NAFTA (Clinton, 1992). As President, Clinton pressed for environmental regulations and job training programs to offset the perceived harms of NAFTA, and he signed the agreement in 1993 in an action comparable with his campaign pledge.

THE 1996 CAMPAIGN: 1980 REVISITED

In the arena of environmental policy, the 1996 presidential campaign looked strikingly similar to the Carter-Reagan-Anderson campaign sixteen years earlier--a Democratic incumbent, and former governor from the South, extolling his environmental policy successes while the Republican challenger speaks out against overregulation, and all of this occurring in a climate less receptive to environmental issues than the climate of the previous election. Fortunately for President Clinton he was not facing the economic stagflation and energy concerns that plagued the Carter Administration, making his campaign, both on the environment as well as general domestic policy, more successful. Because of divergent election results, the similarities in environmental policy between the 1980 and 1996 elections end with the common campaign themes. President Clinton and President Reagan held vastly different environmental policy goals, and in the 1996 campaign President Clinton focused on several new proposals that shaped his environmental legacy.

Senate Majority Leader Robert J. Dole of Kansas began his campaign on the environment in Florida, addressing one of the most significant environmental issues of the campaign. Senator Dole publicly announced his support for a multi-million dollar
Everglades restoration project. Simultaneously, he excoriated Vice President Gore for suggesting that the Florida sugar industry fund part of the restoration through new taxes (Booth, 1996). The sugar industry played a central role in this debate because fertilizer-polluted runoff from the businesses killed indigenous plant species.

After his early April tour of southern Florida, Dole spoke of more efficient environmental regulations in a brief Earth Day oratory on the Senate floor, and then he avoided major environmental speeches for a number of months (Lee and Yang, 1996). In late July, Senator Dole headed to the American West, and, like President Bush in 1992, Dole targeted timber regulations. Without detailing specific policies, Mr. Dole recommended easing restrictions on harvesting salvage timber and blamed the courts and the Clinton Administration for lumberyard closures, telling a crowd in northern California they had been “abandoned” (Harden, 1996). He used similar language in a September campaign stop in Pittsburgh. Attempting to attract small business owners and blue-collar Rust Belt workers, Dole stated that government regulations had overreached their bounds. In particular, he declared, “The EPA has gone overboard. A lot of these people have gone overboard. And they need to be reined in” (Nagourney, 1996).

Senator Dole’s campaign statements led to some observers perceiving him as anti-environment, and his debate performances did not help in winning over voters uncertain of his environmental positions. Dole delivered no substantive comments about the environment in either debate with President Clinton. And while Dole’s inattentiveness to environmental concerns must be qualified by the declining salience of these issues in comparison to the 1988 and 1992 elections, the Clinton campaign portrayed Dole’s negligence as an indication that Dole would govern in a manner consistent with his zero percent grade on the most recent League of Conservation Voters Scorecard (League of Conservation Voters, 1995).

The 1996 Republican Party Platform more directly considered environmental issues than the Dole campaign, most prominently sharing Senator’s Dole emphasis on opening federal lands in the West for multiple uses and the decentralization of public lands policies. On other issues, the Republican Party again called for redesigning the Endangered Species Act, expanding nuclear power production, eliminating the Department of Energy, and exploring ANWR for oil (Republican National Convention,
Although the platform dealt with numerous environmental matters, the lack of innovative ideas limited Senator Dole’s ability to supplement his own proposals with farther reaching policies.

While the boasting typical of a sitting president constituted much of President Clinton’s reelection campaign, 1996 was also a year in which the incumbent made more new and significant environmental policy proposals than previous incumbents during the era of global environmental problems. After initially remaining uncommitted on Vice President Gore’s suggestion of taxing the Florida sugar industry as a revenue source for the Everglades restoration plan, President Clinton later pledged his support for the tax. The administration’s formal proposal for this leading early campaign issue included a penny-per-pound tax that would raise approximately $35 million a year of the $3 billion necessary for clean up (Booth, 1996; Thomas, 1996).

On Earth Day 1996, Clinton announced his national parks initiative, commonly known as “National Parks for Tomorrow,” in an address at Great Falls National Park outside of Washington, D.C. (Lee and Yang, 1996). Clinton underscored his first term successes and the failings of the Republican Congress, while presenting two portions of the plan: expanding the Pt. Reyes National Seashore in California, and purchasing the Sterling Forest in New York. The full initiative also incorporated passing legislation giving parks the authority to increase user fees, generating funds by allowing competitive bidding for park concessions, reducing noise pollution at the Grand Canyon, and granting parks the ability to create cooperative relationships with other parks or private interests (Clinton, Apr. 22, 1996; Landay, 1996).

After the Democratic Convention, President Clinton visited Kalamazoo, Michigan and shared his proposal for cleaning up hazardous waste sites. Clinton pledged to double the pace of Superfund cleanups, cleaning 500 new sites by the year 2000. Also, he emphasized brownfield redevelopment, turning urban waste sites into safe commercial or residential areas, as a mechanism for partnering sound environmental and economic policy. For these and other waste cleanup programs, President Clinton urged the enacting of an environmental crimes bill that would establish larger penalties for polluters and increase polluters’ mitigation responsibilities. To roaring applause, Clinton said of the environmental crimes bill, “That is perhaps the most important thing of all.” (Attorney
General Janet Reno subsequently announced new environmental crimes enforcement policies, removing environmental crimes legislation from the forefront of Clinton’s campaign. Then, he concluded the speech by calling for Congress to fully fund the Safe Drinking Water Act, and promising an expansion of the community right-to-know law, making health and environmental information more readily available (Clinton, Aug. 28, 1996).

