

ago, the Bush Administration authorized the release to Congress of thousands of e-mail communications by senior White House officials in the Clinton administration, including messages sent by outside advisers and senior aides to Vice President Al Gore.

Sixty-seven percent of Americans believe the Bush Administration is either hiding something or lying about its relationship with Enron Corp., up from 53% the week before, says a CBS-New York Times poll.

The public could soon learn how much influence Enron CEO Ken Lay and other power-company executives had in ghostwriting the Bush Administration's energy plan. After numerous attempts by Congress and others to find out how much influence polluting industries had in drafting the energy plan, the Sierra Club filed a suit against Vice President Cheney's Energy Task Force, which prepared the proposal.

EPA

A federal judge has temporarily halted a Bush Administration plan to reshuffle the office of the Environmental Protection Agency's hazardous waste ombudsman.

There has been a steep decline in environmental enforcement during President Bush's first year in office, according to figures released by Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility.

The computer model the EPA uses to decide whether homes are dangerously contaminated with industrial solvent fumes seriously underestimated the risk in one Denver-area home and probably in hundreds of cases across the country.

The EPA has announced that the federal government will not regulate levels of dioxin in sewage sludge that is incinerated or placed in sludge landfills or containment ponds.

Anthrax may get ink, but every day 850,000 U.S. facilities use dangerous chemicals. More than 7 billion pounds of them end up in the environment.

FORESTS

The Bush Administration wants Congress to approve a plan for "charter forests," a new category of federal forest land that would be managed locally. Some Democrats and conservationists worry it's an attempt to circumvent environmental protections. They're already upset that the Bush administration is revising Clinton-era forest policies, including the "roadless rule" that protected more than 58 million acres from most logging and road construction.

The U.S. Forest Service sometimes uses federal funds provided under the National Fire Plan for non-fire related projects, finds a new report by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Office of Inspector General.

GENETIC ENGINEERING

In a victory for companies that develop genetically modified plants, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that seeds and seed-grown plants can be patented.

While the Nation's attention was occupied by war and terrorism, US scientists quietly conducted the world's first confined field test of a genetically modified insect.

JUDICIARY

In the first year of Bush's presidency, environmental protections have taken a back seat to industry concerns, according to attorneys who represent environmental groups in court. "Under this Administration the courts have become the forum of choice for rolling back environmental protections," said Earthjustice Executive Director Buck Parker.

Federal agencies have flouted a Gulf War-era law requiring most of their newly purchased vehicles to run on alternative fuels, environmental organizations charge in a lawsuit. The suit filed in San Francisco federal court accuses 18 federal agencies of failing to follow the 1992 Energy Policy Act, signed by then-President George Bush. The act was sup-

posed to reduce America's dependence on oil by encouraging use of other fuels, such as natural gas.

The nomination of a Pennsylvania district court judge by President. Bush to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit is being challenged by 27 national environmental and community groups. They claim that, as a district court judge, D. Brooks Smith handed down rulings that favored industry interests over environmental protection and public health.

MILITARY

After years of denying any link between illness and service in the Persian Gulf war, military officials said that veterans of the conflict were nearly twice as likely as other soldiers to suffer ALS, the fatal neurological illness known as Lou Gehrig's disease.

The U.S. Navy and the National Marine Fisheries Service have released a report acknowledging the role that the Navy's experimental sonar played in the deaths of 17 marine mammals in the Bahamas last year. The report is the agency's first official admission that sonar may contribute to whale beachings.

MINING

Federal regulators approved the largest railroad construction project in modern history, a 900-mile \$1.4 billion line to help move Wyoming coal to power plants in the East and Midwest.

The day after Christmas, officials of the U.S. Forest Service and the state of Montana approved a plan by Sterling Mining Co. to build Rock Creek mine. It took 14 years to win approval, but the battle is far from over. It's a battle worth fighting. Sterling would create a 500-acre industrial site in the midst of Montana's Cabinet Mountain Wilderness. Those who discover it, like Theodore Roosevelt more than a century ago, are awed by its scenic grandeur. This place was among the first 10 areas officially protected as wilderness by action of Congress.

Charging that new Bush Administration rules governing hard-rock mining on public lands will stick taxpayers with cleanup costs for toxic messes, environmentalists sued to block the regulations from going into effect.

The Bush Administration will lift a two-year moratorium on new mining claims on more than 1 million acres of federal lands in southern Oregon. The Clinton Administration ordered the temporary ban last year to foster a debate over a new national monument.

NUCLEAR

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission has failed to adequately ensure that owners have enough money to safely own, operate and later decommission nuclear power plants, a Congressional review says.

Energy Secretary Spencer Abraham selected Nevada's Yucca Mountain, 90 miles northwest of Las Vegas, as the final resting place for tens of thousands of tons of nuclear waste.

National environmental, public interest, and safe energy organizations blasted Abraham's recommendation that Yucca Mountain be developed into the country's repository for high-level atomic waste. Citing intense earthquake and volcanic activity at the site, the risks of transporting the highly radioactive wastes cross-country, as well as the proposed dump's huge and still rising costs, the groups charged that Abraham's recommendation is based on politics, not science.

