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A Stronger Role for the United States President in Environmental Policy

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Introduction

“The golden era of environmental lawmaking, in which 22 major federal laws were passed between 1964 and 1980, has been followed by a long period of legislative gridlock, increased partisan contention over environmental policy, and growing frustration on the part of environmentalists.”¹ These golden-era laws do not significantly address many issues that are prevalent in today’s globalized environment, and federal statutes remain silent on the paramount issue of reducing greenhouse gas emissions. These issues did not fall within the ambit of the laws adopted in the 1960s and 1970s, and in the era of legislative gridlock, it has been difficult to fill these critical gaps in the green state.² Environmentalists today believe that despite significant public support and tremendous organizational effort, they are “fighting defensive battles and struggling at the margins of growing environmental problems”³. The public contends that environmental policy in the United States is characterized by the “resilience of the basic policy commitments of the golden era of environmentalism”⁴.

There is a palpable sense of failure on the part of the environmental community. Concerns about the capacity of United States institutions to address critical problems have surfaced, and environmentalists worry about “significant retrenchment in environmental policy commitments”⁵. Pressures have built for congressional action to address climate change; and within the federal government, pressures for change have grown on policymaking pathways carved out around the longstanding legislative deadlock. There is a demand for stronger action within the federal government in dealing with the increasingly substantial environmental issues that our nation faces. In the environmental history of the United States, the Executive President has played a significant role in the way in which environmental protection is implemented into the political, economic, and social sectors of the nation. Environmental causes have succeeded

within the federal government when the president chooses to make the issue a top priority on their legislative agenda, and utilize their presidential power and influence to enact policies that help further environment protection. This thesis argues for the stronger role of the American President in dealing with the globalized environmental challenges that threaten the economy, health, and safety of both the United States and the world's nations today.

Our skepticism about the "death of environmentalism" is rooted in a deeper story about environmental policy in the United States⁶. Environmental policymaking must account for the historical policies that are now embedded in our "nation's laws, the institutional structure and culture of implementing agencies, and public expectations that are aggressively articulated by interest groups and national political parties"⁷. The top layer of the nation's environmental state—"the policy regime created between 1964 and 1980 in a series of remarkable victories for the environmental movement"⁸—sets the basic landscape of modern environmental policymaking. This thesis will examine how the top layer of federal government impacted the development of the environment movement through a historical, political, and economic lenses, ultimately supporting the stronger role of the American President in environmental policy.

Branches of United States Government

The policy making process is often complex and can cause significant barriers in the President's attempt to establish their legislative agenda. In order to avoid centralized control in government, powers are allocated to the separate branches of legislative, judicial, and executive, creating a system of checks and balances that inhibits one branch being subjugated to another.⁹ This fragmentation government causes rational and comprehensive policy making to be very difficult. The president's control over the executive branch is limited, and their ability to

formulate, adopt, and implement their chief executive policies is further complicated by the vertical division of power among national, state, and local levels of government.¹⁰ The president can often be characterized by this limited scope of power and weak position from which they must influence environmental policy. They are just one of many actors seeking to utilize the resources available to them in order to shape policy proposals and influence implementation strategies dealing with environmental matters. Having to do this in a fragmented and adversarial policy making structure is a difficult challenge that faces each new administration.¹¹

Yet despite these challenges, as one of the three major pillars of the U.S. political system the American president is expected to fulfill public expectations in performing domestic and foreign policy making. The primary focus of each president tends to follow the same pattern of concerns, including the economy, employment, and foreign and national security. However certain issues, such as health care, education, civil rights, and most importantly environmental concerns receive different levels of consideration from each president.¹² The policy-making approach of each president differs depending on their unique leadership style. Eisenhower for example, presided over the federal government in the 1950's with a "hidden hand" approach, where he preferred to avoid public conflict and manage politics behind the scenes.¹³ When presidents are active policy makers and utilize the power resources of the executive office they can have a considerable impact on shaping policy, particularly when promoting either a pro-environment or anti-environmental agenda.¹⁴

The executive authority plays a major role in environmental agenda setting and policy making. They have the ability to enforce their administration's agenda, can take the lead in policy formulation and implementation, and can constantly assess and evaluate the public's policies.¹⁵ Presidents have multiple resources for setting their public agenda and policy making.

Through political communication, which involves remarks and formal speeches to the American public, the president's portrays their position on the environment and their stance as a party leader. Strong public outreach skills can help generate support for an administration's environmental goals. Legislative leadership is also one of the most important aspects of a presidency, since the president's overall accomplishments in office are determined by their relationship with congress and their ability to develop a successful legislative agenda. A president's policy preferences are indicated through the signing, vetoing, and promotion of certain legislation.¹⁶ The president also plays a significant part in environmental diplomacy, acting as the United State's spokesperson in the international arena of foreign affairs. They are expected to offer diplomatic leadership on issues that our important to the global community, from matters of war to, in the case of this analysis, the environment. The president represents America at both regional and international conferences and multilateral environmental agreements.¹⁷

While few presidents have been able to fully utilizing their administrative power, some have succeeded in shaping environment policy by establishing new offices, staffing, and appointments, as well as issuing executive orders and proclamations. As previously noted, it is difficult for the president to concentrate control over the executive branch because of the constitutional fragmentation of control over bureaucracy and the amount of agencies and individuals involved in the process.¹⁸ Normally, the president will present the issues that they believe to be a high priority to congress or the public. There is high competition for policy dominance in politics, with parties from congressional members, to cabinet staff persons, to advisors all attempting to gain support from different groups and departments.¹⁹

Despite the president's influential ability, they do not act in isolation from the political environment. Each president has key individuals who play important roles in the influence of the president's actions in environmental policy making.²⁰ Through making key appointments to different agencies, the president has the ability to shape the way a policy is implemented within the government and society.²¹ The Secretary of the Interior for example, plays a large role in the formation of the president's environmental policy agenda. The need to manage newly discovered public resource, particularly in regards to land and mineral rights, led to the development of several agencies that came to fall under the Department of the Interior's jurisdiction. This shift caused the department to gain a significant influence over the development of policy, and allow the Secretary of the Interior to contribute majorly to defining the parameters of environmental policy.²² Another influential body in the president's circle is the Council of Economic Advisors (CEA, which analyzes the macro-economic state of the U.S. The staff is orientated towards specialized issues in the economy, such as labor, health care, agriculture, energy, and regulation, causing the use of natural resources to be a recurrent issue within the CEA. Disagreements on the subject are characterized by a broad variety of approaches to environmental policy. In order to guide the president in his decision making process, assessment of these issues demands timely policy analysis that is authoritative, technically reliable, and free from bias.²³

While the CEA often comes under fire from environmental groups for being anti-environment, they can be seen instead as holding a neo-classical economic position of being pro-efficiency. While they support a more economic analysis of policy alternatives and often give a greater consideration of tradeoffs in environmental policy debates, they continue to operate with the overarching policy goal of providing more environmental protection at a lower cost. They seek to establish policy that maximizes the broad notion of "net benefits" to a society. However,

the fact that environmental policy debates are often polarized can make this goal very difficult for policy makers to achieve. There is often little constituency for cost-effective environmental protection and rather a great demand for symbolic victories in policy making.

These fundamental differences in the measuring of environmental threats and progress makes it increasingly difficult for the government – particularly the president - to build a consensus for what is considered reasonable and practical environmental policy²⁴. The president deals with environmental policy in a highly intense atmosphere, where conflicts are constantly present and the evidence of political and social consequences is clear. In the last several years in presidential politics, social issues – especially the environment – have become equally if not more important than economic issues. This results in consequences and challenges that are posed to the president and groups like the CEA in attempting to conduct environmental policy.²⁵

Falling under the jurisdiction of the executive branch is the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). After years of study and staff negotiations, President Nixon agreed to a federal reorganization plan that called for an independent control agency, or the EPA. The EPA, opened under William Ruckelshaus, is an independent agency in the executive branch that maintains the responsibility for administering a broad spectrum of environmental laws and regulation. By dividing the country into 10 geographic regions, each of which is responsible for monitoring and supporting the environmental policies in the area, the EPA is able to make decisions, move programs ahead, and motivate people to produce high volumes of work.²⁶

The judicial branch plays a major role in environmental policy making through the use of the Judicial Courts and their involvement with certain laws. There are two types of laws within the structure of the U.S. legal system that are important in the president's management of environmental policy. The first, constitutional law, enumerates the separation of powers among

the executive, legislative, and judicial branches of government, and specifies where these powers are dispersed between the national government and states. This law defines the relations between and among government agents and citizens.²⁷ In comparison, administrative law provides the ground rules that govern the actions of the government agencies and structures the enforcement of regulatory legislation. This involves specifying limits that are placed on the government's discretion in environmental policy making.²⁸ These procedural and substantive components of environmental law explain what is permitted and what is prohibited, a process that the government follows in the administration and enforcing of laws and citizen rights.

The U.S. Courts oversee how these laws are used within the development of environmental policy making. They have two primary functions, the first of which is to exercise their authority for judicial review, and the second being the interpretation of statutes through the cases that are brought to them.²⁹ The courts use the constitution to determine the legality of the actions of both the executive and legislative branches, and define the meanings of the laws that are often open to different interpretations. They maintain the authority to determine who has access to the judicial process and who can play an activist role in policy.³⁰ In hearing different cases, the U.S. Courts determine whether there are concrete issues to be resolved and what the appropriate remedy is, whether it be forcing statutory compliance or ordering payments in order to deter future violations.³¹

However before the passage of major environmental laws in the 1970's, most courts involvement with environmental issues was limited to resolving disputes between polluting industries and the citizens affected. These cases were usually filed under the Common Law of Nuisance, and typically resulted in cease-and-desist orders or fines³². However, this new generation of environmental laws opened up opportunities for private parties, mostly

environmental groups, to use the U.S. Courts to compel agencies to follow the mandated regulations of statutes or sue polluters when government officials fail to enforce laws. The willingness of the courts in the early 1970's to review agency decisions resulted from several factors, including public support for the environment, a tendency to lean toward stricter enforcement of statutory procedural requirements, and the recent tightening up of the review of agency decisions and actions by the courts.³³ This period of judicial activism paved the way for several important environmental decisions.