Many policies from the extensive list of 1992 campaign promises again received coverage by President Clinton as well as the party platform. The Republican Congress had stymied some of the proposals, and Clinton was committed to prioritizing first-term goals during his second term. In expanding the international environmental leadership role imagined in 1992, the President and the Democratic Party Platform of 1996 supported a “strong international agreement” for curbing greenhouse gas emissions (Democratic National Convention, 1996). The Democratic Party’s other new ideas matched those of the Clinton campaign and complemented the themes of 1992.

PRESIDENT CLINTON’S SECOND TERM

The debate over global climate change became the principal environmental policy issue of President Clinton’s second term. With the scientific evidence of climate instability and gradual warming mounting, the United States entered into greenhouse gas emissions reductions negotiations at Kyoto, Japan in late 1997. At the Kyoto conference, the third and most noteworthy in a series of conferences including the 1995 Berlin meeting, delegates agreed on binding emissions targets. While the administration supported the goals of the proposed Kyoto Protocol, several months earlier Congress unanimously passed the Byrd-Hagel Resolution advising the President not to sign a mandatory climate accord excepting developing nations. Nonetheless, when the Kyoto nations reconvened the next year in Buenos Aires, the United States signed the Kyoto Protocol. Despite administration efforts, Congress immediately and overwhelmingly opposed ratification, eliminating President Clinton’s chance of incorporating the United States in a binding international climate treaty (Hempel, 2006).

Superfund, another highly contentious issue, also garnered tremendous political attention. During the fiscal year 1996 budget impasse, Superfund cleanups slowed, and
Clinton accused Congress of, “let[ting] polluters off the hook,” by proposing measures for weakening Superfund. In response, the President offered a $2 billion tax break plan to stimulate site cleanups (Mitchell, 1996). After reelection, President Clinton continued his Superfund battle with Congress, stressing a polluter-pays principle for cleanup. As the fund’s assets slowly withered away, Congress continually deferred action on reform legislation. Without congressional reauthorization, Clinton relied on three sets of administrative reforms. Assistant EPA Administrator Timothy Fields Jr. (1999) noted that the agency actions resulted in an expedited and more efficient cleanup process. Eventually, however, the lack of congressional action strangled Superfund, pushing it to the brink of bankruptcy by the end of the Clinton Administration. And while he oversaw the cleanup of far more hazardous waste sites than his predecessors, President Clinton did not reach his ambitious second-term goal of decontaminating 500 Superfund sites.

As the disputes over climate change and Superfund intensified, President Clinton executed a little publicized administrative rule expanding the community right-to-know program. A year after first promising greater access to environmental information, Clinton marked Earth Day 1997 by announcing sweeping additions to the reporting program. The rule added seven industries and more than 6,100 facilities to the list of polluters required to disclose their toxic waste releases into the land, air, and water (Baker, 1997).

President Clinton experienced similar success on one point of his national parks plan while encountering difficulties on other details. Near the end of 1996, Congress passed a public lands preservation bill. The legislation included the Sterling National Forest, a campaign priority and major political victory for Clinton (Cushman Jr., 1996). Clinton’s other primary target, expansion of the Pt. Reyes National Seashore, proved a more difficult task. The administration authorized initial funding for expansion, but acquired only a fraction of the desired lands. Representative Lynn Woolsey (D-CA) introduced the Point Reyes Farmland Protection Act four times during Clinton’s second term, failing in each effort to obtain approximately 40,000 acres of California farmland for preservation (Lochhead, 1997; Lochhead, 1999). Moreover, while Congress thwarted some of his national parks legislation and budget proposals, President Clinton ended his presidency by aggressively pursuing public land acquisition. In 1999, Clinton requested
$1 billion for national park system expansion (Cushman Jr., 1999). A year later, he capped off a series of national monument designations using the 1906 Antiquities Act, a remnant from the conservation-minded Roosevelt administration, resulting in millions of acres of newly protected public lands (Egan, 2000; Janofsky, 2000).

In another late-term action, Clinton followed through on his pledge of Everglades restoration by approving nearly $8 billion in funding. The plan relied less on the Florida sugar industry than Clinton had proposed during the 1996 campaign, but still employed cooperation between the government and sugar companies. With a total cost of $14.6 billion, the four decade restoration project follows an Army Corps of Engineers blueprint for refurbishing South Florida’s water supply (Alvarez, 2000).

Despite significant efforts by the Clinton administration, the President could not attain his two-term goal of a twenty percent improvement in national energy efficiency. In his effort against wasteful consumption, Clinton utilized the 1992 Energy Policy Act and issued Executive Order 12902 for energy efficiency and conservation as well as a 1998 memorandum directing federal agencies to consider energy savings when awarding contracts (Clinton, 1994; Clinton, 1998). These and other efforts fell short of the President’s ambitious goal. As Americans increasingly shifted to driving larger vehicles, specifically Sport Utility Vehicles, energy consumption for transportation offset the gains made in the industrial and residential sectors, and total energy consumption increased between 1992 and 2000 (Bureau of Transportation, 2005).

ASSESSMENT

Unlike President Reagan, Bill Clinton had greater success fulfilling environmental policy promises in his second term, as displayed in table 5, and his presidency ended with a flurry of environmental action. Still, the Republican dominated Congress limited Clinton’s effectiveness on several issues. While President Clinton acted on all of his key promises, he typically only partially fulfilled the pledges because of inter-branch disputes and ineffective policies.
Table 5. Analysis of President Clinton’s Second Term Performance on Key Environmental Policy Promises