The Energy Department plans to ask permission to dispose of nuclear waste at Yucca Mountain before it has finished designing the repository, and it hopes to begin burying the waste long before it knows how to seal the tunnels, department officials said in testimony before an independent science advisory panel.

A panel of scientists says the Energy Department's plan is fraught with uncertainties. They say that, no matter where the waste is put, it will be impossible to avoid unexpected problems over the

more than 10,000 years the material will be highly radioactive.

PUBLIC LANDS

A federal judge Thursday upheld President Clinton's creation of six national monuments in Arizona, Colorado, Oregon and Washington, ruling they were valid exercises of a 95-year-old law.

Internet access to the U.S. Department of the Interior across the country, including e-mail and Web sites, was shut down for several months by a federal judge who said the action was needed to protect hundreds of millions of dollars in a government-run trust for Native Americans.

President Bush is said to be considering for an Interior post the executive director of the Cody, Wyoming, Chamber of Commerce, who is also a former aid to Dick Cheney and an outspoken opponent of Yellowstone's snowmobile ban.

A federal review of snowmobile use in Yellowstone and Grand Teton National Parks has found little evidence to challenge a Clinton Administration decision to ban the machines because of their impact on the environment.

Wholesale killing of coyotes and mountain lions, and opening up protected areas to new power transmission lines, could now be allowed in Arizona's five recently created national monuments under a new policy quietly issued last month by Interior Secretary Gale Norton.

TOXICS

The Bush Administration is considering allowing data from human testing of toxic pesticides to be part of regulatory decisions, a step that would run counter to a Clinton Administration scientific advisory panel. Critics say it would violate the Nuremberg Code adopted after World War II.

WATER POLLUTION

According to the EPA, more than 1.2 trillion gallons of untreated sewage pours into waterways each year from aging sewer systems designed to overflow when it rains.

The Bush Administration weakened several rules designed to protect thousands of streams, swamps and other wetlands from destruction through the Clean Water Act, despite opposition to the changes from two of its own environmental agencies.

CONGRESS

ARCTIC REFUGE

If Congress approves drilling for oil and gas in the ANWR, it will be breaking with government practice of the last 35 years, which has limited when drilling may occur in refuges, the General Accounting Office has concluded.

As the Senate debates the patriotic merits of drilling for oil in Alaska's ANWR, a new report by BP PLC documents widespread operational problems at its giant oil field in neighboring Prudhoe Bay.

The Senate overwhelmingly opposed the latest attempt to drill in the ANWR, by a vote of 94-1. Offered by Minority

Leader Trent Lott (R-Miss.), the amendment was contained in the House-passed energy bill (minus the \$33 billion in energy subsidies) along with a moratorium on human cloning. The measure would have done nothing to aid consumers, was a threat to the environment, and offered false promises of national security. Senator George Allen (R-VA), cast the lone affirmative vote.

ENERGY

Government subsidies to oil, coal and nuclear power industries could double if the Senate passes the House energy bill (H.R. 4), according to a report released by the Green Scissors Campaign. "Running on Empty: How Environmentally Harmful Energy Subsidies Siphon Billions from Taxpayers" details new and existing subsidies to oil, coal, gas and nuclear power industries that would total \$62 billion over the next 10 years.

New wind farms installed across the United States in 2001 will produce enough electricity to power 475,000 average American households, according to a year end analysis by the American Wind Energy Association. It was a record year, but the ongoing Congressional battle over an economic stimulus package has stalled renewal of the wind production tax credit, stranding hundreds of millions of dollars in wind power investments in states like Montana, Oregon, South Dakota, and West Virginia.

NUCLEAR

The House passed H.R. 2983, a bill to reauthorize the Price-Anderson Act until 2017, by voice vote. The act limits the financial liability of nuclear power plant operators in the event of a major accident or terrorist attack.

PESTICIDES

A congressional committee has killed legislation seeking to protect public school children and staff from certain pesticides. The provision was backed by Democrats, the nation's largest teachers union and even a pesticide group, but it was opposed by Republicans and the National School Boards Association, wary of jurisdictional disputes and the possibility of costly, and unfunded, mandates.

TRADE

The House of Representatives voted to approve "Fast Track," H.R. 3005, by a vote of 215 to 214. Specifically, H.R. 3005 would allow trade deals to include provisions like Chapter 11 of the North American Free Trade Agreement. These conditions encourage "regulatory takings" claims by foreign companies, and threaten hard-won laws and regulations that protect citizens and natural resources. Additionally, the bill would do nothing to prevent countries from lowering their environmental standards to gain unfair trade advantages.

Voting NO for New Jersey (FOR the environment, against Fast Track): Andrews, Holt, LoBiondo, Menendez, Pallone, Pascrell, Payne, Rothman, Smith. Voting YES, against the environment: Ferguson, Frelinghuysen, Saxton. Did not vote: Roukema.

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