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Here's one for a heads-up, particularly in regard to the concerns for the future of farming. They are not limiting themselves to machinery . . . cows and crop sizes would be additionally regulated in the context of greenhouse gas emissions. Well and irrigation pumping would also be targeted.

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July 19, 2008

REVIEW & OUTLOOK

The Lawnmower Men

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Al Gore blew into Washington on Thursday, warning that "our very way of life" is imperiled if the U.S. doesn't end "the carbon age" within 10 years. No one seriously believes such a goal is even remotely plausible. But if you want to know what he and his acolytes think this means in practice, the Environmental Protection Agency has just published the instruction manual. Get ready for the lawnmower inspector near you.

In a huge document released last Friday, the EPA lays out the thousands of carbon controls with which they'd like to shackle the whole economy. Central planning is too artful a term for the EPA's nanomanagement. Thankfully none of it has the force of law -- yet. However, the Bush Administration has done a public service by opening this window on new-wave green thinking like Mr. Gore's, and previewing what Democrats have in mind for next year.

The mess began in 2007, when the Supreme Court ruled 5-4 in *Mass. v. EPA* that greenhouse gases are "air pollutants" under current environmental laws, despite the fact that the laws were written decades before the climate-change panic. The EPA was ordered to regulate if it decides that carbon emissions are a danger to the public. The 588-page "advance notice of proposed rulemaking" lays out how the EPA would like it to work in practice.

Justice Antonin Scalia noted in his dissent that under the Court's "pollutant" standard "*everything* airborne, from Frisbees to flatulence, qualifies," which the EPA appears to have taken literally. It is alarmed by "enteric fermentation in domestic livestock" -- that is, er, their "emissions." A farm with over 25 cows would exceed the EPA's proposed carbon limits. So would 500 acres of crops, due to harvesting and processing machinery.

But never fear. The EPA would regulate "farm tractors" too, plus "lawn and garden equipment." For example, it "could require a different unit of measure [for carbon emissions] tied to the machine's mission or output -- such as grams per kilogram of cuttings from a 'standard' lawn for lawnmowers."

In fact, the EPA has new mandates for everything with an engine. There's a slew of auto regulations, especially jacking up fuel-efficiency standards well beyond their current levels, and even controlling the weight and performance of cars and trucks. Carbon rules are offered for "dirt bikes and snowmobiles." Next up: Nascar.

The EPA didn't neglect planes and trains either, down to rules for how aircraft can taxi on the runway. Guidelines are proposed for boat design such as hulls and propellers. "Innovative strategies for reducing hull friction include coatings with textures similar to marine animals," the authors chirp. They also suggest "crew education campaigns" on energy use at sea. Fishermen will love their eco-sensitivity training.

New or modified buildings that went over the emissions limits would have to obtain EPA permits. This would cover power plants, manufacturers, etc. But it would also include "large office and residential buildings, hotels, large retail establishments and similar facilities" -- like schools and hospitals. The limits are so low that they would apply to "hundreds of thousands" of sources, as the EPA itself notes. "We expect that the entire country would be in nonattainment."

If this power grab wasn't enough, "EPA also believes that . . . it might be possible for the Agency to consider deeper reductions

through a cap-and-trade program." The EPA thinks it can levy a carbon tax too, as long as it's called a "fee." In other words, the EPA wants to impose via regulatory ukase what Congress hasn't been able to enact via democratic debate.

That's why the global warmists have so much invested in the EPA's final ruling, which will come in the next Administration. Any climate tax involves arguments about costs and benefits; voting to raise energy prices is not conducive to re-election. But if liberals can outsource their policies to the EPA, they can take credit while avoiding any accountability for the huge economic costs they impose.

Meanwhile, the EPA's career staff is unsupervised. In December, they went ahead and made their so-called "endangerment finding" on carbon, deputizing themselves as the rulers of the global-warming bureaucracy. The adults in the White House were aghast when they saw the draft. EPA lifers retaliated by leaking the disputes of the standard interagency review process to Democrats like Henry Waxman and sympathetic reporters. Thus the stations-of-the-cross media narrative about "political interference," as if the EPA's careerists don't have their own agenda. So the Administration performed triage by making everything transparent.

At least getting the EPA on the record will help clarify the costs of carbon restrictions. Democrats complaining about "censorship" at the EPA are welcome to defend fiats about lawnmowers and flatulent cows.

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