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Promise</th>
<th>Performance</th>
<th>Assessment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Restoration of the Everglades</td>
<td>Signed legislation authorizing $7.8 billion for restoration.</td>
<td>Comparable Action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institution of the “National Parks for Tomorrow” program for park revitalization and expansion</td>
<td>Protected the Sterling National Forest and designated millions of acres as national monuments, but incompletely implemented total program.</td>
<td>Partially Comparable Action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expediting cleanup of Superfund sites, totaling 500 by the year 2000</td>
<td>Used administrative reforms to overcome congressional inaction on fund reauthorization. Actions resulted in expedited process, but fell short of total cleanup goal.</td>
<td>Partially Comparable Action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expansion of the community right-to-know act</td>
<td>Enacted EPA rule expanding the community right-to-know program.</td>
<td>Comparable Action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Controlling carbon dioxide emissions at 1990 levels by the year 2000 / A “strong international agreement” for reducing greenhouse gas emissions</td>
<td>Signed the 1997 Kyoto Protocol, which overwhelmingly failed in Congress.</td>
<td>Partially Comparable Action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twenty percent improvement in national energy efficiency by the year 2000</td>
<td>Used legislative and executive actions aimed at increasing efficiency, but failed to reduce total energy consumption.</td>
<td>Mixed Action</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Italicized promises and actions represent environmental issues classified as global in scope

Assessment of Performance on Major Domestic and Foreign Policy Promises

Economic issues again dominated the presidential campaign in 1996. A fifteen percent rate cut for all taxpayers led Senator Dole’s proposals. Meanwhile, President Clinton promised a balanced budget by the year 2002 (Quirk and Matheson, 1997). As
Paul J. Quirk and William Cunion (2000) note, Clinton and congressional Republicans agreed in principle on balancing the budget, but disputed the means for reducing the deficit. Remarkably, the flourishing late 1990s economy helped produce a balanced budget by fiscal year 1998 without extensive spending cuts, yielding a campaign promise fulfilled for President Clinton.

President Clinton emphasized arms control as a key piece of his foreign policy campaign. He advocated building on the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty through the Chemical Weapons Convention and strengthening the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty and Biological Weapons Convention. The Chemical Weapons Convention, deemed by Clinton as the critical element of improved arms control, won ratification in the Senate, and Emily O. Goldman and Larry Berman (2000) mention the Convention as one of President Clinton’s most significant foreign policy achievements. Also, as Clinton pledged, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) assumed a strengthened role under the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty in 1997. The member parties of the Biological Weapons Convention negotiated an enhanced protocol for weapons verification throughout Clinton’s second term; however the negotiations extended beyond Clinton’s presidency, and the succeeding Bush administration abandoned the protocol in 2001. President Clinton could not fully deliver on his campaign pledge for arms control, earning his performance a designation as partially comparable with his promise.


At the outset of the 2000 campaign it appeared the two leading candidates, Vice President Al Gore and Texas Governor George W. Bush, would take the dichotomous positions of activist and reformer on environmental issues. As is typical of presidential campaigns, both men later moderated their positions. Gore focused less energy on the environment than he had when running with President Clinton—a position that some observers believe may have cost him votes to Green Party candidate Ralph Nader—and Bush made several key policy proposals, endearing conservative and centrist environmentalists. Yet, the candidates’ environmental worldviews remained as distant as the 2000 election was close.
Frequent attacks aimed at Bush’s environmental record in Texas characterized Vice President Gore’s campaign. He elicited the help of his staffers, environmentalists, and interest groups in criticizing Bush:

They pointed out, for example, that Texas ranked first among the states in toxic chemical releases, greenhouse gas emissions, and several other pollution indexes and that Bush had appointed industry lobbyists to key environmental positions (Vig, 2003).

As Carter had done in his 1980 campaign against Reagan, Gore blended his criticism of Bush with statements about the previous administration’s accomplishments. Despite escalating his focus on other policies, Gore’s background and personal commitment to the future of the environment yielded strong positions on numerous environmental policies. Early in the campaign he proposed a sweeping plan for national forests as he accepted an endorsement from the League of Conservation Voters. Gore pledged to prohibit road building and logging on roughly 43 million acres of roadless forestland while also mentioning his personal devotion to protecting ANWR. Members of the Vice President’s own party noted that the proposals were an overdue shift away from attacking Governor Bush (Dao, 2000). While not as extensive as Ralph Nader’s plan for complete protection of the national forests, Gore’s plan created positive momentum for his campaign. Then, in June, Vice President Gore announced his energy plan—a segue to his more internationally focused promises later in the campaign. The $125 billion plan chiefly revolved around market-based tax incentives rewarding more efficient and less polluting energy sources (Bruni, June 28, 2000).

The themes of Gore’s (1992) book Earth in the Balance: Ecology and the Human Spirit reemerged in autumn of 2000. A new direction for business practices was addressed with his energy plan, and Gore spent the final pre-election months raising the themes of a new global alliance against international environmental problems and a new understanding of the relationship between man and nature, while fending off attacks from both George W. Bush and Ralph Nader. Mr. Gore maintained his support for the climate accord reached in Kyoto, stating he would ratify the pact or a similar agreement designed for greenhouse gas emissions reductions. Increasing fuel efficiency standards and combating air and water pollution also were important campaign topics (Jehl, 2000;
The Gore-Lieberman campaign environmental policy proposals fell in line with expectations. Gore’s bestselling book and his positions during previous campaigns formed the prologue to his 2000 campaign, but in working to win over voters in the center the Vice President slightly deemphasized green politics.

Governor Bush did not back down when his opponents depicted him as an enemy of the environment. In fact, he and his advisers repeatedly responded by noting significant additions to the state park system in Texas and reductions in industrial waste in the state (Bush, Oct. 11, 2000; Dao, 2000). As the campaign progressed, Bush assumed an offensive role, unveiling several important environmental proposals. In a September visit to Monroe, Washington, a small town just northeast of Seattle, Governor Bush promised $5 billion for maintenance and improvement of the national park system. This constituted a $3.75 billion increase in planned spending. Moreover, Bush steadfastly opposed breaching Pacific Northwest dams to aid salmon spawning, and he lambasted Vice President Gore for not taking a firm position on the salmon issue (Bruni, Sept. 14, 2000; Walsh, 2000). Later that month, the Texas Governor presented his comprehensive energy plan. Energy production was a focal point of the speech, and Bush pledged his support for opening portions of ANWR for oil exploration. The proposed energy policy also included new air pollution guidelines. Bush declared his administration would, “require all power plants to meet clean air standards in order to reduce emissions of sulfur dioxide, nitrogen oxide, mercury, and carbon dioxide within a reasonable period of time,” using market-based incentives (Bush, Sept 29, 2000).

