The Obama Record on the Environment

President Obama began his term by appointing Lisa Jackson as Administrator of the EPA. As Administrator, Jackson has done a great job in spite of Congressional harassment and attacks.

Over the past three years, the Obama Administration has issued over a dozen key rules and regulations to address environmental problems that Congress can’t or won’t fix. Among those that have been the most important to Clean Water Action are:

- **Air pollution:** The EPA issued rules that will reduce mercury and other toxic emissions by coal fired power plants, cut toxic pollution from cement kilns, and cut air pollution from industrial boilers.
- **Water pollution:** The draft Waters of the US guidance that EPA issued would begin to provide greater protection under the Clean Water Act for small streams and wetlands.
- **Climate change:** The White House pressed for climate change legislation but was unable to secure passage by the Senate. Since then, the White House has negotiated two new rules to double fuel efficiency and reduce greenhouse gas emissions by automobiles and light trucks. The EPA also issued a draft rule that will limit greenhouse gas emissions from new power plants for the first time.
- **Fracking:** EPA issued new rules to reduce air emissions from oil and gas drilling, including fracking operations. The Bureau of Land Management has proposed rules to regulate fracking on public lands; they could be stronger, but are an important first step. EPA has also issued new guidance to restrict the use of diesel in fracking.

These are a few highlights of what the Obama Administration has done so far on Clean Water Action’s priority issues. Many more advances have been made dealing with other issues.

In addition, if he’s re-elected, there are a number of items on the President’s agenda for another four years:

- A rule to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from existing power plants.
- A Waters of the US rulemaking that would reverse the Bush Administration decision withdrawing protection from small streams and “isolated” wetlands.
- A new standard for ozone pollution.
- A final decision on the Keystone pipeline.

Finally, the White House has been a critical back-stop in preventing horrible bills from being enacted by Congress. The US House has voted 247 times in 2011 and 2012 to weaken environmental standards and protections under the Clean Air Act, Clean Water Act, Endangered Species Act and other environmental laws. (That’s almost one of every 5 votes taken in the House!) Most of these bills and riders died in the
Senate. But that might not have happened if the White House had not threatened to veto them.

**The bottom line:** President Obama has an excellent record on environmental issues. On the whole, the Obama Administration’s record is one of the strongest and most protective of the environment in recent memory.

---

### Romney’s Positions

Mr. Romney’s official website comments about the Obama record: “*In thrall to the environmentalist lobby and its dogmas, the President and the regulatory bodies under his control have taken measures to limit energy exploration and restrict development in ways that sap economic performance, curtail growth, and kill jobs.*”

If elected, Mr. Romney will attempt to weaken or repeal the rulemakings outlined above, make it more difficult to adopt new regulations to protect the environment and public health, and promote oil and gas drilling and coal mining in areas where they are currently not allowed. He will reduce spending for renewable energy and green jobs.

Like his colleagues, Mr. Romney opposes federal action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and fight climate change. In fact, he promises to amend the Clean Air Act to prevent any regulation of carbon dioxide, the greenhouse gas which is the chief cause of climate change.

Mr. Romney spent the primary season trying to out-do his Republican challengers in attacking water, air and health protections. He constantly refers to environmental laws as “job-killers.” He and his colleagues in the 2012 primaries have taken more extreme positions on the environment than any serious Republican contender for President in recent memory.

---

### The Political Context

It is entirely possible that control of the US Senate may shift to the Republican Party after the November election. The likely Majority Leader, Sen. Mitch McConnell, has a voting record that is significantly more hostile to environmental issues than Sen. Harry Reid, the current Majority Leader. It is entirely possible that more of the anti-environment bills and riders passed by the House could see Senate passage in 2013. That makes having a pro-environment President willing to veto such legislation absolutely critical.

---

**The difference between the two candidates on environmental issues is very stark this year. That’s why Clean Water Action has endorsed Barack Obama for re-election and urges all its members to vote for Barack Obama on November 6!**