

Little Green Monsters

Part 2: Louisiana Green Groups Promote “Big Green Easy”

By Kevin Mooney

Summary: John Mitchell, President Nixon’s attorney general, once said “Watch What We Do, Not What We Say.” Mitchell’s Machiavellian advice characterizes Obama administration officials who say they want to increase the supply of domestic energy but then take actions to prevent it. Meanwhile, the environmental movement is redirecting its energies back to the states. With a Republican House of Representatives and Senate rejection of cap-and-trade legislation last year, little known grassroots green groups are stepping up their efforts to advance their agenda. But they are running up against energized Tea Party activists and Republican state lawmakers.



Louisiana Sen. David Vitter (left) has challenged Interior Sec. Ken Salazar (right) on Gulf drilling permits

Don Briggs, president of the Louisiana Oil and Gas Association (LOGA), says he no longer has any interest in talking to Obama Administration officials about what America’s domestic oil and gas industry needs.

“They talk about wanting to help, but it’s like watching a magician who is doing one thing with his hands but the action is really somewhere else,” he told a gathering of industry officials in New Orleans a few days after the one-year anniversary of the BP oil spill disaster. Briggs was particularly critical of Interior Secretary Ken Salazar

and Michael Bromwich, director of the newly created Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, Regulation and Enforcement (BOEMRE), the successor agency to the disgraced Minerals Management Service. Both officials say they want increased energy production in the Gulf Coast.

Briggs thinks their actions do not square with their words: “Been there, done that. They tell you one thing and they do another. We give them too much attention and way too much credit because they do not want us to go back to work.”

“Louisiana is the Aorta of America,” Briggs said. “When we shut down our

refineries this means 60 to 70 percent of the fuel that runs this country gets shut down.”

Briggs believes only a change in administration can bring about the right policies to revive the Gulf Coast economy. He says there used to be 61 rigs in the Gulf before the BP spill, but now there are

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only 26. Where five or six new deep-water permit applications were being filed every month, there is now only one, according to LOGA. Shallow water permits are also down from about seven to under five. “You have to understand one thing,” Briggs noted. “If they [Obama administration officials] wanted us to drill in the Gulf of Mexico, we would be drilling.”

Briggs is seconded by Sen. David Vitter (R-La.) who called out top Obama administration officials for what he says are duplicitous and misleading statements on the number of offshore drilling permits under review. In a letter to Salazar and Bromwich, Sen. Vitter details the discrepancies:

“Over the last several weeks and months, you have indicated publicly, before Congress, and privately to members, including myself, that there are only a handful of permits awaiting agency action...It is a mathematical impossibility for your representations to be accurate, as well as the filings of the Department of Justice to be accurate. It is not possible for there to be ‘too few permits’ awaiting review, and simultaneously ‘too many’ permits being reviewed to make issuing a particular handful problematic.”

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In March, the Obama administration filed a motion to halt two federal court orders directing BOEMRE officials to issue at least seven drilling permits. In its filing opposing the speed-up, the DOJ warned that the court orders could force a potentially harmful “re-prioritization” in authorizing permits because there are 270 shallow water permit applications pending and 52 deepwater permit applications pending.

This contradicts Secretary Salazar’s recent Senate testimony before the Energy and Natural Resources Committee. Salazar said the Interior Department had received only 47 shallow water permit applications over the past nine months and only seven deepwater permit applications were pending. Michael Bromwich personally told Vitter that deepwater permits would be limited because “only a handful of completed applications have been received.”

Alliance for Affordable Energy

Critics say the Obama administration is engaged in sleight-of-hand that is harming the production of domestic energy in the Gulf, and that local and state-based Gulf Coast environmental groups are abetting the administration’s deception. While green groups in Louisiana publicly sympathize with those hurt by the collapse of the Gulf Coast’s energy-based economy, they privately continue to push an anti-energy agenda that will make oil and gas production more costly. These well-funded and politically potent “Little Green Monsters” work tenaciously to make energy less affordable and less accessible.