Governor Bush stressed these key issues in the weeks before the election, drawing on them in two of the presidential debates, while continually voicing his opposition to the Kyoto Protocol. The nation also heard two less publicized environmental positions in the second debate. First, Mr. Bush promised full funding for the Land and Water Conservation Fund, giving half the money and decision power to the states. Then, he proposed a brownfield redevelopment plan based on the Texas urban redevelopment program (Bush, Oct. 11, 2000).

The Reaganesque themes of local cooperation and multiple use buttressed many of the 2000 Bush-Cheney environmental polices. Governor Bush frequently alluded to these concepts, and the Republican Party Platform of 2000 manifested such ideas:
We support the federal, state, local, and tribal responsibilities for environmental protection…While the very nature of environmental concerns at times requires federal intervention, the heartening progress made by many of the states and localities demonstrates their unique ability to solve problems at the local level…Strong leadership by governors, legislators, and local officials is the key to solving the emerging environmental issues of this new century…We support multiple use of public lands conducted in an environmentally and economically sustainable manner (Republican National Convention, 2000).

As George W. Bush set a new course for environmental policy, one more in line with the trends of the 1980s, he also promised to meet the challenges of the twenty-first century. Meeting his objectives would require a delicate balance of policies.

**PRESIDENT GEORGE W. BUSH’S FIRST TERM**

The Bush administration’s first 100 days were cause for concern among environmentalists. George W. Bush rescinded or weakened a number of regulations issued during the final months of the Clinton administration, such as new standards for the acceptable level of arsenic in drinking water. However, these changes were not directly related to campaign promises, and the new arsenic standards still met World Health Organization minimum requirements. But a mere 53 days after taking office, the President changed course on a central campaign pledge. Noting the possible increases in electricity costs and that he did not consider carbon dioxide as a pollutant as defined by the Clean Air Act, President Bush declared he would not pursue mandatory carbon dioxide emissions reductions for power plants (Bush, Mar. 13, 2001). Bush had previously promised reductions in emissions of this pollutant, considered by scientists a significant source of greenhouse effect amplification, and, in turn, climate destabilization, as part of his campaign energy plan.

President Bush quickly addressed other portions of his September 2000 energy proposal. On May 17, 2001, Bush announced a formal national energy policy. The energy policy received intense public and media scrutiny as it had evolved from the recommendations of a secret task force directed by Vice President Cheney and comprised of business interests. Among the corporations represented was Enron, which would later collapse amid scandal. Moreover, Enron’s officials were found to have manipulated the
energy market in California, artificially worsening the blackouts of 2000 and 2001. As part of the energy plan, President Bush proposed opening ANWR for energy development, suggesting that the wildlife refuge could provide enough oil to supplant imports from Iraq for forty years (Bush, May 17, 2001). The energy plan, and ANWR provision specifically, caused substantial controversy, and the administration’s early environmental proposals played a significant role in Vermont Senator Jim Jeffords’ critical defection from the Republican Party. Eventually, the Senate defeated the ANWR development plan nearly a year after Bush first introduced it (Schlesinger, 2002).

In February 2002, President Bush presented the Clear Skies Initiative, a program based on the air pollution goals established as part of his campaign energy proposal. Clear Skies included two phases of reductions concluding in 2018, with emissions cuts of seventy-three percent from the 2002 level for sulfur dioxide, sixty-seven percent for nitrogen oxides, and sixty-nine percent for mercury. To achieve these goals, the President suggested a cap-and-trade system with tradable emissions credits based on the existing approach to sulfur dioxide, which was both successful and cost effective (Bush, Feb. 14, 2002). Sponsors in both chambers of Congress backed the legislation, later titled the Clear Skies Act, in the exact form proposed by President Bush. Yet, many Democrats and moderate Republicans despised the act and it quickly stalled. Seeing the staunch opposition among legislators, President Bush moved to administratively implement some of the Clear Skies clauses. Possibly the most significant change was a new rule relaxing the new source review standards in the Clean Air Act (Pianin, 2003). None of the administrative actions taken directly reflected the main points of Bush’s campaign air pollution plan—regulations for the four primary pollutants remained unchanged—and the President’s first term concluded with the Clear Skies Act stuck in Congress.

Also in 2002, the President announced his Healthy Forest Initiative during an August trip to Oregon. Healthy Forests epitomized multiple use policy, local cooperation, regulatory reform, and economy-environment balancing. Based in part on the 1994 Northwest Forest Plan, President Bush’s proposal included sustainable timber harvesting on portions of the forest system, creating an expected 100,000 jobs. The President unveiled his initiative after an historic wildfire season destroyed millions of acres in the American West. In promoting the Healthy Forests Initiative, the President
noted that thinning forests would help protect the region from fire damage and maintain
forest vitality. Skeptics of forest thinning accept forest fires as a natural process in the
evolution of healthy forests, but this approach may yield temporary downturns for the
timbering economy.