The Legislative branch, particularly with the involvement of the United State's Congress, is another relationship that is significant in the president's ability to create and implement environmental policy. Partisan control of one or both of the congressional chambers can make a substantial difference in whether or not the president's initiatives and legislation are passed. When congress passes a statue, it reflects the outcome of an agenda setting process that typically includes many months, if not years, of discussion about the issue.³⁴ The way in which a legislator characterizes a problem, meaning how they identify the cause and potential solutions, determines which institutional structures will address the issue. Unless a person or institution with the authority to take action identifies a problem, the issue may never reach the policy agenda. Further complicating environmental policy making is the fragmentation that exists within congress, where different responsibilities, all of which pertain to the environment, are delegated to a series of commitments within congress.³⁵

The primary role of congress is policy formation and adoption, however the nature of the institution hampers their capacity to fulfill this role. Congress's inability to develop over-arching national environmental policies is referred to as "environmental gridlock"³⁶. Today's lack of active policy making sharply contrasting congress's rapid pace of legislative action during the

60's and 70's. The decentralization of power and the decision making process in the current system causes environmental issues to not "belong" to any one committee in congress. Today 11 Senate's and 14 House committees claim environmental jurisdiction in some form or another.³⁷ For example, a bill dealing with the issue of global warming could be heard by the Senate's Agriculture, Commerce, and Natural Resource committees as well as the Foreign Affairs, Appropriations, and Technology committee of the House. Environmental issues are viewed as "hot topics", and certain rivalries arise that cause competition among the committees.³⁸

Members of congress also lack the time and expertise that is required to produced sophisticated legislation. They can be characterized as scientific amateurs enacting programs of great technical complexity in order to amend scientifically complicated environmental problems, while having only a dim understanding of the intricacy behind the legislation³⁹ Congress's incapacitation was clearly evident in the congressional hearing of the 1990 Clean Air Act Amendments. The more technical aspects of the legislation were so obtuse that several members left their decision-making up to their staff, who in turn argued with industry lobbyists over the feasibility of the proposed controls. The result of this lack of understanding on the part of congress was legislation that was watered down and made intentionally vague⁴⁰.

The last barrier that congress faces is the fact that localized re-election concerns often override the "national" view of environmental policy making. It can be difficult for congressional members from northern California to convince urban district members from New York on the relative important of a bill barring timber exports to Japan.⁴¹ With congress reelection pressure surfacing every two years, bargaining becomes an essential style of policy making. Little thought is given to the regional impact of a decision; local concerns determine which legislation will get passed and which will not⁴².

All of these barriers come into play with congress's relationship with the president. Within the environmental policy arena, the president-congress relationship is divided. If a consensus about environmental problems and strategies is established, then bipartisan resolutions will often be the result. Yet if the opposite exists, disagreements can occur over the nature, scope, and existence of environmental problems and the strategies employed to control them.⁴³ The president will propose legislation that reflects either their own personal environmental priorities or the priorities of the political actors who influence the president's pursuit of specific environmental concerns. Congress however can overshadow the president in environmental initiatives and seek to influence environmental policy via their control over the legislative process and their oversight functionality, particularly through the authority that exists within the committee system.⁴⁴ Due to this imbalance of authority, it is impossible to be a successful environmental president without the support of congress.

The History of United States Environmentalism

In order to gain a further understanding of the development of environmental policy and the role that the president plays, it is important to understand the foundation of the movement within the United States. A review of American history shows that concern about the environment dates back to the nation's infancy, and that it has been a recurrent theme throughout its development. However other issues, such as the economy, national security, and the energy crisis have at times pushed environmental problems down on the public policy agenda. Overall, the development of the environmental policy agenda can be viewed in two ways. The first is as a "history of ideas and a philosophical framework about our relationship to nature and to the world"⁴⁵. This approach takes into the account of several key historical figures, such as Thomas Malthus, Charles Darwin, and Paul Ehrlich. The second approach however, is through examining

the “factual history of environmental policy, and the events, individuals, and conditions that contributed to its development”.⁴⁶ This second approach is the primary method that will be utilized.

American is geographically located in an area where there are an abundance of renewable and nonrenewable resources, that even the technologies of two or three hundred years ago were able to exploit. American’s earliest interest in the land was focused on the “amount and speed of which it could be harvested”⁴⁷. In the 1770’s, the original coastal colonies harvested agricultural produce, tobacco, fur, fish, timber, and iron. The nation’s westward expansion illustrated the vastness of America’s landmass and its climatic and geographical diversity. A belief in the inexhaustibility of resources emerged and took root in the superabundance that pioneers, homesteaders, and industrialist encountered everywhere. The relentless exploitation of these resources appeared to be reasonable. The first Americans that took concern with the environment around them were the Native Americans. This group, who lacked any profit motive for resource exploitation, viewed their existence from the perspective of an integrated harmony, where “goodness and God exists within natural cycles”.⁴⁸

Throughout the 17th, 18th, and 19th century, American environmental policy developed under the influence of several key leaders and events. Even before American states were united, there was an awareness of a need to limit the use of new land’s natural resources. As early as 1626, members of Plymouth County passed ordinances that “regulated the cutting and sale of timber on colony lands, prohibited the setting of forest fires, and limited the hunting of deer”⁴⁹. Despite the fact that upon entering the 18th century the nation was consumed with the building of a new government, states continued to make efforts to preserve resources within their boundaries. By mid-century, public interest in preserving natural resources had begun to bloom,

and 19th century brought with it new adventures and explorations, such as Lewis and Clark's transcontinental explorations and John Wesley Powell's journey down the Colorado River in 1869.⁵⁰

Gradually a more deliberate and academic attempt to "identify, quantify, and interpret" the American environmental condition emerged. This, on top of an increase in pollution problems, enhanced the public's interest in the environment. The turn of the century led to the exponential growth of urban populations and an increase in new environmental problems, such as the contamination of drinking water sources and the dumping of garbage and sewage. These pollution problems called for serious reform, and reactions from different individuals and organizations began to appear. In 1884 the Ladies Health Protective Association, fueled by the city's upper-middle class housewives, implemented a movement to keep New York City's streets free of garbage.⁵¹ State and legislative successes began to surface as well. In 1832 George Catlin submitted a proposal for the first national park. In 1876 George E. Waring, a pioneer in sanitation engineering, built the first sewer system in Lenox, MA, and in 1891 U.S. Congress passed the Forest Reserve Act which set aside forest lands to preserve.⁵² The concept of preserving land and natural resources began to germinate in society.

While events and individuals like these laid the groundwork for a more organized effort, most environmental historians place the beginning of an actual environmental "movement" at the turn of the 20th century.⁵³ The opening decades of the 20th century are where modern day attitudes and policies towards wilderness preservation and sustainable natural resource use began to come into focus. The pillars of the nation's current national parks, forests, and wildlife refuges were erected by the icons of environmental leadership of this time.⁵⁴ It is during this era where the actions, decisions, and policies of the nation's Presidents began to shape the formation of the

environmental movement in the United States. Certain presidents, namely Theodore Roosevelt, William Howard Taft, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, John F. Kennedy, and Lyndon Johnson, created the foundation of the development of environmental policy. By examining historical role of these presidents, one can gather a stronger understanding of the role that the federal government played in the environmental movement.

The U.S. entered the 20th century in a state of exponential economic growth, industrial ingenuity, and expanding science knowledge.⁵⁵ This development, in combination with the U.S. industrial revolution, led to countless social and political issues such as low labor wages and poor conditions, overcrowding and impoverishment in cities, and the overconsumption of natural resources.⁵⁶ As the nation struggled to combat these rising social and environmental issues in the early 1900's, a strong political leader stepped forward. Theodore Roosevelt is commonly referred to as the nation's original environmental president, having set the tone for other presidents who followed.⁵⁷ Being a lifelong hunter and outdoorsman, Roosevelt saw firsthand the damage that unchecked resources consumption does to natural wilderness. He was able to easily relate the conservation of natural resources to issues of national welfare and efficiency: a connection that had not yet dawned on the public mind.⁵⁸ From stepping up into the presidential spot in 1901 to the seven and a half years that Roosevelt remained in office, he remained committed to the issue of conservation.⁵⁹

Roosevelt's years in office made it clear that it was crucial for America to preserve their natural resources for the generations to follow. He stated, "If there is any one duty which more than another we owe it to our children and our children's children to perform at once, it is to save the forests of this country, for they constitute the first and most important element in the conservation of the natural resources of the this country"⁶⁰. Roosevelt believed that the

conservation of natural resources and their proper use constituted the fundamental problem that underlies almost every other issue within the nation. His administration held the conviction that government had a role to play in protecting public interest from excessive corporate powers or the collateral damage wrecked by industry⁶¹. Roosevelt, believing that the president had the right and duty to do anything that the needs of the nation demand, greatly broadened the use of his executive power and in turn was able to strengthen the conservation movement.⁶²

However Roosevelt's proactive legislative action became a source of conflict between the executive branch and congress, which began to opposition the frequency of which he vetoed legislation that undercut environmental concerns.⁶³ He also faced antagonism from western states that were upset that through the extension of Roosevelt's executive power, the meaning of conservation was broadened to include coal, gas, oil, timber, iron, water, and grazing lands.⁶⁴

Yet Roosevelt's boldest use of executive power came from his use of the 1906 Antiquities Act, which gave the president the sole discretion to proclaim "historic landmarks, historic and prehistoric structures, and other objects of historic or scientific interest that are situated upon the lands owned or controlled by the Government of the United States to be National Monuments".⁶⁵ Roosevelt left an unmatched legacy after setting aside 230 million acres, including 150 national forests, 4 national game preserve, 51 federal bird reservations, 5 national parks, 18 national monuments, 24 reclamation projects, on top off the convention of 7 conservation conferences.⁶⁶ Roosevelt considers his conservation efforts to be the landmark of his presidency. His legacy, both tangible and intangible, forever changed the way people think about conservation.

Having followed Roosevelt, more was expected of William Howard Taft in terms of conservation action. Taft had a different philosophy of governance, as well as a narrow and

limited conception of presidential power based on a strict interpretation of legal statute.⁶⁷ Feeling that Roosevelt's methods of achieving success were not fully legitimate, Taft made the focus of his years in office to validate the programs that he considered to have a more legalistic approach. Taft shifted the implementation of conservation policies out of the executive office to congress and statehouses, and tried to roll back Roosevelt's expansion of federal authority over natural resources⁶⁸. At the Public Lands Convention in 1911, he urged that the nation must settle down and while considering the mistakes of the past, calmly deliberate on what ought to be done in the preservation of natural resources. Yet Taft remained unclear on what he meant by wise reforms, and made few advances beyond refashioning Roosevelt's programs by basing them on firmer legal ground.⁶⁹ Overall, he failed to make a lasting imprint on the conservation movement.

Unlike Roosevelt who willingly used his political authority and enterprise to advance the conservation movement, elected presidents who served from 1909-1932 lacked the initiatives needed to become effective environmental presidents. Environmental policy in the 1920's was stagnant, as conservative politicians and judges rolled back already limited regulatory processes in industrial and economic activities.⁷⁰ Governmental activism and civic reform were not the top priorities of the public, who were focusing on goals of economic prosperity and material comfort. During World War I, the nation's resources were funneled towards military victories. The funds and staffs for progressive environmental programs were reduced, extinguished, or devoted to wartime efforts. Many national parks were converted into military grounds, and mining on public lands was increased in order to meet the war demands of raw materials⁷¹.

Yet with the onset of the great depression, activist government swung back into action with the election of Franklin Delano Roosevelt (FDR). Known as the first modern environmental president, FDR brought issues of the environment and conservation back into the primary focus

of the White House's attention with the introduction of the "Golden Age of Conservation."⁷² FDR saw himself as a conservationist wanting to educate others, urging congress in 1935 to "start to shape our lives in a more harmonious relationship with nature", and cautioning that the "future of every American family everywhere will be affected by the action we take"⁷³. FDR expressed the critical need for conservation and why federal regulations were necessary to establish conservation as a working concept in the minds of Americans. By exposing private citizens to the overall responsibilities of preserving land and resources, FDR hoped to connect conservation with every aspect of American life⁷⁴. Natural resources were used not as a thing apart, but as something interwoven with industry, labor, agriculture, recreation, and good citizenship.