One in particular, the New Orleans-based Alliance for Affordable Energy, founded in 1985, is very adept at diverting public attention away from the costs of

government regulation that have increased unemployment and raised energy prices in the Gulf Coast region. The Alliance’s benign-sounding marketing campaigns belie pernicious policy motives that work against the same low-income constituents the group claims to champion. But the motivations are not difficult to discern. The Alliance pushes the most expensive power sources onto those who can least afford it, while opposing the cheapest, because the group has its marching orders.

The Alliance’s first executive director was a political activist named Gary Groesch who started up the organization as part of an unsuccessful protest against the Waterford 3 nuclear power plant located near New Orleans, which is still operating. Groesch passed away in 2002, but his projects now have added momentum.

A key turning point came in 1992, when the Surdna Foundation called on the environmental movement to change its focus more in the direction of reshaping public policy. Ron Arnold, executive director of the Center for the Defense of Free Enterprise, knows the full story.

During a members-only retreat of the Environmental Grant Makers Association, a coalition of almost 200 donor foundations, the Surdna member said too much money was being wasted on green groups that did not yield results. And by results he meant laws, regulations and election outcomes.

“We have to get prescriptive,” he said. By this he meant, projects are created by the foundations, and the recipients are then held accountable for a return on those investments. The Alliance took this to heart and began to grow in influence.

In 1997, the Louisiana Legislature appointed Groesch to a commission

studying the effects of global climate change on the state, which then initiated the Alliance's campaign to replace low-cost fossil energy -- oil, natural gas and coal -- with high-cost (and unreliable) wind and solar power.

The grant records of the Blue Moon Fund are particularly telling. Between 1999 and 2000, it gave the Alliance \$50,000 to "To focus attention on the need for action to address climate disruption, including its impacts on sea level along the Louisiana coast."

In 2000, the Energy Foundation, which was founded as a consortium of seven big foundations, including the Pew Charitable Trusts and its Sun Oil fortune, began directing grants to the Alliance:

This includes \$25,000 in 2000, "To support an advocacy effort to rapidly advance low-income energy efficiency efforts in Louisiana."

The Energy Foundation pumped \$50,000 more into the energy efficiency campaign, in an effort to get government and utilities (not the foundation) to pay for the home improvements.

"When Hurricane Katrina devastated New Orleans in 2005, the Big Green grants strangely vanished," Arnold said. "Actually fixing things didn't interest them. But they reappeared in 2008, when the Surdna Foundation, figuring the Alliance for Affordable Energy was now powerful enough, sent \$100,000 for an undisclosed purpose. "But we can guess."

He explained: Surdna's companion in arms, the Energy Foundation, simultaneously sent \$97,000 along with instructions "To

oppose new conventional coal-fired power plants in Louisiana.'

It is difficult to overstate how well-connected The Alliance is with some of the most influential environmental actors at the national level and with key government agencies: The following organizations are identified as financial backers: ARC of Greater New Orleans, Azby Fund, Booth-Bricker Fund, Civil Sheriffs Reserve Deputies Association Corps Network, Doerr Furniture, Ella West Freeman Foundation, Energy Foundation, Fertel Foundation, Greater New Orleans Foundation, Gulf Coast Fund, Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors, Louisiana Association of Non-profit Organizations (LANO), Louisiana Department of Labor, Lowenburg Family Foundation, Mary Freeman Wisdom Foundation, Mercy Corps New Orleans Neighborhood Development Collaborative, Oreck Vacuum Cleaners, Prentice Foundation, RosaMary Foundation, Sharp Solar, Sierra Club, Sun Power, Surdna Foundation, The Occasional Wife, Train-2-Rebuild, Union of Concerned Scientists, US Department of Energy.

The Surdna Foundation donated \$100,000 in 2008, The Mary Freeman Wisdom Foundation donated \$5,000 in 2009, The Prentice Foundation donated \$5,000 in 2009, and the Rosemary Foundation donated \$5,000 in 2009.