As part of the forest package, Bush also recommended streamlining the regulatory
process and eliminating bureaucratic red tape (Bush, Aug. 22, 2002). Unlike his other
major first term initiative, Clear Skies, Bush had success with the Healthy Forest plan.
On December 3, 2003, President Bush signed into law the Healthy Forest Restoration Act
of 2003. After a congressional compromise, this act integrated most of the President’s
recommendations with key provisions for regulatory reform and local community
development intact (Bush, Dec. 3, 2003; Soraghan, 2003). Extending many of the
cooperative principles of the Healthy Forest Restoration Act and the 2000 campaign,
President Bush issued Executive Order 13352 in August 2004, directing the Departments
of the Interior, Agriculture, Commerce, and Defense, and the EPA to promote
cooperative conservation when implementing laws and calling for a “White House
Conference on Cooperative Conservation” (Bush, Aug. 26, 2004).

Another early success for President Bush was brownfields legislation. Early in
2002, He signed the Small Business Liability Relief and Brownfields Revitalization Act
in accordance with a campaign pledge to expand the brownfields programs he developed
as Governor of Texas. The legislation protected potential land purchasers from litigation,
making redevelopment more enticing for investors. Moreover, federal funding to states
and local entities nearly doubled to up to $200 million annually, and state and local
officials were given more responsibility for redevelopment (Bush, January 11, 2002;
Pianin, 2002).

Along with brownfields legislation, President Bush also promised full funding for
the Land and Water Conservation Fund. In each of his first term budget proposals,
President Bush appeared to allocate $900 million for the fund (Bush, June 21, 2001;
Quimby, 2002; Quimby, 2003 Quimby, 2004). But critics promptly pointed out that
Bush used LWCF appropriations as an umbrella for appropriating money to a number of
extraneous programs. For example, the budget lumped Take Pride in America and Urban
and Community Forestry, among other programs, under the Land and Water
Conservation Fund, and while these are conservation-related initiatives they are not directly connected to the intent of the fund. The figures released by the Department of Interior corroborated a funding discrepancy. When combining the Interior and Forest Service land acquisition appropriations and state grants in the President’s 2004 budget proposal, a total of $347.2 million went toward the LWCF (Quimby, 2003). For fiscal year 2005, the figure equaled $247.1 million for Interior and the states, which shared approximately two-thirds of the LWCF funds for that year (Quimby, 2004).

President Bush’s budgets also appeared to meet his other major funding promise: major budget increases for national park maintenance. After Bush announced his proposed budget for fiscal year 2005, the National Park Service noted that the President had suggested appropriating $3.9 billion for backlogged maintenance projects since the beginning of his term (Barna and Sevy, 2004). However, an examination of the National Park Service budget reveals that the operations and maintenance budget for improvements totaled only $2.1 billion during the same period, falling well short of President Bush’s promise. Large appropriations for ancillary programs like fire management boosted budget appearances, and by 2004 total national parks appropriations had actually decreased from 2001 levels (National Park Service, 2005). While the administration actively and successfully advanced brownfields funding, they manipulated appropriations figures in trying to project similar success meeting campaign pledges for the Land and Water Conservation Fund and the National Park Service.

ASSESSMENT

Following Senator Jim Jeffords’ defection from the Republican Party in June 2001, Democrats gained control of the Senate and stifled President Bush’s environmental initiatives. The President’s party regained power in both legislative chambers after the 2002 mid-term election and Bush worked closely with Congress in crafting the Healthy Forest Restoration Act. However, several moderate Republicans broke with their party line, preventing the Clear Skies Act from receiving a floor vote. Despite the favorable composition of the 108th Congress (2003-2005), Bush largely relied on executive actions when carrying out his campaign pledges, as table 6 illustrates. President Bush capitalized on his increased public approval after the September 11, 2001 terror attacks to win
support for his environmental priorities and administrative actions, but Bush also
deeled emphasis environmental policy in the final three years of the term.

### Table 6. Analysis of President George W. Bush’s First Term Performance on Key Environmental Policy Promises

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Promise</th>
<th>Performance</th>
<th>Assessment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$5 billion in funding for national park maintenance/repairs</td>
<td>Failed to meet the $5 billion park maintenance pledge, and reduced total park service appropriations.</td>
<td>Contrary Action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opening of ANWR for energy development</td>
<td>Introduced a proposal for ANWR energy development, which was defeated in the Senate.</td>
<td>Partially Comparable Action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reduction of carbon dioxide emissions</td>
<td>Announced that he would not pursue carbon dioxide emissions regulations.</td>
<td>Contrary Action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reduction of mercury, nitrogen oxide, and sulfur dioxide emissions</td>
<td>Proposed the Clear Skies Initiative, which stalled in Congress. Implemented some provisions of the proposed legislation through administrative action.</td>
<td>Mixed Action¹</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full funding for the Land and Water Conservation Fund</td>
<td>Increased LWCF funding to fully funded levels. However, the appropriations included programs unrelated to the fund’s original intent.</td>
<td>Mixed Action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promotion of cooperative conservation and multiple use policies</td>
<td>Proposed the Healthy Forests Initiative and strongly supported the Healthy Forest Restoration Act. Issued Executive Order 13352 announcing a cooperative conservation summit.</td>
<td>Comparable Action</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Redevelopment of brownfield areas | Signed the Small Business Liability Relief and Brownfields Revitalization Act. | Comparable Action

Note: Italicized promises and actions represent environmental issues classified as global in scope

1 Because portions of the Clear Skies Act would weaken or delay provisions of the existing Clean Air Act (if fully implemented and enforced), the proposal qualifies as, in part, contrary to Bush’s campaign promise of emissions reductions for the listed pollutants.

Assessment of Performance on Major Domestic and Foreign Policy Promises

George W. Bush centered his 2000 domestic policy campaign on a sizable tax cut affecting all taxpayers and phasing out the estate tax and marriage penalty while increasing the child tax credit. Gary Mucciaroni and Paul J. Quirk (2004) observe that Bush, through several rounds of tax cuts passed by Congress, achieved most of what he promised. The tax packages approximated the total figure pledged by Bush and included marriage penalty relief, across-the-board refunds, and an increased child tax credit. The president carried out his key domestic policy promise with comparable action.