In facing the overwhelming national issues of the great depression, FDR looked for ways that environmental policy could be implemented to help revitalize and stabilize the economy while reversing the loss of confidence felt in the nation's future. In 1933, FDR had the advantage of reorganizing the government for two years without congressional oversight. He worked with a democratic-control congress that was in full support of his legislative objectives, allowing him a "free hand" in establishing governmental structures that would help to facilitate environmental objective. This resulted in his first 100 days in office experiencing a period of productivity that has not replicated by any other president in U.S. history. He utilized an "all hands on deck" approach, enacting resource policy initiatives to create jobs, stimulate economic activity, and improve natural resources. These "New Deal" policies and programs had a significant impact on natural resources, and reflected FDR's heartfelt belief that environmental policies were an integral part of a lasting sustainable economic recovery.⁷⁵

Because of the limited number of conservation issues that were prevalent at the time, FDR and his administration were able to be selective in which environmental problems they

focused on. Throughout his term he focused on six primary areas related to the environment; forests, minerals, water, soil, wildlife, and recreational resources. Of the 14 major legislative pieces that were passed through, the two that dealt with environmental issues were the Tennessee Valley Authority and the Civilian Conservation Corps. While the Tennessee Valley Authority was an important energy production project, the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) was considered to have had the most wide-reaching and enduring impact of all the New Deal initiatives. The program fulfilled both economic and environmental needs by putting unemployed men to work preserving and restoring the nation's natural resources. Throughout the program's life, over two billion trees were planted on public and private lands, anti-erosion measures were executed on 40 million acres of rangelands and fields, 800 new state parks were created, as well as 10,000 reservoirs and three thousand beaches. These efforts spanned over every state and territory.⁷⁶

FDR's "Golden Age of Conservation" enhanced the conservation of resources despite the financial demands of the great depression and World War II.⁷⁷ He was able to develop a connection between maintaining strong environmental programs and policies while strengthening the nation⁷⁸. The effectiveness of Franklin Delano Roosevelt's presidential conservation efforts has been universally recognized since his death in April of 1945. In a 1962 speech, John F. Kennedy stated "What this country needs is a broad new conservation effort worthy of the two Roosevelts, Theodore and Franklin, who lived in New York and who helped build the West: an effort to build up our resource heritage so that it will be available to those who come after us"⁷⁹.

During WWII and the decade of economic expansion that followed, Americans became more concerned with improving their standard of living than the environmental consequences of

their actions. Manufactures and providers of raw materials expanded their operations, and the impact on the economy was substantial. The post-war affluence that caused the public to abandon their depression-era financial caution, and led to the rise of the middle class suburban settlement. The massive population shift to the suburbs changed the way natural resources and lands were used.⁸⁰ State legislators and congress responded to the public pressure of suburbanization through the allocation of federal funds to build new roads, sewers, bridges, and infrastructure that would support this new population. The new value system of that nation's people reflected an orientation that favored development over preservation, and consumption over conservation.⁸¹

While the economic issues faded, the environmental sector of the nation began to suffer. War mobilization resulted in the reduction of many environmental agencies, with the budget and staff of many state and federal conservation and natural resource management agencies being cut back. The Civilian Conservation Corps was disbanded and replaced by a military draft, mining and logging on public lands increased, and national forests and park programs were suspended in order to use their agencies and lands in the war efforts.⁸² Lawmakers, government officials, and the public were slow to understand the pressure that the new economic expansion had on the environment. Issues of environmental protection or wilderness conservation were not priorities of the government or the public, who instead focused on industry and economic prosperity, putting new pressures on the nation's resources. Few efforts were made to account for the consumption, and the issue failed to enter the bloodstream of the national policy making body.⁸³

The most profound change in the environmental movement is the transformation of societal attitudes regarding pollution and environmental preservation in the 1960's.⁸⁴ The 1960's quickly developed into a battle between those who supported industrial growth, and those who

were concerned about the effects of the pollution caused by economic growth. This disparity marked the beginning of tremendous growth in environmental organizations, as well as legislative initiatives that would be fine-tuned over the following 30 years.⁸⁵ The catalyst to this transformation was the publication of Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* in 1962. The book, which argued that uncontrolled and unexamined pesticide use was harming and killing both animals and humans alike, shepherded the public to a more sophisticated understanding of the potential ecological perils of runaway technology. The controversy of *Silent Springs* triggered a new public awareness of environmental issues, and put pressure on the government to take action.⁸⁶ The 60's quickly became a period of intense legislative activity and an unprecedented time of environmental policy making.

Leading the government in their response to the environmental issues of the 60's was John F. Kennedy. Influenced by Carson's *Silent Springs*, Kennedy looked at a broader range of environmental protection. He became convinced of the distinct role that the 60's could play in the plight of environmental causes, with citizens having the obligations to keep the movement alive and strong⁸⁷. With the excessive demands that the citizen population was putting on natural resources, they had an obligation to do more than conserve. Kennedy developed his understanding of the environment to the point where he believed the nation could enjoy the use of the environment without defacing it, use its resources without detracting from its value, and maintain the living balance between a man's actions and nature's reaction. He felt that natural resources were the preservation of America's strength in the world, and the foundation upon which the defense of freedom rests.⁸⁸

Kennedy entered the White House when the U.S. was in a critical period that called for decisions to be made in order to prevent environmental conditions from further deteriorating.

Kennedy stated, “We live in a land of vanishing beauty, of increasing ugliness, of shrinking open space, and of an overall environment that is diminished daily by pollution and noise and blight”.⁸⁹ With the support of a democratic congress, Kennedy was able to devise new programs of land stewardship that enabled further environmental preservation.⁹⁰ He appointed key leaders to his administration, such as Stewart L. Udall, who as the Secretary of Interior was essential to the administration’s positive environmental record. From 1961-1963 alone, Kennedy issued 19 executive orders protecting the environment, as well as several proclamations that created or expanded national monuments. The Youth Conservation Corps, patterned after Franklin Roosevelt’s Civilian Conservation Corps, was established in 1960 to put 1,000’s of young men to work while simultaneously benefitting public lands, water, forest, and recreational areas.⁹¹

Kennedy’s role as a conservationist was primarily as a “man of words”, believing that the 60’s contributions to the conservation efforts would require concerted action, and be purposefully directed with vision and ingenuity. He understood the demands that the environmental movement would face in moving ahead. While Kennedy was a reflective president who viewed the conservation movement as a whole, the unlimited energies of Johnson, Kennedy’s successor, gained him the reputation of a “man of action”.⁹² Johnsons worked with congress for and in behalf of conservation, gaining him many more legislative victories. Coming into the White House with previous congressional experience as one of the most accomplished senate majority leaders the Democratic Party ever produce, Johnson had mastered how to accomplish his initiatives. His uncanny ability to “work the system” allowed him to get congress to back environmental legislation to advance the conservation efforts of the 1960’s.⁹³ Johnson was able to follow up on Kennedy’s environmental proposals and launch several of his own.

Johnson's approach to the environmental was one that he referred to as "new conservation", meaning an enlightened and progressive conservation that focused on the government's efforts to bring the conservation of public land closer to the people.⁹⁴ With this approach in mind, Johnson limited his efforts to a workable number of issues, such as air and water pollution, the preservation of national parks, and beautifying American. This last issues specifically remained a strong focus throughout Johnson's time in office. He stated, "the task of creating a more beautiful America, of making it a more pleasant place in which to live, is not and cannot be the job of the federal government alone. We must have the enthusiasm, the concern, the cooperation of every level of government – states, counties, cities, and precincts." Johnson received support for this initiative from his wife, Lady Bird Johnson, who spearheaded the drive to improve the nation's roadways through the congressional passing of the 1965 Highway Beautification Act.⁹⁵

Johnson comfortably advocated for environmental legislation because of the bipartisan support for environment concerns that existed within both the public and within congress. In 1965 the nation's pervasive societal issues of increasing population, urbanization, industrialization, and pollution were increasing so rapidly that present efforts to manage them were not sufficient.⁹⁶ Johnson gave these problems a high priority, communicating America's need to focus on these issues through his congressional environmental agenda. Through several significant acts, such as the Water Quality Act 1965, the Clean Air Act 1965, and the Solid Waste Disposal Act 1965, Johnson was able to educate the public and policy makers on the pressing environmental issues of the time. Many of the organization and agencies established during Johnson's time in office became the foundation for the future development of the Environmental Protection Agency.⁹⁷ While the environmental decade of the 1960's profited from

the “vision” of Kennedy, the policy accomplishments of Johnson gave vigor to the environment movement.

As the environmental movement developed within the nation, it quickly became apparent that environmental needs were not being fulfilled by a single-focus approach to conservation. The narrow methods that characterized earlier efforts were no longer appropriate, and a more comprehensive environmental approach was needed. This change marked the turn from conservationism to environmentalism in the United States, and began to truly take hold with the election of Richard Nixon.⁹⁸ This modern environmental movement differs from the previous conservation and preservation era in two respects. First, the conservation era emphasized the protection and efficient management of the natural environment, whereas the primary policy of the modern environmental movement is based on the cleaning and control of pollution. Secondly, the modern movement displays “social roots”, meaning numerous citizen groups or organizations that are decidedly absent from the first era. This change parallels the infusion and widespread expression of particular social values into the public environmental arena.⁹⁹ These changes led to an explosion of issues and an expansion of what issues the president must take into consideration in their approach to the environmental movement.¹⁰⁰

The Changing Scale of Environmental Problems

Throughout the environmental movement, environmental issues went from being addressed at a local scale, to a national scale, and eventually to a global scale, as is seen in today’s society. This development was caused by the changing manner in which the President chose to approach the environment, and the role that the federal government would play in the management of its many issues. The first president to take an active stance on federal

involvement was Eisenhower, who preferred a limited federal role in environmental policy, with conservation efforts being addressed at the state and local levels of government. The environmental policy arena involved a partnership between the federal and state governments and private interests, such as in the case of the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA). Established under FDR in the 1930's, the TVA was a major economic development and environmental project that served the dual purpose of providing important sources of low-cost energy for citizens during an economically distressed period while creating employment opportunities to help improve the Tennessee Valley region. Eisenhower viewed this project with disdain, believing that the federal project should have been constructed and managed at the state level.¹⁰¹

The next president to make the federal-state relationship an important aspect of their presidency was Nixon, who sought to develop a relationship between the state and federal government that would become known as “new federalism”. Though environmental problems appear at the local level, Nixon recognized that they effected many other states and localities as well, and were essentially national in their scope. While he encouraged the federal government and states to work together to solve pollution problems, if states became unwilling to implement environmental programs, the federal government would enforce compliance without state input, sometimes causing tension between different levels of government.¹⁰²