The Alliance also has a major hand in operating The Louisiana Green Groups, launched by a U.S. Department of Labor National Emergency Grant in May 2008. It is set up to benefit unemployed or low income youth age 17 to 24. Participants complete environmental restoration projects and learn the language of green propaganda.

'Green Homes' But No Jobs

The plan now is for hundreds of "green homes" to be built in the New Orleans neighborhoods that received the worst of the damage from Hurricane Katrina.

"The destruction caused by Katrina necessitated almost everyone to rethink how to rebuild their home," Forest Bradley-Wright, a member of the Alliance has said. "Make it Right," the initiative started by Hollywood actor Brad Pitt aims to build 150 "eco-friendly" homes in the lower 9th ward of New Orleans.

The provisos, restrictions and mandates that are typically attached to green building efforts are worth considering in a state that has taken a beating from the economic recession, Arnold observed.

Although the national unemployment rate dropped in the past year, Louisiana's employment picture has deteriorated. In New Orleans, the impact has been dramatic, as the unemployment rate has increased from 6.6% to 7.9% in the past year. The situation is even worse in Baton Rouge, which has experienced the largest 12-month unemployment rate increase in the country, from 6.6% to 8.2%. Statewide, the unemployment rate has jumped from 7.2% to 8.1% in the past year. The correlation between the administration's moratorium and the state's bleak economic climate is inescapable.

Production in the Gulf of Mexico is projected to fall by 130,000 barrels per day in 2011 and by an additional 190,000 in 2012, according to the U.S. Energy Information Administration (EIA) thanks to the moratorium, which was imposed just over one year ago. EIA also expects

the retail price of regular-grade gasoline to average \$3.56/gallon in 2011, 77 cents/gallon higher than 2010 and about 40 cents higher than previous projections. Moreover, gasoline is expected to average \$3.70 in the peak summer driving months.

The Alliance has promoted an alternative energy campaign in New Orleans and throughout Louisiana, citing the dangers of global warming. Despite the production cutbacks since the BP oil spill last year, which have cost jobs and crippled the area's economy, the Alliance continues to sell the pipe dreams of conservation and renewable energy. Last year it worked with New Orleans Councilwoman Susan Guidry on an "Energy Smart" program that offers rebates and other financial inducements to city residents and business owners if they will invest in "high efficiency" products to lower their greenhouse gas emissions. Guidry's initiative was approved by the city council.

Guidry sits on the Utility Commission, which oversees the city council's regulatory authority over two utilities, Entergy Louisiana and Entergy New Orleans. At the direction of the council, Entergy New Orleans has committed \$3.1 million to the "Energy Smart" project.

The Louisiana Association of Business and Industry (LABI) doubts the economic benefits of high efficiency products such as compact fluorescent lighting, solar water heaters and solar screens. Says LABI vice president Ginger Sawyer: "I don't see the residential consumers benefiting from these arrangements. This is particularly true for lower-income people. Even if they are supposedly going to get a payout sometime down the road, you have to keep in mind that similar programs have gone by the wayside and are now subsidized

through federal grants. They are just not economically viable."

The Obama Campaign for "Renewable" Energy: Restrict Gulf Drilling

"Councilwoman Guidry and the Alliance for Affordable Energy are very much partners," Guidry chief of staff Deborah Langhoff says. "Now that the program has been passed she is working with the Alliance to take the next step." The "next step" appears to be a "renewable portfolio standard."

In 2010, the Louisiana Public Service Commission (LPSC) approved a statewide pilot program to test the feasibility of renewable energy. Between now and 2014, the program seeks to create up to 350 megawatts of long-term renewable power within the next three years, which is enough to supply 2 percent of the state's energy needs. The idea is to spur research and development of renewable energy technologies, such as biomass, geothermal, hydro, solar or wind.

