

## EarthTalk™

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**Dear EarthTalk:** What are the major environmental issues that our next president, be it Obama or McCain, will have to confront?

-- Melinda Barnes,  
via e-mail

Global warming is unquestionably the most pressing environmental issue facing whoever ends up in the White House in January 2009.

Not only does climate change impact—and in most cases exacerbate—other environmental problems, it has even wider implications for the economy and society at large.

Luckily for all of us, both Barack Obama and John McCain are committed to tackling climate change, although their proposed approaches differ in significant ways.

The non-profit League of Conservation Voters (LCV), America's leading voice for environmental advocacy within electoral politics, would prefer to see Obama elected president given his environmental track record and plans for the future.

While both candidates favor instituting a mandatory "cap-and-trade" program (whereby the federal government allows polluters to trade for the right to emit a reduced overall amount of greenhouse gases), Obama is for more strident cuts.

He would like to see the U.S. reduce its greenhouse gas emissions by some 80 percent by 2050, while McCain supports only cutting back by 65 percent. Both candidates have authored legislation in the Senate designed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, although no such bills have come close to passing.

Even though McCain is by far the most forward-thinking of the original

Republican presidential contenders on global warming and the need to take action, LCV still gives him poor marks, only a 24 rating (out of 100) lifetime and zero for 2007.

LCV says that McCain missed all 15 critical environmental votes last year and that he "repeatedly clings to outdated policies and flip-flops on core environmental issues." By comparison, Obama earned a score of 100 in 2007 and has a lifetime LCV rating of 87.

One area where environmentalists take issue with McCain is his support for expanding the role of nuclear power in cutting fossil fuel use. Obama would rather bolster alternative energy sources like wind and solar power that do not have the nasty side effect of radioactive waste in need of storage and disposal. (McCain also supports the development of new renewables, but not to the extent that Obama is willing to commit).

Some of the other hot button environmental issues sure to occupy the next president's time include: how to best protect the nation's water resources and wetlands; whether to allow more drilling for oil and natural gas both offshore and within Alaska's Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.

Also, whether to reinstate the Roadless Area Conservation Rule, a Clinton-era law (subsequently overturned by the Bush administration) calling for protection of some 58 million acres of public land from logging; how to meet U.S. commitments on existing environmental laws in international trade agreements; and whether to bring back the so-called "polluter pays" part of the government's "Superfund" toxic waste clean-up program.

While Obama is clearly the greener candidate on most of these issues, the fact that McCain even takes them seriously—and is committed to any greenhouse gas reductions whatsoever—is a



Global warming is the biggest issue facing our next president. Both Barack Obama and John McCain are committed to tackling climate change, although their proposed approaches differ in significant ways. (Photo courtesy Getty Images)

plus for environmental advocates exasperated by eight years of green naysaying by the Bush administration.

**CONTACTS:** Obama '08, [www.barackobama.com](http://www.barackobama.com); McCain for President, [www.johnmccain.com](http://www.johnmccain.com); League of Conservation Voters, [www.lcv.org](http://www.lcv.org).

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## Gabriel Skatepark

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ing of the new skatepark at Gabriel Park. Actually it was a rather low-key event.

July 11 was one of those hot summer days that we dream about in the middle of January. About 50 people attended the opening ceremony, huddling around Mayor Tom Potter, Parks Commissioner Dan Saltzman, and Stephanie Mohler from Airspeed Skateparks that designed and built the 10,000 square foot concrete modified snake-run.

There is no doubt in my mind that skateboarding in general is becoming a more accepted form of recreation.

This is the second fastest growing sport in the United States behind snowboarding. And local skaters have waited a long time for this one.

So it was sort of surprising that the turnout was so low. The young and old skaters that showed up were quickly rewarded, skating almost as soon as Commissioner Saltzman cut the ribbon.

The new skatepark is located near the tennis courts along Southwest 45th Avenue. Gabriel Park is the fourth of 19 planned skateparks in Portland, following respectively Pier Park, Glenhaven and Holly Farm. Now, about those BMX bikes...OK, that's another story.

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