Both Reagan and Bush Senior adopted the attitude of “new federalism” in their approach to the relationship between the federal government, states, and the environment. They both increased the power given to state and local authorities and reduced the overhead regulation of the federal government in subnational affairs, yet gave few resources and funding to help the states carry out the mandates. Continual decentralization and defunding within the environmental policy domain left states programs, such as air and water pollution control, hazardous waste

management, and safe drinking water, subject to substantial budgetary cuts. States had difficulty meeting the federal obligations and many began to question whether additional funds would have to be taken from the states own revenue; something that many states were unwilling to do. While this accountability at the state level led to some new innovations and accomplishment, many environmentalists who demanded a stronger activist federal role in the environmental domain were discouraged by additional suggestions of increased state power. George W. Bush preferred the environmental decision making process to be handled at the state and local levels, with his 2000 campaign supporting an increase in state authority over environmental problems. However, the events of September 11th may have altered Bush's plans regarding environmental federalism, since his attention shifted to the role of federal agencies in the new ear of war on terrorism.¹⁰³

A significant moment in the federal-state environmental relationship was the 2000 Montana Supreme Court ruling that guaranteed state citizens a "fundamental right" to a clean and healthful environment, which stands today as a landmark environmental decision. The impact of the ruling was substantial, stating that no state law can legally survive if it threatens citizen's environmental rights. The decision stemmed from a lawsuit that challenged amendments made to Montana's state water quality laws, exempting a gold mine's discharge of arsenic laden groundwater from state water quality standards.¹⁰⁴ These amendments received sharp backlash by citizens, and states were criticized for taking a less passive role in environmental protection. In the previous 30 years, the federal government had been given low marks for their efforts to deal with serious environmental problems, and it was only after the public displayed concerns for public health and air pollution that they began to contribute to the effort.¹⁰⁵ Federal mandates began to proliferate throughout the 60's and 70's, forcing states to

create environmental agencies on a single-media basis, such as State Air Quality Boards or Water Commissions¹⁰⁶. However while the federal government provided the funds necessary for the planning, monitoring, and management of the different focuses, the states were expected to implement the agencies and make them effective.

Gradually, distinct patterns of state initiatives emerged throughout the nation, with agencies focusing on administration efficiency and pollution control. Yet as the technical competence of state governments grew, so did the environmental presence within the government's actions. Business and industry interests found this new development unacceptable, and turned to the federal government for regulatory relief and federal preemption of state authority. The reduction in the scope of federal activity, privatization and devolution of policy and fiscal responsibility to states – an issue that will be examined further in the analysis of Reagan's presidential terms – resulted in the EPA becoming unwilling to serve as a policy initiator or congressional advocate¹⁰⁷. In order to fill this void, state officials banded together to lobby collectively for important issues. For example, when the EPA no longer would act as a congressional policy advocate for air quality, eight states formed the Northeast States for Coordinated Air Use Management and lobbied for the reauthorization of the 1987 Clean Air Act.¹⁰⁸ The state created a complete role reversal, serving as policy indicators through the preparation of legislative proposals, technical support, and documentation for their positions.

In the 1980's, states that experienced concentrated population growth and urbanization, and therefore the most severe pollution problems, took an active role in dealing with them. The environmental movements were strong, and local officials were pressured to enact environmental regulations that were more stringent than those of the federal or other state governments, particularly western states.¹⁰⁹ However, several other states were characterized by passiveness in

their environmental leadership, showing low levels of compliance with the laws, or ignorance of the requirements of the statutes. Many states argued that the severity of the regulations were unachievable, particularly due to funding. A direct relationship was seen between the amount of state resources available and the commitment to environmental protection. States with a budget surplus and other resources had the ability to use funds directly for environmental mandates, while for states that experienced financial limitations, environmental problems were in competition with other issues like education, crime control, and health care for funding.¹¹⁰ Similarly, democratic states were more likely to lean towards environmental protection legislations than republican controlled states.¹¹¹

Regardless of whether environmental issues were being managed at a local state level, or at a national federal level, the national environmental performance of the United States began to have international impacts. With the world being so interconnected, environmental harms, such as greenhouse gas emissions, that are left unattended at the local and national level may result in global scale problems. Failure to address the spillover of harm creates a risk for the international economic system to become weighed down by market failures. This trans-boundary pollution spillover, which results in many externalities, is especially difficult to manage. They demand a need to bring multiple countries together in a common response to these issues, which are more difficult to address than national scale environmental issues.¹¹² Because the costs of these issues are borne locally and the effects spread globally, there is no single jurisdiction that has the incentive to regulate such harms. In the case of regular externalities, where environmental harms occur within one nation, there are reasons why that nation's government may not optimally regulate their emissions or harmful practices. However, they at least have the incentive to do so in the face of the welfare loss of their own citizens. Yet when harms span multiple jurisdictions

and become global, there is an increasing likelihood that governments whose facilities are causing the negative impact will choose not to act because their own cost-benefit calculus does not justify an intervention.¹¹³

National scale regulatory policies often differ widely among countries that are closely integrated economically. Deeper economic integration causes countries to become more sensitive to regulatory choices and the social policies of trade partners. In the 1970's for example, China's trade within the United States totaled less than US\$1 billion a year, giving U.S. citizens little reason to care about China's labor or environmental policies. Today however, China has emerged as a major trade partner and competitor, and trade within the U.S. has increased 100-fold to almost US\$92 billion in 2002, making China's policies subject to greater American interest and concern. A key focus of trade policymaking thus centers on non-tariff barriers to trade and a need for a level playing field in the global marketplace.¹¹⁴

Taking environmental issues to a global scale, one must consider that there exist a series of environmental challenges that span multiple countries across the globe. These realities, such as polluted waters, invasive species, and the threat of climate change, are exacerbated by globalization. Globalization is a mixed blessing; it creates economic opportunities but also causes new problems and tensions. Globalization increases the volume and decreases the cost of information, expands access to knowledge, and offers new mechanisms for participation in the policy making process. Most importantly, it has a profound effect on the environment, which in turn impacts many sectors of the U.S. society, the first of which is the economy.¹¹⁵

The environmental impact of expanded economic growth and trade is understood in terms of four effects; scale, income, technique, and composition. Scale effects refer to increased pollution and natural resource depletion because of an increase in economic activity and

consumption. Income and wealth effects appear when an increase in financial capacity causes a greater investment in environmental protection and new demands for attention to environmental quality. Higher income causes two related phenomenon, meaning technique effects and composition effects. Technique effects are a rise in tendencies toward cleaner production processes as wealth increases, and better access to new technology and environmental processes as trade intensifies. Composition effects take place as economic bases evolve towards less pollution-intensive high-tech and services-based set of activities. The overall impact of economic growth depends on the net impact of these four effects. If the income, technology, and composition effects overwhelm the negative scale effects of expanded economic activity, then the impact of growth will ultimately be positive.¹¹⁶

Economic theory suggests that free markets can expect to produce efficient, welfare-enhancing levels of resource use, production, consumption, and environmental protection if the prices of the resources, goods, and services capture the social costs and benefits of their use. When private costs – the basis for market decisions – fail to include the social costs, market failures can occur. This results in allocative inefficiencies in the form of suboptimal resource use and pollution levels. Market failures are hallmarks of the environmental domain, with critical resources such as water, timber, oil, and coal, tending to be underpriced and ecosystem services such as flood prevention, water retention, and carbon sequestration going entirely un-priced. These underpriced or un-priced resources can often be overexploited, because economic actors are able to ignore part or all of the environmental costs that they generate.¹¹⁷ Globalization magnifies the problem of mispriced resources and their consequent environmental harms.

The second significant area that environmental globalization impacts are the U.S. regulatory processes. The primary goal of trade liberalization is the reduction of barriers to

market access, with trade agreements often including “disciplines” on how parties will regulate. However, environmental advocates decry the loss of regulatory sovereignty. Freer trade promotes competition among countries, the pressures of which may manifest in industry and governmental efforts to reduce pollution control compliance costs. This political dynamic triggers a regulatory “race to the bottom” in which jurisdictions with high environmental standards will relax their regulatory regime in order to avoid burdening industries with pollution control costs that are higher than those of competitors operating in lower standard jurisdictions. The outcome of this is political drag, resulting in lax enforcement of existing rules and standards and the weakening of environmental laws that might have otherwise been adopted.¹¹⁸ Diverse national circumstances generally make uniform standards across different jurisdictions less attractive than standards tailored to local conditions and preferences. However, sometimes having divergent standards across jurisdictions imposes market access barriers on traded goods that overwhelm the benefits obtained by allowing each jurisdiction to maintain individualized requirements. In some cases, producers vying for access to high standard jurisdictions will drive upward harmonization, or a “race to the top”, though this logic applies to only a few areas of the regulatory sector.

Information is also highly impacted by environmental globalization, with increased access to data and information on economic and environmental performances allowing for faster problem identification, better analysis, and quicker trend spotting. Better identification of leaders and laggards in the international arena relative to various environmental and social criteria spurs competition, and thus improved performance, among nations, companies, and communities. A key feature of globalization is the expansion of community networks across the globe, which virtually eliminates the traditional concept of distance. This dramatically increases the intensity

of national interdependence, fomenting a greater sense of international community and a foundation for shared values. In turn, an incipient sense of a world community provides citizens with a basis for demanding that those with whom they trade meet certain baseline moral standards, such as a commitment to environmental stewardships. As the economic integration of the world's countries broadens and deepens, information become more readily available, and = citizen's set of baseline standards grows.¹¹⁹

Lastly, environmental globalization has a significant impact on pluralization, with the intensified interaction in the economic and political sphere, couple with the rapidly diminishing costs of communication, increasing the number and diversity of participants in the global network. This is evident in the exponential growth of NGO's, with their heightened levels of activity and increased access to policy-making processes at the national and international levels. In 1990 for example, six thousand international NGO's were established. This number grew to 26 thousand by the year 2000, with an elaborate organization or institutional infrastructure no longer being necessary for an entity to have a global reach.¹²⁰ With the rise in global interconnectedness one also sees an increase in transparency, participation, and democratization. This provides a broader constituency of concerned groups and individuals who have access to global decision makers. National governments remain central to global-scale policy making, with new actors playing a complex role in the process.

Overall, globalization has both positive and negative consequences on the environment, where the same forces that help amend certain issues can exacerbate existing problems. Environmental choices help to shape globalization, and the core challenge of policy makers is to find the appropriate mix of competition and cooperation, market forces and intervention, and economic growth and environmental protection. In order to maximize the potential of

globalization, fundamental reforms of global governance structure, as well as the implementation of international architecture for environmental cooperation is required.