In contrast to the Alliance and other Gulf Coast environmental activists, the LPSC takes a pragmatic approach to the issue of renewable energy. "The Commission may ultimately decide that a long term [renewables program] is not appropriate for the State of Louisiana," says Melanie Verzwylt, an LPSC staff attorney. She notes that commission members can deny certification to any particular renewables project if it proves too costly, even before the pilot period expires in 2014.

But this cautious approach assumes that facts and data take precedence over politics. In fact, so-called "renewables" are almost always the product of political pressure because they are not economically

competitive in a free market. The only way that renewable energy sources can become competitive in price with gasoline and natural gas is if the federal government deliberately restricts supply by not granting the permit applications that the petroleum industry needs to begin producing more energy. And that's what the oil association's John Briggs and Senator Vitter think the Obama administration is up to.

The Jig Is Up

The emphasis on "renewables" is part of a new green campaign that's been engineered by the Obama White House. President Obama realizes that the American public rejects the idea that there is "overwhelming scientific evidence" for global warming. Al Gore got an Oscar in 2006 and the Nobel Prize in 2007 for warning that the planet will be destroyed if the U.S. and other developed nations continue to use energy that emits greenhouse gases. But the American public isn't buying Gore's gloom and doom scenario thanks in no small part to some recent developments.

For starters, there is the "Climate-Gate" scandal, the discovery of emails from the University East Anglia's Climate Research Unit in Great Britain suggesting that scientific data on climate change had been manipulated. The failure of an international climate change conference in Copenhagen and the U.S. Senate's unwillingness to support climate change legislation that had passed the Democrat-controlled House in 2009 also signaled that the alarmist campaign has failed.

Opinion polls show there is now substantial public doubt that human activity causes climate change or that it is a very serious problem. And Team Obama recognizes that it must adapt to this new political reality.

In his 2010 State of the Union speech, President Obama asked Congress to mandate that 80 percent of the U.S. electricity come from ‘clean energy’ by 2035. He told the American people that they should accept alternative energy sources—even if they are not convinced that man-made global warming is a real problem.

“I know that there are those who disagree with the overwhelming scientific evidence on climate change,” he said. “But here’s the thing—even if you doubt the evidence, providing incentives for energy-efficiency and clean energy are the right thing to do for our future—because the nation that leads the clean energy economy will be the nation that leads the global economy. And America must be that nation.”

Some national environmental groups have adapted their marketing campaigns to reflect updated research that debunks alarmist claims. There is for example, the Pew Center on Global Climate Change (not global warming). The Union of Concerned Scientists (UCS) has also adopted the same language.

These groups have largely abandoned the term “global warming” and the imagery of rising sea levels and expanding deserts. Instead they use the vague phrase “climate change” and, like President Obama, moralize that it is “the right thing to do.”

Did Global Warming Cause Hurricane Katrina?

But the Alliance for Affordable Energy prefers the old rhetoric. “Every generation faces its historical challenge and is defined by how it responds. For all of humanity alive today that challenge is the crisis we call Global Warming,” declares the

Alliance on its website. “Thousands of studies have made it clear that Global Warming is not only real, but ultimately is the result of human activity through greenhouse gas emissions which come from burning fossil fuels like coal, oil and natural gas. Most of the greenhouse gas pollution is produced by generating electricity or by vehicles.”

Because it is based in New Orleans the Alliance works tenaciously to exploit Hurricane Katrina for political gain. “We are already experiencing some serious affects of Global Warming, including stronger hurricanes,” the organization claims. “The work of hurricane expert Dr. Kerry Emanuel indicates that Global Warming provided the extra margin of energy that gave Hurricane Katrina enough power to break the levees in New Orleans.” Really?

Just last year, a team of researchers with the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) published a peer-reviewed paper for Nature Geosciences that concluded there is no hard evidence to link tropical cyclones with anthropogenic (i.e. human-based) activity. On his blog, Roger Pielke, a University of Colorado professor of environmental studies, commented:

“The latest WMO statement should indicate definitively (and once again) that it is scientifically untenable to associate trends (i.e., in the past) in hurricane activity or damage to anthropogenic causes.”

