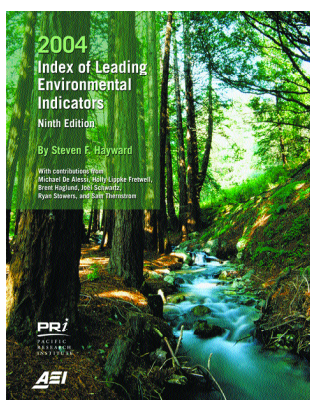


INDEX OF LEADING ENVIRONMENTAL INDICATORS Ninth Edition

By Steven Hayward

with Michael De Alessi, Holly L. Fretwell, Brent Haglund, Joel Schwartz, Ryan Stowers, and Sam Thornstrom



Good News is No News

Earth Day used to be big news, inspiring public marches and grabbing headlines. But in recent years the media and activists have been relatively quiet. Why the decline in popularity? Because environmental trends are

nearly all positive – and that message can be a tough sell.

We've been so successful in improving environmental quality in the United States that it is nearly impossible to paint a grim, doom-and-gloom picture anymore, unless you distort the evidence. And while some may attempt to sell papers with junk science, the American public now increasingly shrugs off deliberate scaremongering.

Nine years ago PRI launched an annual *Index of Leading Environmental Indicators* to spread the positive news about environmental progress. While we met with skepticism and resistance at first, the *Index* is now viewed as an indispensable resource for lawmakers, media, and the mainstream public.

As the highlights from this year's edition demonstrate, the environment remains our single greatest policy success story.

Air Quality

- Average vehicle emissions are dropping about 10 percent per year as the fleet turns over to inherently cleaner vehicles, including modern SUVs.
- Since 1985, nitrogen oxides (NO_x) emissions from cars have dropped 56 percent and volatile organic compounds (VOCs) are down 67 percent, according to the most recent EPA data.

Water Quality

- The EPA reports that the percentage of the U.S. population served by water systems that have reported no violations of any health-based standards has risen from 79 percent in 1993 to 94 percent in 2002.
- Private efforts such as Ducks Unlimited have been enormously successful in conserving habitat for waterfowl and other wildlife, and private water trusts have also helped further conservation efforts in a number of states.

Climate Change

- In the past year experts have raised new doubts about climate models. The uncertainty in the range of CO₂ emissions projections is even larger than the uncertainty of the climate models themselves because of flawed economic assumptions.
- There is also controversy from several sources about whether the climate of the 20th century was the warmest on record or whether the period around the 1500s was warmer.

Toxic Chemicals

- There has been a 55-percent decline in toxic releases since 1988, even while total output of the industries covered by this measurement has increased 40 percent. This is a result of productivity gains and technological improvements.

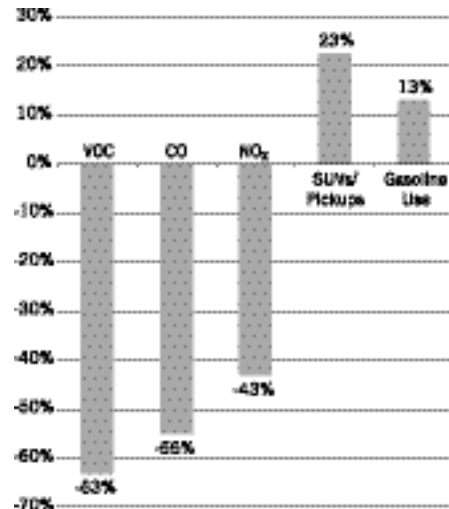
Species and Habitat Conservation

- The Endangered Species Act (ESA) remains embroiled in controversy. A total of seven species have gone extinct in America and 10 have had full recoveries, four of which predate the ESA.

Public Land Management

- One of the few areas to show no environmental improvement is controlled by the government – public lands. While funding and land allotments have increased, quality has deteriorated by most significant measures.

Net Change in Automobile Emissions in CA, 1994-2001



Source: A.J. Kean, et al., "Trends in Exhaust Emissions from California Light-Duty Vehicles, 1994-2001" (Warrendale, Pennsylvania: Society of Automotive Engineers, 2002).

2004 Index of Leading Environmental Indicators, Ninth Edition

http://www.pacificresearch.org/pub/sab/enviro/04_enviroindex/Enviro_04.pdf

Published jointly by:



Pacific Research Institute
755 Sansome Street, Suite 450
San Francisco, CA 94111
Tel: 415/989.0833
Fax: 415/989.2411
Email: info@pacificresearch.org



American Enterprise Institute
1150 Seventeenth Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20036
Tel: 202/862.5800
Fax: 202/862.7177
Email: info@aei.org