The primary responsibility for environmental protection rests with national governments and local communities. However, some issues are inescapably regional and global in scope and cannot be addressed without international cooperation. Certain issues have large incentives for countries to pursue behavior that is individually rational but collectively suboptimal. These incentives are strong in regards to the depletion of natural resources. For example, it is rational for a fisherman to maximize their personal gain by collecting as many fish as possible. Collectively however, this strategy may lead to the overexploitation of resources and a “tragedy of the commons”, where the entire fishing community would be left worse off than if a cooperative arrangement to manage fishery based on a sustainable basis was found.¹²¹

When extended to the global scale, problems become even more acute and intractable in the absence of clear rules and institutions that ensure sustainable resource management. Global scale issues require a response aggregated beyond a level of national jurisdiction, with coordinated national action. International cooperation is helpful in attaching a set of common problems that is encountered locally across the globe, and thus a concern to policy makers around the world. These problems, such as air and water pollution, have no inherent need for global scale cooperation, and should usually be dealt with at by local and national authorities. However because many countries face these common problems, there is logic for global cooperation, where comparative analysis can help to illuminate issues and highlight the best practices, policies, and technologies that should be deployed in response. National level environmental policies may influence international actions, and ecological realities may require policy coordination and collective action on a global scale. An increased understanding of the

interdependence of ecological systems contributes to establishment of a more robust global environmental regime.¹²²

The U.S. has played a significant role in the global issue of climate change, particularly through their role in the Kyoto Protocol, an international treaty signed in 1997 in Kyoto, Japan that would require nations to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions. As of 2011 the United States remains the only signatory not to have ratified the protocol. In 1997 the U.S. Senate voted unanimously under the Byrd-Hagel Resolution that it was not in the sense of the senate that the United States should be a signatory to the Kyoto Protocol. In 2001, the Bush Administration announced that it would not implement the Kyoto Protocol, and that ratifying the treaty would create economic setbacks in the U.S. and does not put enough pressure to limit emissions from developing nations. This was supported by former National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice, who stated that the Protocol "is not acceptable to the Administration or Congress"¹²³.

However the president and congress did not take allow for proper interagency cooperation, was either poor or nonexistent in the U.S. response to the Kyoto Protocol. Most notably, the Environmental Protection Agency, the principal body responsible for enforcing emissions requirements, was poorly integrated into the policy-making processes of the Bush administration. This is evidenced by an EPA report released in 2002, contradicting the official position of the president on the Kyoto Protocol. Furthermore, there is a striking inconsistency between state and federal responses to the Kyoto Protocol. The state of California and a group of northeastern states have expressed official support for the protocol, implicitly deviating from federal policy.¹²⁴

In February 2002, Bush announced his alternative to the Kyoto Protocol, by bringing forth a plan to reduce the intensity of greenhouse gasses by 18% over ten years. Bush focused on

the ratio of greenhouse gas emissions to economic output, meaning that under this plan, emissions would still continue to grow, but at a slower pace. Bush stated that this plan would prevent the release of 500 million metric tons of greenhouse gases, which is about the equivalent of 70 million cars from the road. This target would achieve this goal by providing tax credits to businesses that use renewable energy sources, as to not hurt the business sector of the economy. Yet despite this compromise, global climate change continues to plague the environment.¹²⁵ Thus far, Presidents Bill Clinton, George W. Bush, and Barack Obama have not submitted the treaty for ratification.

Without effective international-scale governance, globalization may intensify environmental harms where national regulatory structures are inadequate. In strengthening competitive pressures across national borders, economic integrations may help consumers by lowering prices, improving services, or increasing choices. However these same pressures threaten to overwhelm regulatory capacities of national governments, and thus necessitate intergovernmental coordination of domestic policies and cooperative management of the global commons. While some problems are best dealt with at the local level, others are inextricably international and require a coordinated multi-country response that must be back up by effective action at the national and local level.¹²⁶

It is necessary to understand the significant impact of ecosystems on human health, as they are the planet's life support system for human species and all other forms of life. Human biology has a fundamental need for food, water, clean air, shelter, and relative climactic constancy. They also benefit from a full complement of species, intact watersheds, climate regulation, and genetic diversity. Environmental stresses on these necessities cause major impacts on human health. Ecosystems, providing life's basic needs, are indispensable to the well-

being and health of people. A change in the flow of these needs affects the livelihoods, income, local migration, and political conflicts of the surrounding dependent regions, as well as the area's economic and physical security.¹²⁷ The causal link between environmental change and human health is complex, with the impacts often being indirect, or displaced in space or time, as well as being dependent on a number of factors.

However the impact of environmental issues on human health can be clearly seen in the examples of fresh water and climate regulation. Many aspects of the world's hydrological cycle are regulated by the natural functions of the ecosystem, and are often associated with geophysical processes, such as evaporation. Human intervention in these natural ecological features takes many forms, such as deforestation, farming, irrigation, river damming, or extraction of subterranean aquifers. Wetlands for example play a crucial role in the filtering of freshwater, including the removal of various chemicals or potentially toxic elements. Freshwater is essential for human health, being used for growing food, drinking, hygiene, washing and cooking, and dilution as well as countless other purposes.¹²⁸

However, the world's sources of freshwater are being threatened by ecological changes, and water scarcity jeopardizes food production, human health, economic development, and geopolitical stability. Globally, the availability of water per person declined markedly in recent decades. One third of the world's population lives in countries that experience moderate to high water stress, a number that will likely increase as population size and per capita water demand grows. While the fresh water requirements of wealthy urban residences for agriculture, livestock, production, and industry escalates, over one billion people lack access to safe drinking water, and 2.6 billion people lack adequate sanitation. This disparity has led to the widespread microbial contamination of drinking water, with water-associated infectious diseases claiming up

to 3.2 million lives per year. Investments in safe drinking water and improved sanitation show a direct correspondence to improvements in human health and economic productivity.¹²⁹

The second example of climate regulation shows how regional climactic conditions are influenced by changes in ecosystems and landscapes, particularly deforestation and desertification. Larger scale impacts also are having a tremendous affect, such as the ongoing human-induced alterations of atmospheric conditions, meaning the greenhouse effect. Ecosystem services, such as the regulation of infectious disease and waste management, are affected by human-induced climate change. In turn, the ecosystem changes affect the well-being and health of the human population. Climate change in itself affects human health, with direct negative effects that are readily predictable, such as death from heat waves, and indirect effects, which will have an overall great impact. Human health is affected indirectly by climate-induced changes in the distribution of productive ecosystems, such as the availability of food, water, and energy supplies. These changes will affect the distribution of infectious diseases, nutritional status, and patterns of human settlement. Extreme weather events, such as floods, heat waves, or droughts, as well as sea level rises are anticipated to increase as a result of climate change. These events have both a local and regional effect, whether it is directly through deaths or injuries or indirectly through economic disruption, infrastructure damages, or population displacement.¹³⁰

As a result of these human actions, the structuring and functioning of the world's ecosystems have changed more rapidly in the second half of the 20th century than any other time in human history. The magnitude of changes grows as population size and intensity of economic activity increases as well. This era of globalization has ushered in a period of fast-paced change and persistent problems. It has spurred a growing degree of interdependence among economies and societies through a trans-boundary flow of information, ideas, technologies, goods, services,

capital, and people. In doing so, it has challenged the traditional capacity of national governments to regulate and control markets and activities. The rapid pace of economic integration has led to world markets and economies to become interlinked, requiring a degree of synchronization of national policies across a number of issues. One dimension of this coordination concerns the environment, from shared natural resources such as fisheries and biological diversity, to the potential for trans-boundary pollution spillovers across the land, over water, and through the air. Governance approaches that are bounded by the traditional notion of national territorial sovereignty cannot protect us from global-scale environmental threats. An effective response to these challenges will require fresh thinking, refined strategies, and new mechanism for international cooperation.¹³¹

This response calls for direct action by the world's governments that will address the health consequences of ecosystem change and help to avoid disease and injury caused by ecosystem disruption. This can be accomplished through two different strategies. The first, and the strategy that is preferred in principle, is to prevent, limit, and manage environment damages. The second strategy is to make adaptive changes that will protect individuals and populations from adverse consequences of ecosystem change. These two aspects are not viewed as alternatives to each other, but rather being useful in implementing them together. In order to understand the potential negative health impacts of ecosystem change, one must consider two aspects; the current, and likely future intrinsic vulnerability of populations, and the likely future capacity for adaptation. Closely related are also the forces that place populations at risk, such as poverty and the high burdens of disease, which also impair the capacity for future growth.¹³²

Improved ecosystem management needs to address the complex set of underlying causes of environmental change, which entails implementing cross-sectoral policies, institutions, and

investments on a local, regional, and global scale. Enhancing human well-being and improving human health status requires paying particular attention to improving ecosystem management and a government's capacity for policy making at a national and local level. This also includes addressing global challenges, such as long term climate change, depletion of international fisheries, or the spread of exotic species. The health threats caused by an ecosystem's environmental changes have serious policy implications. Certain measures to ensure ecological sustainability and safeguard ecosystem services are necessary in order to benefit long-term health of humans. A good and equitable health status within a population confers a range of social, economic, and political benefits, such as a more cohesive, productive, and stable society. Increasing the size of a population or the number of growing economies results in a higher level of total consumption, and places increased pressures on ecosystems, which in turn increases certain health risks. Establishing cross-sectoral policies that promote ecologically sustainable development and address the underlying driving forces of such development is essential in avoiding negative health implications. There have been two significant policy plans that have been set forth in the past years. The first, Agenda 21, is an international action plan that was adopted in 1992 at the UN Conference on Environment and Development, also known as the Earth Summit. The second was the World Summit's Sustainable Development plan of implementation that was adopted in Johannesburg in 2002. Both policy plans describe comprehensive approaches to ecologically sustainable development, and incorporate cross-sectoral policies.¹³³

While policy solutions lie in a structured program of collective action, it can be difficult to accomplish this in the international realm. There exist a high number of potential contributors to the global environmental problems, with the spatial and temporal distribution of the causes and effects making it hard to identify those who fail to cooperate. There is also an absence of an

overarching international authority, allowing scant means of discipline or sanctions.¹³⁴ Traditional policy prescriptions to environmental issues, such as sets of taxes or subsidies to internalize externalities, cannot be easily applied to a multi-jurisdictional context that has fragmented institutional structures. Collective action in response to global environmental challenges continues to fall short of the public needs and expectations because of a deep-seated weakness within the existing institutional structures that we rely upon for solutions. The integrated and interdependent nature of the current environmental issues contrasts sharply with the poor decision-making processes of our government's fragmented institutions.¹³⁵ Essentially, the problem lies in organizing and maintaining international cooperation. Situations must be converted from one where decisions are made independently based on narrow self-interests, to one in which actors adopt cooperative solutions that serve a broader common interest.

To achieve these goals of enhancing human well-being while conserving ecosystems, wide-ranging reforms of governance, institutions, laws, and policies are required. Effective management cannot focus on a single approach, such as market, local, or government control, but rather response strategies must be tailored within specific social and environmental contexts. Approaching local, regional, and global issues all require a number of functions that need to be performed at various levels of governance and among different institutions. Global scale problems require institutions that possess several capacities, such as the ability to identify and define problems, formulate policy options, facilitate cooperative actions among governments, gather finances and support for activities, and develop global management systems. When problems exist at a national scale, national institutions remain primary actors charged with regulatory and enforcement powers to solve environmental problems. Their functions, policy formulating, compliance monitoring, problem evaluation, are necessary to the problem-solving

process. Even when problems exist at a global level, national institutions remain key actors, with the implementation of multilateral agreements ultimately being their responsibility. Essentially, effective management of ecosystems in regions cannot be achieved through a narrow focus of responses at any one scale, meaning local, national, regional, or global, but rather a holistic overarching approach.