The report’s key findings cut to the heart of alarmist arguments that the Alliance continues to peddle:

“There is no conclusive evidence that any observed changes in tropical cyclone genesis, tracks, duration and surge

flooding exceed the variability expected from natural causes,” the report says. “We cannot at this time conclusively identify anthropogenic signals in past tropical cyclone data.”

Never let the facts get in the way of a good scare campaign. Thus far, the Alliance has not yielded any ground in its initiatives against global warming. In fact, as the science that underpins their arguments unravels, groups like the Alliance sound more and more frantic. But there’s no denying that its policy preferences are still gaining traction.

Louisiana Tea-Party Set to Challenge Little Green Monsters

Robin Edwards, a co-founder of the Louisiana Tea Party Federation and president of the Baton Rouge Tea Party, has watched in frustration as environmentalists in the Gulf Coast have held their conferences and organized their coalitions. She thinks they only help increase energy prices and impose costly restrictions on existing job-creating industries. But Edwards sees an opening for free market activists to go on the offensive.

“Everyone is thinking about budgets and expenses here in Louisiana,” she said. “People are losing patience with green schemes that have more to do with a political agenda than they do with genuine environmental concerns. I think we can make ourselves heard here and call attention the economic fallout average Louisiana residents will experience if these mandates and restrictions become locked in.”

The Louisiana Tea Party will have more flexibility and dexterity to confront and expose the costs associated with

environmentalism over the coming months, she added. Up until now the Alliance has been permitted to cajole and pressure government officials without an organized push back from free market groups. Edwards is determined to help change the equation.

A Nationwide Grassroots Backlash

Louisiana's Edwards has plenty of company across the country as Tea Party activists push back against well-funded green pressure groups. Since the 2010 elections, Republican governors and new majorities of Republican state lawmakers have aligned with the Tea Party. They are working in coalition with the business community to unwind burdensome environmental regulations that undermine property rights and stifle entrepreneurship.

When George W. Bush was president, environmental activists tried to circumvent federal policymakers by promoting regional global warming initiatives that would link adjoining states to one another in projects to curtail carbon emissions. But the Republican takeover of statehouses in 2010 is reversing this trend. For instance, Susana Martinez, the Republican governor of New Mexico, has moved aggressively to roll back environmental regulations since taking office in January. In 2007 the governors of California, Arizona, New Mexico, Oregon and Washington jointly signed an agreement creating a Western Climate Change Initiative (WCCI) committed to tracking and reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Martinez opposes her state's participation in the WCCI.

Similar regional initiatives exist in the Northeast and Midwest. In May New

Jersey governor Chris Christie withdrew his state from the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI), which covers New England and the Mid-Atlantic states. The legislature in New Hampshire is also trying to modify that state's participation in RGGI.

Instead of fixating on Washington D.C. politics, key players in the Tea Party network are focusing on the states and directing their energies to combat state-level green pressure groups. Ned Ryun, executive director of American Majority, a grassroots organization headquartered in Virginia, urges the Tea Party take full advantage of its decentralized character and local roots.

* In Florida, Republican Governor Rick Scott has moved to cut staff members at the Department of Community Affairs, which oversees regulation for land use. Scott also favors cutbacks in land use initiatives.

* Republicans took control of the North Carolina legislature for the first time in 140 years. They are eyeing significant budget cuts to the Department of Environment and Natural Resources.

As Maine Goes

In Maine Tea Party-backed Republican governor Paul LePage is rolling back environmental regulations with support from new Republican majorities in both houses of the state legislature. He faces a "green iron triangle" that is deeply entrenched, lavishly funded and closely aligned with state and federal government agencies. Interviewed by this reporter, Arnold, the executive director of the Center for the Defense of Free Enterprise, had this to say:

"The Big Green disaster that's destroying Maine has been gnawing away at every state for years. The influence and reach of green pressure groups has gone unchecked and unchallenged far too long, crushing private citizens and business owners nationwide. The Iron Triangle, as I describe it in Maine, shows rank collusion between the Maine Audubon Society and the DEP [Dept. of Environmental Protection], jointly concocting false 'science' to justify catastrophic regulations.

