

Your Fall Report

What's being done to save the bees?

By Steve Blackledge, senior director of our national conservation program

One in 7 Americans now lives in a state that restricts the use of bee-killing pesticides. How did that happen?

Here's a quick look at the progress to date:

States banning bee-killing pesticides

Neonicotinoids (or neonics for short) are a class of pesticides that have been linked to bee die-offs. They're 1,000 times more toxic to bees than DDT, and even sublethal doses cause a lot of damage. These neurotoxic pesticides attack bees' brains, making it harder for them to sleep, forage, fly and even find their way home.

Fortunately, states are recognizing the threat these dangerous pesticides pose to bees, and they're taking action to limit their use and sale. These are the nine states that have already passed laws to that effect: Connecticut and Maryland in 2016; Vermont in 2019; Maine and Massachusetts in 2021; New Jersey, New York and Rhode Island in 2022; and Colorado in 2023.

Thanks to this progress, 1 in 7 Americans now lives in a state with some restriction on bee-killing pesticides.

Next up: Our sister group Environment California is working to build support for a bill currently under consideration in California that would address non-agricultural uses of neonics, such as on lawns, gardens and golf courses. If successful, it would boost that number to 1 in 4 Americans living in a state with a similar such law. And our national network is looking for more opportunities to advance legislation in more states.



Steve Blackledge, senior director of our national conservation program, with our canvassing team on our Save the Bees campaign.

Taking neonics off store shelves

When it comes to maintaining our lawns and gardens, there are plenty of safe products on the market. Too many garden centers, however, still sell pesticides that are harmful to bees.

Conservationists have already helped convince The Home Depot and Lowe's to commit to phasing out the sale of bee-killing neonics for consumer use. Now, we're calling on Amazon, the world's largest online retailer, to do the same.

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Thanks
for making it
all possible

Is your favorite beach safe for swimming?

Even though our water is cleaner than it used to be, runoff pollution and sewage overflows still can make swimmers sick. Scientists estimate 57 million instances of people getting sick each year from swimming in polluted waters in the U.S. Those illnesses can include nausea, diarrhea, ear infections and rashes.

Our research partners at Environment America Research & Policy Center released

In May, Gov. Tim Walz signed the most comprehensive state right-to-repair law in the country. This landmark legislation requires manufacturers to make spare parts, tools and repair information available to consumers and independent repair shops. State lawmakers added right to repair to an omnibus bill (SF 2774) after gaining strong support in both chambers.

The new law covers nearly all electronics (with the exception of farm and construction equipment, video game consoles, specialized cybersecurity tools, motor vehicles and medical devices). Minnesota is the first state to extend the right to repair to home appliances and a range of commercial and business products, including commercial, educational and business computing. The new law will go into effect on July 1, 2024.

Minnesota moves to get the lead out

Gov. Walz recently signed a law dedicating \$240 million to replace lead pipes that bring drinking water into people's homes.

Lead is highly toxic, especially for kids. And these lead pipes (called lead service lines) are a primary source of lead getting into drinking water. State officials estimate there are 100,000 lead service lines in Minnesota.

While this is a win for clean water in our homes, we still have more work to do to get the lead out of schools. Environment Minnesota Research & Policy Center's latest "Get the Lead Out" report gave our state a D for its lack of action on schools' drinking water. Minnesota law requires public schools to test taps used for drinking water and cooking, but it does not require remediation.

"Most schools have faucets, fountains, pipes or plumbing made with lead," said John Rumpler, clean water program director for Environment America Research & Policy Center. "While it's alarming to find this toxic substance in the water our kids drink every day, it's not particularly surprising."

We are currently working to convince the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to require water utilities to replace all lead pipes within 10 years, with EPA expected to propose a new rule this fall.

NBC News Center Maine



John Rumpler, our national clean water director and senior attorney, spoke with local media about the threat sewage pollution poses to people enjoying popular summer destinations like Gooch's Beach in Kennebunk, Maine.

a new report, "Safe for Swimming?," which revealed that more than half of coastal and Great Lakes beaches surveyed had bacterial levels indicating potentially unsafe levels of fecal contamination on at least one day last year. As part of the report, we created a state-by-state map that allows the public to see which beaches were potentially unsafe for swimming on the greatest number of days last year.

"All of us want to enjoy a safe and healthy day at the beach," said John Rumpler, our national clean water director and senior attorney. "By calling attention to the dangers of water pollution, we can make a strong case for our elected representatives to invest in water infrastructure and stop sewage overflows."