THE 2004 CAMPAIGN: THE ORWELLIAN DISCOURSE

The 2004 campaign was not a memorable one for environmental policy discussion, as the issues lacked salience like they had in the first campaign of the global era twenty-four years earlier. However, the one nationally televised dialogue about the
environment between President George W. Bush and Massachusetts Democrat John F. Kerry featured a memorable statement from Senator Kerry. Borrowing language from Robert F. Kennedy Jr., and other critical assessments of the Bush Administration’s environmental policies, Kerry dubbed Bush’s Clear Skies Initiative as an environmental program with an “Orwellian” name that was misleading and meaningless (Kennedy Jr., 2004; Kerry, Oct. 8, 2004). Instead of spotlighting Bush’s record, Kerry succeeded in fueling the widely held, but largely inaccurate perception, of environmentalists as elitists and intellectuals by making a reference that connected with few viewers. In a campaign dominated by national security and foreign policy issues, the environment emerged on the national scene only long enough for a trivial exchange between candidates. However, even if under the radar, both candidates made important environmental policy promises during the 2004 campaign.

Canvassing the South on a three-day expedition in April, Senator Kerry condemned President Bush’s environmental policy decisions, linking America’s dependence on foreign oil with poor environmental policies. Kerry also criticized the President’s record on pollution, but made few overtures about his own positions for the future (Halbfinger, 2004; Sanger and Halbfinger, 2004). Remarkably, Kerry’s focus on President Bush did not stem from a lack of refined policy positions. Rather, he had already proposed most of his significant environmental policies early in the primary campaign and over several decades in the Senate. In October 2003, Senator Kerry outlined a plan for the environment, including a conservation covenant for land preservation, financial incentives for companies pursuing alternative energy innovations, investments in clean energy production, global leadership on climate change issues, fuel efficiency increases, and environmental justice initiatives (Kerry, 2003). Later, near the end of the general election campaign, Kerry and running mate Senator John Edwards announced a principal policy initiative. The proposal, known as the “no toxics” plan, called for tougher guidelines for mercury emissions from power plants near the Great Lakes. Additionally, Kerry and Edwards restated their opposition to water diversions from the Great Lakes to other regions and championed reinstating the Superfund tax on polluting industries (Christoff, 2004).
Senator Kerry also frequently referenced his environmental voting record in Congress. Over the course of his four terms, Kerry earned a lifetime voting score of 96 percent from the League of Conservation Voters and merited positive grades on every environmental vote for which he was present in the year before the election (Knickerbocker, 2004; League of Conservation Voters, 2004). Throughout the campaign, John Kerry seemed confident in drawing distinctions between his environmental record and George W. Bush’s record as an effective environmental policy strategy. The Democratic Party used a similar approach, chiding President Bush and promoting many of the same policies Kerry had pursued for years: climate change legislation, rigorous CAFE standards, and Clean Air Act and Clean Water Act reforms designed to strengthen enforcement (Democratic National Convention, 2004). Although Senator Kerry’s environmental policies evolved over the campaign, he and his party were comfortable espousing a Kerry-Bush dichotomy on environmental issues rather than centering media attention on new proposals.

Realizing Senator Kerry had an advantage on environmental issues among concerned voters, President Bush introduced several well-crafted policies and affirmed the priorities of his first term. Concurrently, Bush expressed his desire to enact environmental policies appropriately balancing environmental and economic interests. These actions were aimed at solidifying the President’s base and attracting undecided voters who considered the environment as just one of a large number of issues in determining vote choice.

On Earth Day 2004, the President announced a plan for America’s wetlands. Whereas previous presidents had promised a no net loss of wetlands policy, President Bush proposed protecting and adding over three million acres of wetlands. The plan called for restoring one million acres through grants and incentives, improving one million acres of existing wetlands through public-private partnerships, and protecting another one million acres of at risk wetlands (Bush, Apr. 22, 2004). The wetlands initiative was part of the larger cooperative conservation idea that Bush stressed the next day in Florida (Bush, Apr. 23, 2004). Continuing a major theme from the 2000 campaign and his first term, the President promoted environmental policies involving local and state governments as well as public and private entities. One collaborative effort
promised by George W. Bush was his Great Lakes Initiative. Like the Kerry-Edwards no toxics plan, this proposal sought to restore the Great Lakes by mitigating pollution and invasive species, using increased funding and a cooperative approach with less stringent mandates for industries than the Democrats’ plan (Barringer, 2004; Evans, 2004).

President Bush mentioned his Great Lakes Initiative in an extensive interview with *Field & Stream* in October 2004. Also, he outlined three key conservation goals for his second term. First was “full implementation” of his wetlands policy, which he stated again during the second presidential debate. Next, he cited the passage of his Clear Skies legislation by Congress. Finally, Bush discussed the continuation and expansion of brownfield restoration policies (Evans, 2004). These few, but well-developed, policies, along with the Great Lakes plan, comprised President Bush’s pledges for environmental policy, and all fell under the umbrella theme of cooperative conservation. The Republican Party advocated Mr. Bush’s inter-jurisdictional approach in its platform and supplemented his promises with several more proposals. As Republicans had done throughout the era of global environmental issues, the 2004 platform supported oil exploration in ANWR. Furthermore, the party promoted advancing the Nuclear Power 2010 initiative for the construction of new nuclear power plants, creating a national oceans policy, and modernizing the Endangered Species Act (Republican National Convention, 2004). President Bush aimed the environmental policy objectives for his second term at fostering the growth of his first term priorities rather than developing an abundance of new policies.