Gov.-elect Page and incoming lawmakers need to show some guts and throttle these cabals so they can never hurt anyone again. There is no reason to let fictitious 'ecological concerns' continue to overwhelm the state's economy. It's time to strip Maine of its anti-business regulations and regulators, restructuring the bureaucracy to promote economic development and force environmental protection to help growth, not demolish it."

LePage has a 63-point plan to cut environmental regulations and open up 3 million acres of the state's North Woods to development. But the governor has a long road to travel. Erich Vehyl, a local free market activist and landowner, notes that environmental groups have collaborated with state officials for decades in framing laws and in staffing agencies devoted to regulating land use and prohibiting natural resource development. An umbrella organization known as the Northern Forest Alliance, which operates throughout New England, coordinates many government takeover efforts, Vehyl said. Other key players include the Maine Audubon Society, the Natural Resources Council of Maine and the Maine Coast Heritage Trust (MCHT).

“Maine is best described as an environmental dictatorship,” Vehyl said. “It is difficult to overstate how intertwined the local level green groups are with state and federal government agencies.” He points to Theodore S. Koffman, a former state representative from Bar Harbor, who was also a trustee to the Maine Audubon Society. Said Vehyl:

“It began when Audubon and other pressure groups like the Maine Coast Heritage Trust, Natural Resources Council of Maine, and the State Planning Office led by ex-Nature Conservancy president Henry Tyler, were attempting to arrange for the National Park Service to come in and take over most of our county and much of rural Maine, while ‘greenline’ controlling everything else. They are still maneuvering for that. Audubon’s Executive Director Koffman pulled off the stunt of slipping in legislation for ‘bird habitat’ overlays on private property as House chair of the legislative committee by inserting a brief, incomprehensible provision indirectly referring to the DEP mapping.”

Unfortunately, no one but Koffman’s supporters understood his intentions. “Each provision by itself was intended to look innocuous while sounding poetically ‘protective,’ but were absolutely devastating when accumulated and the pin was pulled,” Vehyl said. “Throughout the final legislative process DEP had the first set of maps it intended to launch, but didn’t tell anyone and kept them secret until it was too late to stop them. Audubon has been putting together maps of bird and other ‘habitat’ for this purpose for decades.”

Audubon’s Koffman, who is working with the Obama administration to transfer to federal control millions of acres of private

property in Maine, taught for years at the College of the Atlantic, an environmental liberal arts college. At a legislative hearing Koffman said he told students that property owners should not complain about the loss of property values because regulatory land use prohibitions are an economic ‘risk’ like the ‘stock market.’

“Audubon does not mean bird watching,” Vehyl argues. “The enviros want you to believe that whatever they say is ‘science’ because they say it. They are not scientists but they have real political power. Stop giving them money and stop funding state ‘land use planning’ in the name of protection.”

ECOS: Protector of the State

One little green monster has begun to take notice of the Tea Party activism, and it is stands ready to help state environmental agencies under attack by grassroots defenders of property rights and development. The Environmental Council of the States (ECOS) is a 501 (c)(6) non-profit founded in 1993 “to improve the capability of State environmental agencies and their leaders to protect and improve human health and the environment of the United States of America.”

As a mission statement that seems innocuous enough. But read more closely. “Our belief is that State government agencies are the keys to delivering environmental protection afforded by both Federal and State law. Further, ECOS provides leadership on environmental issues of national importance, and plays a critical role in facilitating a quality relationship among and between Federal and State agencies.”

It would seem ECOS is the “Phantom Menace” standing behind bloated state environmental agencies that have bedeviled businesses and private landowners for decades. The Tea Party may want to give this organization a closer look as it may be the key to unraveling how local and state-level green campaigns get started.