The Environment and National Security

A critically important and underdeveloped facet of the U.S. national security strategy is the environment. Two key facets of national security are the consumption of resources, such as energy, minerals, water, and land, as well as the consequences of consumption, such as climate change and loss of biodiversity. In the 21st century, the security of nations is increasingly dependent on the security of natural resources, or natural security. Natural security is the sufficient, reliable, affordable, and sustainable supply of natural resources for a modern global economy.¹³⁶ Addressing the natural security challenges in a mutually reinforcing way that builds security is a challenge for the U.S. government. Modern global economics depends on having access to energy, minerals, potable water, arable land, and other essential elements that are needed to meet the rising expectations of the growing world population. However, with an increase in the consumption of resources, access to these necessities is not assured. This overconsumption has consequences that challenge the security of nations, and requires the U.S. to respond to the emerging natural resource challenges in the changing strategic environment.¹³⁷

Natural security involves two broad categories; consumption and consequences. The consumption of natural resources, such as energy, land, and water, affects geopolitics and the stability of nations. The consequences of the high consumption rates of these resources, such as climate change and loss of biodiversity, also create geostrategic pressures and instability. Each

natural security concern has somewhat different challenges, such with the finite state of certain energy providers, or the broad implications of global climate change.¹³⁸ Regardless, the problems intertwine with one another. Any solution to a country's energy insecurity is likely to involve water and non-fuel minerals. Without the integrated national-level approach that links together natural security challenges and consequences, the U.S. runs the risk of trading one dependency for another and exacerbating the consequences. It is essential that governments incorporate a more holistic view of resources challenges into their existing institutions and processes.¹³⁹

Many governments that experience high consumption rates are at a disadvantage, with more countries competing for the same strategic resources when access to resources is increasingly compromised by climate change and biodiversity loss. Nations that consume imports of natural resources may be vulnerable to disruptions of supplies and broad economic and security consequences. For example, the U.S. depends on imports of many strategic commodities, such as oil and nonfuel minerals, for a range of economic and defense uses.¹⁴⁰ Import dependence is not a threat in itself; ideally, it can act as a force for great global prosperity and stability for nations at each end of the transaction. However, dependence on imports can become a strategic liability when sources are highly concentrated, demand rises, or substitutes for commodities are limited. At the same time, environmental strategies can sometimes complement or enhance national security strategies. Some strategies would be unlikely to succeed without addressing certain environmental concerns, such as with the U.S.'s involvement in Afghanistan. President Obama stated repeatedly that peace in Afghanistan was contingent on economic, civic, and political development as much as military success. However a 2009 UNEP report found that most of Afghanistan's natural resources were severely degraded, and that their recovery as a nation was heavily dependent on the restoration of these resources.¹⁴¹ The U.S.

achieving their goals in the region is also dependent on their ability to tie natural resources into national security.

Operationalizing concerns about natural security is often very difficult, consider that the nation already has a crowded domestic and national security agenda, with issues ranging from health care, to economics, to educations, to war. However, the U.S.'s failure to act to improve energy materials and security, or deal with climate change or a loss of biodiversity may not be fully understood for decades. Humanity for example has already emitted enough greenhouse gases into the atmosphere to warm the planet beyond the warmest temperatures to have occurred in the past 100 thousand years. The future warming is already unavoidable and irreversible. However two to three decades will pass before the full amount of warming is measurable on the earth's surface.¹⁴²

From oil, to critical minerals, to water, global competition for natural resources in the 21st century will generate economic dislocation, instability, and conflict. The consequences of the rising resource consumption, such as climate change or loss of biodiversity, multiply these current threats. In order to address these issues, the nation's understanding of what constitutes a national threat, and our understanding of how to achieve peace and prosperity must change. These concerns are not new to the U.S., especially within the context of war, with access to natural resources having been an ongoing concern in the nation's development. During World War II both the Allied and Axis forces struggled with oil shortages, and today's U.S. military forces defending fueled supply lines from attacks. Scholars, theorists, and practitioners in national security have long realized the security implications of natural resources.¹⁴³ The end of the Cold War sparked a serious debate about whether environmental issues were the single most important element of national security. Policy makers, especially Vice President Al Gore and

Secretary of State James Baker, shaped the debate and expanded in into a serious sub-field of security study and practice. Because today's global strategic environment is very different, current strategic concerns surrounding natural resources are set in a different context. Russia, China, and other emerging states have become part of an extraordinary rebalancing of global wealth and power.¹⁴⁴ The increase in the world's population and economic growth has put pressure on resources, such as energy, food, and water, causing a new area of scarcity to emerge as demands outstrip supply. The way in which nations define and achieve national security is changing.

The United States first mentioned environmental issues in regards to national security in the 1990 publication of the National Security Strategy (NSS), a document that periodically updates citizens on the government's current national protection strategy, by President Bush. Both President Clinton and Defense Secretary William Perry made environmental issues a key point in their call for a revolution in security strategy. Nearly all officials have recognized that while the environment may not be a traditional subject of security strategy discussions, environmental degradation and resource scarcity in various forms lies at the root of many world conflicts.¹⁴⁵ The inclusion of environmental concerns in security issues should serve as a strong indicator that the environmental movement and the issues that it represents have become mainstream, bridging the ideological divide.

Comparing Environmental Presidents

Environmental policy, being the federal government's actions that regulate the activities that have an environmental impact in the United States, is an important aspect of today's society. American's highest office has long had a relationship to the environment that is anything but straightforward. Given the enormous social, economic, and political changes in our nation's

history, several criteria can be used to assess a president's success in conducting themselves as "environmental presidents". This thesis will use three criteria to examine the success of our modern presidents, from Richard Nixon to Barack Obama, and the impact that their decisions and approaches had on the environmental movement. These three criteria include; the president's connection to the level of popular public environmental awareness at the time, the extent and type of existing environmental agencies and laws and the presidents involvement in them, and lastly the extend to which the president provided the leadership needed at the time, and what lessons can be learned from their actions today. Understanding the role that the American president plays in the development of environmental policy within the United States will allow society to improve and adapt these policies to today's modern environment and face new environmental challenges with the knowledge of the past

Despite the long-term public interest in matters of conservation and environmental protection that has been seen in American society, the federal government's involvement has been relatively recent. During the first 100 years after the nation's founding, both the President and Congress were more deeply involved with issues of foreign affairs, and paid little attention to internal domestic problems until the growth of the country demanded it¹⁴⁶. During the first half of the 20th century, the United States underwent periods of sudden growth and industrial development, as well as foreign involvement in two World Wars¹⁴⁷. This change in the pace of U.S. expansion caused serious exploitation of natural resources both at home and abroad, and the nation struggled to meet the needs of wartime defense and the demands of the post-war period. The public began to see a direct increase in the levels of air and water pollution in rural and urban America. Concern for the environment developed rapidly in the late 50's, with an

unprecedented speed and urgency with which ecological issues burst into the American consciousness.

Nixon entered the White House during an unusual time, when the public and the government were all united in their focus of resolving critical environmental concerns. The 70's is considered to be one of the most productive decades for environmental activism. Nixon came into office the same year newspaper headlines and media sources made voters aware of the critical nature of the environment through environmental disasters, such as the damage to bird life due to the Santa Barbara, California oil spill. The environment became a unifying factor, with Nixon stating, "Restoring nature to its natural state is a cause beyond party and beyond faction".¹⁴⁸ Nixon's approach was said to be the most far-reaching environmental agenda ever set by a president. Jimmy Carter also was able to latch on to this support, campaigning for the White House as an outsider intending to use the power of the president to bring change to Washington politics.¹⁴⁹ Environmental protection benefited from his deep interest and concern for the issue, as expectations of environmental groups were high and businesses and industry felt that their economic interests were threatened.¹⁵⁰

This situation changed considerably in the 1980's, when the eight years under the presidency of Ronald Reagan marked a stormy chapter in environmental politics. Many critics have gone so far as accusing Reagan of almost single-handedly destroying the progress that had been made in the area of pollution control in the previous decades.¹⁵¹ Backlash against Reagan's administrative environmental policies, as well as the continual emergence of new environment issues led to a substantial increase in public support for environmental protection. The discovery of critical problems, such as global warming and ozone depletion, as well as several specific incidents, such as the Exxon Valdez oil spill, has also fueled public support.¹⁵²

Like many of the presidents before him, Clinton responded to the highly charged political landscape of environmental policy with a balancing act between economic growth and environmental protection. He attempted to stay in the good graces of the environmental community, who were a key political constituency, by appointing respected individuals to high environmental posts and rebuffing Republican attempts to roll back environmental conservation laws and regulations. Despite stepping up the enforcement actions of environmental protection laws, Clinton's success was hindered by incoherent objectives, haphazard leadership, and a decentralized structure.¹⁵³ This caused a split in environmental groups on the merits of agreements and environmental repercussions, as well as causing confusion amongst regulatory relief advocates. Clinton's legislative record remained consistent with his own rhetoric, being neither pro-environment nor pro-regulation.¹⁵⁴

With the Republicans winning control of congress, many conservative leaders in and out of congress began to challenge Clinton's environmental policy.¹⁵⁵ State and local residences began to rebel against Clinton's efforts to preserve land space after the passing of the Grand Staircase Escalante National Monument in Utah prior to the 1996 election. While Clinton saw this as an impressive environmental accomplishment, South Utah residence saw it as an intrusion by uncaring Democrats into a republic state. They accused Clinton of wrongfully acquiring land from Utah in order to politically secure the votes and endorsements for the election.¹⁵⁶ Clinton entered his second term after a Harris public opinion poll showed that Americans continued to favor strong environmental policies, and didn't support reducing EPA power. The public assumed that Clinton would capitalize on public support for environmental protection by proposing new initiatives or reform older laws, but the administration became so engrossed in

the scandal and impeaching proceedings from the last four years, and lacked congressional support for environmental proposals.¹⁵⁷

During the 2000 presidential race, neither Al Gore nor George W. Bush paid much attention to the environment as a platform issue. While Bush began his quest for president under the idea of being “eco-friendly”, he strongly identified with Reagan’s predevelopment, antiregulatory, and pro-business agenda. Upon being elected, Bush used his power to set a different environmental agenda than Clinton.¹⁵⁸ He equated environmental issues with energy resources, downplaying many important issues such as air or water quality, wildlife protection, and global warming. This caused many environmental groups to question his approach to the nation’s environmental issues early on.¹⁵⁹ Today’s current president, Barack Obama, entered office facing serious economic and foreign policy issues, including two wars, a nationwide crisis involving financial institutions, the automobile industry, home foreclosures, and unemployment. The environmental sector of politics was thrilled with the election of Obama, who moved quickly on several environmental fronts to put a “green stamp” on his administration.