To see if your favorite beach is safe for swimming, visit:
environmentminnesotacenter.org.

Gov. Walz signs nation's broadest right-to-repair law

Thanks to a landmark win in the state Legislature, Minnesotans are going to have a much easier time fixing their stuff—and just might help lead the nation into a more fixable future.

Get more updates on our work online at
<https://environmentminnesota.org>.



Toward a greener future

Support our work to build a cleaner, greener, healthier future by including a gift to Environment Minnesota or Environment Minnesota Research & Policy Center in your will, trust or retirement accounts.

For more information call
1-800-841-7299 or send an email to:
PlannedGiving@EnvironmentMinnesota.org



Valentina Angelova via Shutterstock

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What's being done to save the bees?

Members and supporters like you have helped deliver tens of thousands of messages to Amazon, urging it to take bee-killing pesticides off its virtual shelves.

Winning federal progress for the bees

Major progress is also being made at the national level:

- In 2021, we celebrated when we won protection for bees on 11 million acres of Department of Defense-owned land.
- The Inflation Reduction Act, passed in early 2023 and advocated for by our national network, included nearly \$20 billion in additional funding for the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) conservation programs. We're urging the USDA to use this funding to help pollinators, such as through its program to reimburse farmers for replanting prairie that provides native bees with much-needed habitat.

Now, our network is laying the groundwork for even bigger wins, as we urge the Biden administration to reinstate a ban on the use of bee-killing pesticides in wildlife refuges (the places bees should be safest) and call on the Environmental Protection Agency to restrict three of the most common types of neonics as they undergo a periodic review.

Of course, there's still a long way to go to save the bees. They face a triple threat of pesticide use, habitat loss and climate change. And the policies that have been passed so far have mainly addressed the consumer use of bee-killing pesticides, while still allowing for agricultural use.

Still, no one thought it was possible to ban DDT or any other pesticide until Rachel Carson wrote "Silent Spring" and sparked an environmental movement. Together, we can keep that movement burning bright as we work to win a ban on bee-killing neonics.

Farmers market-goers show their support for saving the bees.



Staff

Featured staff



CALSSA

Wendy Wendlandt
President, Environment
America

As president of Environment America, Wendy is a leading voice for the environment in the United States. She has been quoted in major national, state and local news outlets for nearly 40 years on issues ranging from air pollution to green investing. She is also a senior vice president with The Public Interest Network. She is a founding board member of Green Corps, the field school for environmental organizers, and Green Century Funds, the nation's first family of fossil fuel free mutual funds. Wendy started with WashPIRG, where she led campaigns to create Washington state's model toxic waste cleanup program and to stop the nation's first high-level nuclear waste dump site. She is a 1983 graduate of Whitman College. She lives in Los Angeles with her husband and dog and hikes wherever and whenever she can.



Environment Minnesota and The Public Interest Network are celebrating 50 years of action for a change.

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Your 2023 Fall Report

Our mission:

We all want clean air, clean water and open spaces. But it takes independent research and tough-minded advocacy to win concrete results for our environment, especially when powerful interests stand in the way of environmental progress.

That's the idea behind Environment Minnesota: Clean Air, Clean Water, Open Space, Inc., a project of Environment America, Inc. We focus exclusively on protecting Minnesota's air, water and open spaces. We speak out and take action at the local, state and national levels to improve the quality of our environment and our lives.

500,000 people call for mature and old-growth forest protections

More than 500,000 people have called on the U.S. Forest Service to protect mature and old-growth trees and forests from logging on federal land as a cornerstone of U.S. climate policy.

In April, the Forest Service issued a rulemaking proposal to improve the climate resilience of federally managed forests. The public comment period on the proposal closed in July.

In addition to the hundreds of thousands of people who weighed in, dozens of environmental and grassroots organizations submitted comments, including Environment Minnesota Research & Policy Center.

Activists and environmental advocates gathered at the Washington, D.C., offices of the Forest Service to celebrate the outpouring of public support.

"I'm not surprised that so many people took the time to get involved in this comment period. We love our trees and forests, so of course people spoke up," said Ellen Montgomery, public lands campaign director for Environment America Research & Policy Center. "Our forests clean our water, are home for wildlife, and are an incredible ally in our work to stop climate change. Our mature and old-growth forests and trees are worth more standing than as lumber."

Public Lands Campaign Director Ellen Montgomery and activists delivered public comments from 500,000 people to the Forest Service headquarters in D.C.



Staff