Stay tuned for further installments of “Little Green Monsters” to learn more about the collusion between green actors and government agents.

Kevin Mooney is an investigative journalist and frequent contributor to Green Watch.

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Correction: In the May 2011 issue of Green Watch, Robert Fisher was mis-identified as the founder of Gap, Inc. Mr. Fisher is in fact the son of Gap founders Donald and Doris Fisher.

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GreenNotes

File under “unintended consequences”: According to a new report from the **Institute of Medicine**, weatherizing your home to make it more environmentally friendly may be hazardous to your health. A report from *FOXNews.com* summarizes nicely: “By making buildings more airtight, building owners could increase ‘indoor-air contaminant concentrations and indoor-air humidity,’ the report said. By adding insulation, they could trigger moisture problems. By making improvements to older homes, crews could stir up hazardous material ranging from asbestos to harmful caulking.”

Kill a camel, save the planet? That’s a suggestion included in a consultation paper by Australia’s **Department of Climate Change and Energy Efficiency**. The problem: Over one million feral camels roam the Outback, and like a lot of large herbivorous animals, they “produce” a lot of methane. One camel, in fact, can be responsible for the annual methane equivalent of up to one ton of carbon dioxide. **Northwest Carbon**, an Adelaide-based company, has generously offered to “...shoot [the camels] from helicopters or muster them and send them to an abattoir for either human or pet consumption,” according to *AFP*. How much carbon dioxide would be produced by enough helicopter fuel to slaughter a million camels has not been noted, as far as *Green Notes* can tell.

Welcome to the new Dark Ages; at least, if the **Environmental Protection Agency** (EPA) has its way. The EPA’s war on coal-fired power plants continues apace as the Ohio-based utility **American Electric Power** (AEP) warns that stringent EPA regulations will force it to close five of its power plants. *The Hill* reports: “The utility said Thursday that EPA rules will hike prices, kill jobs and lead to the closure in the next few years of five coal-plants, and require costly changes at other plants.” Millions of people who light and heat their homes thanks to AEP plants in West Virginia, Indiana, Michigan and Ohio could now face higher energy prices at a time when many families are struggling financially – all thanks to the busybodies at the EPA.

New Jersey Governor **Chris Christie** has warmed the cockles of conservative hearts with his battle against the Garden State’s public-sector unions. Now he has the green movement in his sights: As *The New York Times* reports, Christie has decided “...to pull the Garden State out of the nation’s only operating cap-and-trade system, spurring environmental anger, conservative cheers and speculation about his national ambitions.” Christie called the **Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative** (RGGI), which mandates that energy producers buy and sell permits for the right to emit CO₂, a “failure” because it has done little since the program began in 2008 to curb emissions. Says Christie: “We remain completely committed to the idea that we have a responsibility to make the environment of our state and world better,” but, “We’re not going to do it by participating in gimmicky programs that don’t work.” Be still our hearts.

The dunes sagebrush lizard is only five inches long, but that’s big enough to be a major pain in the side of oil producers. Reports the *Wall Street Journal*: “The federal government is considering whether to put [the lizard] on the endangered species list, with the **U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service** arguing that oil and gas development in the **Permian Basin**, a rich oil-producing area in West Texas and Southeast New Mexico, is destroying parts of the lizard’s home, a unique sand dune ecosystem.” But the oil industry is warning that listing the little critter as endangered could have huge repercussions for America’s energy portfolio – and pocketbook. According to **Ben Shepperd**, president of the **Permian Basin Petroleum Association**, “This is the most prolific oil-producing region in onshore America...If you are to knock out a big portion of that, it clearly would drive prices up at the gasoline pump.” Of course, environmentalists love high gas prices because they think it encourages less driving, and lizards don’t (usually) drive at all. For the rest of us, however, it will be just another deleterious economic consequence of green do-gooderism.