**PRESIDENT GEORGE W. BUSH’S SECOND TERM**

Fully analyzing the second-term performance of President Bush less than two years into the term is predictably problematic, but the early accomplishments and trends can be addressed. The President’s chief objective, protecting and restoring three million acres of wetlands, also has encountered the most criticism. In April 2006, the Council on Environmental Quality announced that Bush administration efforts helped “restore, create, protect, or improve 1,797,000 acres of wetlands.” But that impressive number included scores of golf course water hazards and human-made ponds with less than 20 acres of surface area. Also, CEQ estimates showed over 523,000 acres of lost swamp and
marshlands since 1998 (Barringer, 2006; Council on Environmental Quality, 2006). The artificial areas classified as wetlands lack the flood control and pollution filtering qualities of the lost swamps and marshes, and typically the natural areas serve as habitat for a wider variety of wildlife. Questions about wetland quality will accompany the administration’s efforts as President Bush’s second term concludes.

President Bush’s second priority, passing the Clear Skies Act through Congress, abruptly met the same fate as it had in the President’s first term. Early in 2005 the legislation encountered strong resistance in the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee, and after a 9-to-9 committee vote Clear Skies failed to reach the Senate floor (Janofsky, Mar. 10, 2005). The Bush administration quickly responded by issuing EPA rules with similar purposes. The Clean Air Interstate Rule (CAIR) covered sulfur dioxide and nitrogen oxide emissions for 28 states in the eastern U.S., and the Clean Air Mercury Rule (CAMR) set national guidelines for capping and reducing mercury emissions (Environmental Protection Agency, Mar. 10, 2005; Environmental Protection Agency, Mar. 15, 2005). Although not as comprehensive as the Clear Skies Act, and more susceptible to litigation, these administrative rules achieved some of the goals outlined by Mr. Bush in 2000. The third of President Bush’s primary objectives received less attention in 2005 and 2006. As anticipated, Congress extended the brownfields program, but the President’s budget proposals remained at $89 million (The White House, 2006). Even with administrative costs added the funding equals only slightly more than half of what the Small Business Liability and Brownfield Revitalization Act authorizes.

Fulfilling the conditions of Executive Order 13352, the Bush Administration convened the invitation-only White House Conference on Cooperative Conservation in August 2005. Federal agents, local and state officials, private citizens, and philanthropic organizations met in St. Louis to discuss collaborative, inter-jurisdictional environmental policies. The conference focused on successes in public-private partnerships, empowering individuals and groups who live and work near America’s wild places, and promoting a 4C philosophy of conservation through communication, consultation, and cooperation (Leiser, 2005; Moody, 2005). Despite limited media coverage and public awareness, the event was President Bush’s crowning achievement for cooperative
conservation, showcasing the progress made under his administration and developing new initiatives for the future.

The Arctic National Wildlife Refuge became a contentious issue in President Bush’s second term. Debate about the Alaska reserve’s future climaxed as Congress neared its 2005 Christmas recess. With the backing of Alaska Senator Ted Stevens, energy exploration in ANWR was included in a key defense appropriations package. After days of political wrangling, the Senate rejected the ANWR proposal, reaching an eleventh hour agreement on modified defense spending legislation (Hulse, 2005). However, the debate continued. ANWR drilling again received support from House members in May 2006, but as of July 2006 the measure had not won full congressional approval.

The President’s other campaign promises have produced less action over the past two years. Bush’s Executive Order 13340, issued in May 2004, created a Great Lakes Task Force, which reports to the President with proposals for cleanup and progress updates (Bush, May 18, 2004). In 2005, the task force published two comparable draft reports calling for $300 million annually in new federal spending and approximately $20 billion in total federal, state, local, and private funding over 15 years for full restoration (Barringer, 2005; Great Lakes Interagency Task Force, 2005). The second draft suggested the agencies made progress in coordinating their efforts, but no report has been released since and funding issues remain unresolved. Similarly, President Bush signed Executive Order 13366 on December 17, 2004, establishing a Committee on Ocean Policy. As he proclaimed a National Oceans Week in June 2006, the President commented that the committee had taken important initial steps toward a uniform ocean policy and both the committee and administration would work with Congress toward greater progress (Bush, 2006). Furthermore, during Bush’s first term, the administration limited the listing of species as endangered, proposed delisting species, sometimes without scientists’ support, and introduced a rule eliminating critical habitat designations, but the President’s second term has not yielded legislative reform for the Endangered Species Act (Lowry, 2006). And while several companies are working through siting processes, no new nuclear power plants have opened during the Bush presidency.
In the first two years of his second term, President Bush continued the performance trend of his first term. Bush selectively advanced several policies he promoted during the campaign, while generally focusing on other issues. As in his first term, President Bush more frequently used administrative action than legislation in fulfilling his promises. As table 7 shows, Bush’s only action completely fulfilling a campaign promise, the Conference on Cooperative Conservation, arose solely from within the administration.

Table 7. Analysis of President George W. Bush’s Second Term Performance on Key Environmental Policy Promises

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Promise</th>
<th>Performance</th>
<th>Assessment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Addition, protection, and restoration of 3 million acres of wetlands</td>
<td>Preserved nearly 2 million acres of wetlands over a two-year period. However, much of the land possessed marginal ecological value. Loss of key marsh and swamplands continued.</td>
<td>Mixed Action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Great Lakes pollution mitigation and habitat restoration projects</td>
<td>Task force issued two drafts for Great Lakes restoration without any further action.</td>
<td>Partially Comparable Action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passage of the Clear Skies legislation</td>
<td>Clear Skies Act stalled in the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee, and several of its provisions were implemented administratively through the Clean Air Interstate Rule and Clean Air Mercury Rule.</td>
<td>Mixed Action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promotion of cooperative conservation initiatives</td>
<td>Convened the White House Conference on Cooperative Conservation in August 2005, recognizing conservation accomplishments and perfecting future plans.</td>
<td>Comparable Action</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Opening of ANWR for energy development | Supported development legislation that failed after extensive Senate debate. | Partially Comparable Action

Expansion of domestic nuclear energy programs | Opened no new nuclear reactors. | No Action

Legislative modernization of the Endangered Species Act | Introduced no significant ESA reform legislation. | No Action

**Assessment of Performance on Major Domestic and Foreign Policy Promises**

President Bush reenergized a 2000 election issue in 2004, as he directed considerable attention to reforming Social Security. Bush endorsed personal savings accounts for younger taxpayers as a means for investing a portion of the money previously channeled into Social Security. As Jeffrey E. Cohen (2006) cites, the President almost immediately began an ambitious nationwide campaign championing Social Security reform following his reelection. Yet, the proposal met with significant opposition, and collapsed within months. Because Bush devoted such tremendous energy to reforming Social Security, despite the ultimate failure, his actions merit a classification as partially comparable with his promise.