Overall, modern presidents have all been aware of the importance of environmental issues to the public during their time in office. However, whether they chose to utilize this public support varies greatly. Nixon, for example, used the public’s interest in environmental matters to gain support for himself as a president and gather a strong following for his political agenda. Reagan, on the other hand, chose to ignore the public’s outcries at his policy choices, and pursue his own agenda based on economic and business motives. Clinton, Bush, and Obama all have acknowledged the importance of the environment in their platforms and time in office, yet their ability to actually implement effective environmental legislation has been affected by several other issues that they faced while serving as President. While the public’s support for environmental

protection has remained strong, if not apparent in society, the President's choice to incorporate such interest into their term in office varies greatly.

The second criteria with which the modern presidents are reviewed is the extent and type of existing environmental agencies and laws at the time of their presidency, and how they situated themselves within this political framework. Historically, the president has a limited role in environmental politics, with power being delegated to executive branch agencies. It was not until Nixon's tenure began in 1969 that environmental issues became a presidential priority.¹⁶⁰ The 1970's also marked the development of a new power struggle and a turnaround in leverage within the environmental movement. The range of environmental issues had become so extensive that organized environmental groups were unable to act effectively, and consequently were no longer able to monopolize policy debate. Many matters became administrative choices rather than public debate or legislative action, giving the administrators and private corporate institutes a political advantage over environmental organizations.¹⁶¹

Despite these conflicts, congress remained dedicated to the passing of environmental legislation. Nixon and Congress enacted over 20 major pieces of legislation, many being refinements of earlier bills, or new bills that brought the federal government into new areas of environmental protection. In his 1970's State of the Union address, Nixon noted, "The 1970s must be the years when America pays its debt to the past by reclaiming the purity of its air, its waters, and our living envi. It is now or never."¹⁶² Nixon declared the next ten years as the "environmental decade", with the signing of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). NEPA required an extensive analysis of the environmental impact of proposed projects before they were implemented, as well as proposed developments of ways in which to minimize the negative impacts. The act still stands today as one of the nation's most important environmental

statutes.¹⁶³ Nixon also agreed to a federal reorganization plan that called for an independent control agency, or the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). The EPA, opened under William Ruckelshaus, maintained the responsibility for administering a broad spectrum of environmental laws and regulation.¹⁶⁴

Nixon used his presidential powers and legislative support, not his own personal interest in the issues, to establish himself as the premier environment president. Yet when congress became involved in the writing and passage of environmental legislation, Nixon began to conflict with the leading senate environmental proposals, causing less legislation to be passed through later in his term. This attitude supports the claim that Nixon was less of a true believer than an opportunist in environmental issues. Despite this, Nixon was still able to claim credit for supporting the passage of more environmental legislation in the 1970's than any other comparable period in modern congress.¹⁶⁵

Carter entered office with strong legislative agenda, yet only thirty days into his administration, he began facing barriers. Carter placed the nation's energy policies at the top of the legislative agenda, and submitted a massive energy bill to congress. He expected congress to support the broad and comprehensive legislation that he provided, while failing to consult with key legislators.¹⁶⁶ His failure to work or cooperate with members of congress resulted in the legislation getting bogged down in committees, and never coming to a vote. Carter's leadership approach strongly contrasts previous other presidents. Johnson employed careful attention to the progress of legislation and wisely consulted with members of congress, and Nixon used his presidential power to propose legislation to congress. Carter instead attempted to put environmental concerns on the public agenda through speeches where he suggested measure that

he hoped congress would consider.¹⁶⁷ His preference for appealing to and working with the American people resulted in a poor relationship with congressional insiders.

Historically, conservation efforts tend to be associated with democratic leadership, while republicans are often linked to a pre-development and anti-regulatory approach. The closing of the 70's marked the end of the "Golden Age", with environmental policy becoming an increasingly polarized subject at both the federal and state level.¹⁶⁸ The relative amity that had existed between Republican and Democratic parties on environmental issues disintegrated as politics headed into the end of the 20th century. The end of environmental bipartisanship was caused by the advent of new environmental regulations that energized and radicalized political constituencies to heightened levels of involvement in the policy making process. Conservative Republican circles became concerned about the economic tolls of environmental regulations on businesses, and became skeptical about environmental rhetoric, questioning the efficacy of the regulations.¹⁶⁹

Reagan entered the White House with an anti-development orientation, offering an alternative ideological paradigm to understanding natural resource and wilderness management. He had a tightly defined political agenda that challenged the core values that had guided the environmental politics of the 60's and 70's.¹⁷⁰ Reagan's policies emphasized economic growth and productivity over environmental protection, and promised to eliminate and repeal regulations in order to reduce the cost of doing business. He faced opposition from the public as well as both congressional houses who held a bipartisan support of environmental protection.¹⁷¹ While Reagan's regulatory relief efforts were deflected by democratic policy makers, the battle inaugurated a policymaking stalemate that endured three subsequent presidents. Neither Democrats, with the supports of their environmental constituents, or Republicans, with the

support of pro-business and property right supporters, were able to sustain enough momentum over the long haul to make any legislative strides.¹⁷² This stalemate weakened the previous decades legislative efforts, which had a profound effect on environmental policy for the next 10 years, and by the end of the 1980's the strength of the public's commitment to environmental protection was less clear.¹⁷³

Faced with Reagan's legacy of environmental "slash and burn" and a host of newly discovered environmental problems, George Bush entered the 1988 campaign declaring himself as the "environmental president".¹⁷⁴ Bush's wanted to be a Republican president of Theodore Roosevelt traditions, distancing himself from Reagan's approach, and adopting classic Democratic issues. As a traditional conservative, he was caught between his dedication to conservation and his allegiance to the republican base of his party. During the first half of his term, Bush reflected concerns focused on environmental and conservation politics, yet exhibited a reversal of these pro-environmental philosophies in the later half of his presidency.¹⁷⁵ This was seen in his actions at the 1992 Earth Summit, where Bush spoke on the role of U.S. leadership in calling world leaders to take environmental action. His words however were unsupported by his actions when he failed to sign the summit's treaty on global warming and biodiversity.¹⁷⁶

Both Reagan and Bush adopted the attitude of "new federalism" in their approach to the relationship between the federal government, states, and the environment. They both increased the power given to state and local authorities and reduced the overhead regulation of the federal government in subnational affairs, yet gave few resources and funding to help the states carry out the mandates.¹⁷⁷ Continual decentralization and defunding within the environmental policy domain left states programs, such as air and water pollution control, hazardous waste management, and safe drinking water, subject to substantial budgetary cuts. States had difficulty

meeting the federal obligations and many began to question whether additional funds would have to be taken from the states own revenue; something that many states were unwilling to do.¹⁷⁸ While this accountability at the state level led to some new innovations and accomplishment, many environmentalists who demanded a stronger activist federal role in the environmental domain were discouraged by additional suggestions of increased state power.¹⁷⁹

Reagan focused his legislative agenda on the concerns of big government, high taxes, and a political philosophy that orientated towards reducing regulatory burdens on businesses and industry. These philosophies were also seen under the Bush administration with the creation of the Council of Competitiveness, an agency that evaluated environmental initiatives in terms of a cost-benefit analysis. The Council protected business at the expense of the environment by overseeing cabinet activity and removing regulations that interfere with businesses ability to compete. It served as a major deregulatory voice within the administration in terms of important environmental issues such as clear air policies, industrial safety laws, and automobile emission laws.¹⁸⁰

While environmental programs suffered from Reagan's opposition of important bills, such as the Superfund Amendment Reauthorization act of 1986, bipartisan support of environmental programs allowed congress to continue efforts to promote conservation efforts without the support of the president.¹⁸¹ Bush faced similar challenges from congress during his time in office, with his major obstacle being the political divisions within government. With Democrats controlling both houses of congress, conflict quickly broke between the executive and legislative branches.¹⁸² In order to gain bipartisan support from the environmental community, Bush realized it would be necessary to forge an alliance between the Republicans and Democrats in congress. This came about in his efforts to pass the Clean Air Act Amendments.¹⁸³

The Clean Air Act was a state level initiative that was brought under federal jurisdiction during Nixon's time in office. Despite having bipartisan support from congress, the legislation languished during the 80's as Reagan refused to act on the measure.¹⁸⁴ Despite his campaigning promises to remain dedicated to the environment, many in that community remained suspicious of Bush due to the eight years he served under the Reagan administration. In order to prove his commitment to the environment, Bush signed the 1990 Clean Air Act Amendment, consequently breaking the legislative gridlock that had characterized Congress under the Republican administrations.¹⁸⁵ The bill allowed the nation to finally meet the air quality standards that had been set in every city. The commitment transcended the differences between Democratic and Republican parties, and brought together a coalition of business and industry leaders, environmental representatives, and government officials. Although the act was ultimately moderate in overall impact and faced opposition from certain business and industry leaders, it received praise from environmentalists as demonstrating that presidential influences can affect the initiation, course, and outcome of legislative debates.¹⁸⁶

The effects of the Reagan administration on the Environmental Protection Agency in turn had a significant impact on the relationship between Republicans, Democrats, and environmental issues. Reagan's reforms did succeed in halting the growth of the federal government's involvement, as well as severing the bipartisan political consensus on environmental issues that had previously existed. The dominant Republican perspective on environmental regulations was altered, with Republicans coming to speak with unity about the sanctity of private property rights and questioning the very legitimacy of the environmental health risks. By the close of the Reagan administration, this perspective of Republican business and industry groups became thoroughly integrated into the mainstream conservative political thought, and the Democratic Party

allegiance to environmental issues deepened. Ultimately, the legislative efforts of Reagan and Bush left irreconcilable policy goals that were daunting for their successors.¹⁸⁷

Clinton's first presidential term was unique in terms of political party control. For the first two years he worked with the support of a Democratic congress, and was able to set the tone for his presidency by eliminating the Council of Competitiveness used by both Reagan and Bush to sidestep EPA regulations. Yet the 1994 "Republican Revolution" congressional election caused a historic transfer of power of both houses to republican, causing any of the administrations few legislative initiatives to become bottled up.¹⁸⁸ Clinton became less assertive and more defensive in the environmental arena, leading by veto rather than through positive legislation declaration.¹⁸⁹ Clinton is often characterized as one that piggybacked on the proposals of the previous administrations, and repackaging the same regulatory system and passing it off as something new.¹⁹⁰ The two significant environmental measure signed, the 1994 California Desert Protection Act and the 1996 Safe Drinking Water Amendments, had the groundwork for passage had already been laid by congress, and reflected legislative momentum rather than presidential leadership. By his second term, he largely abandoned environmental concerns, and refocused on protecting core issues such as social security, education, and health care from Republicans. Rather than creating new legislation, the administration is remembered as the defender of the environmental status quo rather than a candidate of change.¹⁹¹

Bush implemented an "administrative strategy" that promoted an anti-environmental agenda and criticized the previous methods as having put an undue burden on business and industry. Clinton created a strong federal regulatory process that emanated from the White House and drove the formulation and execution of public environmental policy; a process that involved all the appointments, budgets, rule making, and regulatory processes that are used to shape

policy. The administration was able to employ this subtle aspect of the presidential power in order to implement far-reaching policy changes that could be made without the public attention that accompanies congressional debates.¹⁹²