One foreign policy commitment overshadowed all others made by President Bush in 2004. He declared that the United States would not leave Iraq before reaching a successful conclusion (Quirk and Matheson, 2004). Since the conflict still continues, with its resolution uncertain, Bush’s actions in comparison to his promise are, at this point, inconclusive and unsuitable for categorization.

**EMPTY PROMISES: THE ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY PROMISE-PERFORMANCE GAP**

As expected, Reagan, Bush (41), Clinton, and Bush (43) performed far better on key domestic and foreign policy promises than environmental policy promises, particularly global environmental policy promises. Tables 8, 9, and 10 display the presidents’ performances by promise type.
Table 8. Breakdown of Presidential Performance (1980-2006) on Environmental Policy Promises

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Comparable Action</th>
<th>Partially Comparable Action</th>
<th>No Action</th>
<th>Mixed Action</th>
<th>Contradictory Action</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>28.89% (13)</td>
<td>24.44% (11)</td>
<td>6.67% (3)</td>
<td>26.67% (12)</td>
<td>13.33% (6)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Comparable Action</th>
<th>Partially Comparable Action</th>
<th>No Action</th>
<th>Mixed Action</th>
<th>Contradictory Action</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>20% (2)</td>
<td>20% (2)</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
<td>30% (3)</td>
<td>30% (3)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 10. Breakdown of Presidential Performance (1980-2006) on Key Domestic and Foreign Policy Promises

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Comparable Action</th>
<th>Partially Comparable Action</th>
<th>No Action</th>
<th>Mixed Action</th>
<th>Contradictory Action</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>69.23% (9)</td>
<td>30.77% (4)</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Given the extraordinary energy candidates spend on developing and articulating their key policy proposals, the focus on fulfilling these promises, rather than environmental policy and other subordinate issues, is not especially surprising. However, the statistics for fulfilling environmental policy promises also show much less effective performances than on other promises when combining both primary and secondary campaign issues. In Jeff Fishel’s study of five presidencies, two-thirds of the campaign pledges yielded comparable or partially comparable action (1985: 38). Gerald M. Pomper finds an even higher fulfillment level of nearly seventy-five percent (1968: 185-187). Only approximately half of the environmental policy promises made by Ronald Reagan, George H.W. Bush, Bill Clinton, and George W. Bush similarly translated into comparable or partially comparable action. Although the sample size of global environmental promises makes inference more difficult, the figure drops to only 40 percent for global environmental policy performance. The limited number of global
environmental promises may also signal candidates’ awareness of the complexity of these policies. Moreover, Pomper asserts that politicians typically ignore only one in ten promises (1968: 187). The contradictory actions and inactions on environmental policy promises during the period studied here compose twenty percent of the promises—twice the number from Pomper’s research.

Additionally, the presidents of the global environmental era more frequently employed administrative actions than the earlier presidents studied by Fishel and Pomper. Considering the preponderance of executive actions since Reagan’s presidency, one may expect recent presidents to use administrative powers more often than previous presidents as a mechanism for fulfilling their promises. When examined in this light, the lower fulfillment rates for environmental policy promises are especially surprising.

Why are environmental policy promises fulfilled less often? Environmental issues usually lack salience in presidential elections, but Fishel and Pomper show that presidents carry out campaign promises on other issues lacking salience. The absence of immediacy in solving environmental problems offers a better explanation of the poorer performance in fulfilling environmental policy promises. Bill Clinton admitted as much during his 1992 campaign. Defending his poor environmental record as governor of Arkansas, Clinton remarked, “I faced the old short-term tradeoffs between jobs and the environment,” and he chose jobs (Ifill, 1992). Faced with pressing issues, presidents believe they can postpone activist environmental policy making because the potential harms of environmental problems are long-term concerns. This logic holds particularly true for global environmental issues, which are both intergenerational issues and collective issues among many governments. President George H.W. Bush’s policies for acid rain and ozone depletion, the only two actions completely fulfilling international environmental policy promises, arose, in part, from a protracted public outcry for action on problems with tangible and increasingly immediate consequences. The politics of global climate change over the past two decades suggest that meaningful political action may require such immediacy.

Presidential performance on environmental policy promises over the past quarter century falls well short of the performance record for other policies, and approaches a point of jeopardizing public trust in candidates’ ability to fulfill their environmental
pledges. Candidates may simply appease voters with their campaign rhetoric, knowing that fulfilling other promises more strongly influences a president’s approval rating and legacy. The consequences of broken environmental policy promises deserve further consideration in future research.

The present research illustrates the ineffectiveness of presidents in satisfying environmental policy pledges, especially pledges impacting the global environment—a finding with significance for environmental policy analysts and the voting public. Expectations about a president-elect’s environmental policies must be tempered by a sobering reality: in the global era of environmental problems, performance consistently results in unrealized promises.

REFERENCES


Clinton, Bill. Apr. 22, 1996. “Remarks by the President on Earth Day.” Great Falls, MD.

Clinton, Bill. Aug. 28, 1996. “Remarks by the President to the People of Kalamazoo.”