Bush set his environmental agenda with a focus on two goals; reversing or delaying the Clinton-era programs, and moving forward with new initiatives that would at a minimum stall the environmental movement of the previous eight years.¹⁹³ To complete the first goal, Bush attacked the Clinton administration's agenda with the power of having control over the appropriations process, and therefore the ability to prohibit federal spending on Clinton initiatives.¹⁹⁴ Bush also used executive agencies to exert his power on environmental legislation and programs. In May of 2002, the Council of Environmental Quality established the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) task force to review their current practices and procedures. While the task force seemed initially harmless, environmental organizations began to realize the administration's plans to water down or repeal the law.¹⁹⁵ The director of the task force denied these charges, insisting that its purpose was to focus on modernizing NEPA. However the administration followed through on their pledge to streamline NEPA, and by October of 2002 the House already was holding hearings and was in the process of amending proposals to repeal portions of the law. This task force showed environmental groups the need to prepare for a long fight that would last well into the decade as the new administration embarked on a mission to erase the Clinton legacy.¹⁹⁶

The second portion of Bush's legislative agenda was to introduce his own programs, with most of which favoring industry interests over natural resource protection. These programs included proposals to allow oil exploration in Alaska's Wildlife Refuge as well as federal plans to pay \$235 for the purchase of mineral rights near the Florida Everglades.¹⁹⁷ Most significant,

was Bush's introduction of the Clean Skies Initiative as a means to circumvent the Clean Air Act. When the initiative was not passed by congress, Bush circumvented the legislative branch and implemented his administrative strategy by changing the regulatory process related to pollution source regulations. As a result of Bush's revisions, in 2003 the EPA eased the enforcements of pollution standards and dropped dozens of lawsuits against coal burning utilities, oil refineries, and industries for past air pollution violations.¹⁹⁸ These revisions led Bush's approach to be referred to not as environmental protection, but polluter protection.

During Obama's first term in office, some legislative feats have already been made, such as with the announcement of the Major Economies Forum on Energy and Climate in March of 2009 which brought together delegates from seventeen major economies to discuss energy and climate change issues, or the signing of the Omnibus Public Lands Management Act, a landmark legislation that set aside two million acres of public land in nine states to be protected as wilderness.¹⁹⁹ Obama has also announced a landmark National Fuel Efficiency Policy that would bring together the federal and state governments, the automobile industry, and the environmental community to impose new vehicle gas mileage standards that would improve fuel efficiency and cut greenhouse gas emissions that contribute to global warming.²⁰⁰ Yet the financial crisis that took hold in late 2008, coupled with intense partisan polarization in Congress, has clouded the future of climate change legislation.

To summarize, since the 1970's the U.S. President has shaped the development of the environmental movement through their legislative actions and agenda. Nixon, declaring the 70's as the "environmental decade", used his presidential powers and legislative support, not his own personal interest in the issues, to establish himself as the premier environment president. Yet the presidents who succeeded him were not able to live up to the environmental precedent that he

set. Carter's failure to work or cooperate with members of congress resulted in the legislation getting bogged down and a poor relationship with congressional insiders. Reagan had a tightly defined political agenda that challenged the core values that had guided the environmental politics of the 60's and 70's and inaugurated a policymaking stalemate that weakened the previous decades legislative efforts and endured three subsequent presidents. As a traditional conservative, Bush senior was caught between his dedication to conservation and his allegiance to the republican base of his party and exhibited a reversal of pro-environmental philosophies in the later half of his presidency. Clinton became less assertive and more defensive in the environmental arena, being characterized as one that piggybacked on the proposals of the previous administrations, and repackaging the same regulatory system and passing it off as something new.²⁰¹ Bush set his environmental agenda with a goals of reversing or stalling environmental initiatives, and lastly, Obama has set forth environmental initiatives, yet many issues, such as the 2008 financial crisis, has clouded the future of climate change legislation.

This overall view of the modern presidents help to set the foundation for determining the third criteria, or the extent of leadership that each president provided during their time in office. Saving Nixon for last, Carter was described as having first-rate analytical and intellectual capability and rigor. However, as a president he "disdained politics in governing as tawdry".²⁰² His problem was not that he thought too small, but rather that he thought too bold, wanting more out of the political system than it could produce. Carter was further debilitated by his persistent conflicts with the media and in coverage of the president. He was never at ease around reporters, and was unable to conceal the distrust and disapproval that he felt of the press while campaigning; a relationship that further deteriorated while in office. This, on top of his difficulties interacting with congress and with the democratic majority in both house left a

negative press portrayal of Carter's early years in office. As the president, Carter never clearly fixed in the public a sense of what his priorities were, and therefore was unable to effectively mobilize the American public opinion on environmental issues.²⁰³ Yet Carter arrived in Washington during a time when congress was undergoing important fundamental changes. It became more dispersed and increasingly fragmented as organization interests flourished and began to more actively exercise their influence, and individual members becoming more assertive and individualistic. The president as an institution had been weakened, facing new and formidable problems of coalition building within congress.²⁰⁴ Any president in the White House at this time, regardless of legislative abilities, would have encountered problems.

By the close of the Reagan administration, his legislative efforts of had irreconcilable policy goals that were daunting for their successors.²⁰⁵ While his regulatory relief efforts were deflected by democratic policy makers, the battle inaugurated a policymaking stalemate that endured three subsequent presidents. Neither Democrats, with the supports of their environmental constituents, or Republicans, with the support of pro-business and property right supporters, were able to sustain enough momentum over the long haul to make any legislative strides.²⁰⁶ This stalemate weakened the previous decades legislative efforts, which had a profound effect on environmental policy for the next 10 years, and by the end of the 1980's the strength of the public's commitment to environmental protection was less clear.²⁰⁷ In terms of being an environmental president, Reagan left the office in a more destructive state than upon his inauguration.

In 1992, Bill Clinton was seen as the "great green hope", campaigning with support from environmentalists who were frustrated with the Reagan and Bush era.²⁰⁸ Clinton ran on the environmental "dream platform", focusing on key provisions, such as global warming,

conservation incentives, and pollution standards. These promises gave environmentalists enough room to hope for a renewal of the executive branch leadership, and that the inauguration of Bill Clinton in 1993 would mark a turning point in environmental politics. Yet this euphoria dissipated during Clinton's first term in office when the high expectations of environmental groups caused hesitancy in his administrative actions.²⁰⁹ Despite his failure to live up to the expectations of being an environmental president, the Clinton administration was able to stop the Republican-controlled congress from dismantling controversial laws or cutting agency budgets as was feared. He was able to build on the groundwork that had been laid by congressional leaders and environmental organizations and prevent attempts to roll back the nations safeguards stating.²¹⁰ While not being an active legislative president, Clinton was able to preserve the foundation of environmental legislation that was under attack during his time in office.

Overall, no other president has been so harshly criticized for their role in the environmental movement than President Bush. Bush's environmental policy has been characterized by the League of Conservation Voters has an "unfortunate and aggressive anti-environmental approach to public policy"²¹¹ The partisan conflicts over environmental policy during the Bush administration left many citizens uncertain about the true condition of the environmental or the severity of the alleged threats to public health.²¹² The election of Barack Obama and the expansion of Democratic majorities in Congress in 2008 raised hopes among environmentalists that environmental issues would be placed back on top of the legislative agenda. Obama was strongly committed to this in his presidential campaign, and with a large Democratic majority in the House and a sizeable (if not filibuster-proof) majority in the Senate, there appeared to be an opportunity to break through with new legislation on this issue. Yet the

financial crisis that took hold in late 2008, coupled with intense partisan polarization in Congress, clouded the future of climate change legislation.

While each modern president has had a significant impact on the environmental movement, none have served as such a leader of environmental legislation and political power as Richard Nixon. There is often doubt cast on whether Nixon actually had a personal investment in the issues of the environment, or whether he merely recognized the political leverage that would result from following the public opinion closely²¹³. Yet regardless of whether his intentions were backed by a personal interest of political motive, Nixon still had a significant impact on the development of environmental policy in the 70's, being heralded as one of the most effective environmental presidents. Nixon's approach of using the public's interest in environmental matters to gain support for himself as a president and gather a strong following for his political agenda allowed him to implement the most far-reaching environmental agenda ever set by a president.²¹⁴

He made environmental issues a presidential priority, enacting over 20 major pieces of legislation, including the signing of one of the nation's most important environmental statutes, NEPA.²¹⁵ Nixon also changed the role that the federal government plays in environmental protection through the establishment of the Environmental Protection Agency.²¹⁶ Nixon is able to claim credit for supporting the passage of more environmental legislation in the 1970's than any other comparable period in modern congress.²¹⁷ Overall, Nixon used his presidential powers and legislative support, not his own personal interest in the issues, to establish himself as the premier environment president. He serves as a model for today's presidents to look to in their legislative and political approach to environmental protection. Nixon's decisions and actions as president had a significant impact on the environmental movement that shaped its course forever.

Conclusion

The golden-era laws that characterize the United States can no longer form the foundation of our nation's environmental policy. The global environmental problems that face the U.S. today do not fall within the scope of the laws adopted in during this time, and the era of legislative gridlock that followed has allowed for critical gaps in our environmental policy agenda to form. Yet opportunities to stimulate a new era of environmental law-making lie within the influence and power of the President, who has played a significant role in the way in which environmental protection is implemented into the political, economic, and social sectors of the nation. As has been seen in the examination of the nation's presidents, environmental causes have succeeded within the federal government when the president chooses to make the issue a top priority on their legislative agenda, and utilize their presidential power to enact policies that help further environment protection.

In looking at Nixon as an example of a strong environmental president, certain policy methods should be implemented in the future president's approach to environmental issues. Regulatory issues have been a constant source of conflict within the United States, and it is essential that the president is able to find a balance between stimulating the economy and not hindering businesses and industry, while preserving the integrity of the nation's environmental resources. Opportunities for finding this balance exist within new developments such as renewable energy and the green business sector. This same concept applies to balancing the jurisdiction of environmental issues among state and federal authorities. States need to be responsible for the protection and proper use of their environmental resources, with the federal government acting as an overarching authority to guide the nation's environmental resources as a whole. However unlike Nixon's "new federalism", the federal government should lend support

to the states in their work towards environmental protection. Lastly, the United States needs to have a much stronger presence in international global issues, particularly in regards to climate change.

While concerns about the capacity of United States institutions to address critical problems have surfaced, the future of the United States environmental policy agenda has the potential to gain political momentum and support. While the impact of today's current president on the environmental movement is still being recognized, it is clear that future presidents must respond to environmental concerns where the need for the protection and conservation of resources is as critical if not more than early 20th century presidents. With policy issues taking on a global importance and specialization, the term "environment" must now accommodate an expanding number of policy issues.²¹⁸ The federal government can respond to these new demands for congressional action through implementing a stronger role of the American President in dealing with the globalized environmental challenges that threaten the economy, health, and safety of both the United States and the world's nations today.

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