Annual Report

Recapping our work in 2011 for our members

Clean air. Clean water. Open space.
To our members

“Time and again, we see that environmental awareness is strongest when it begins close to home.”

Truth be told I’ve never been in the construction trades, but even I know that if you want to build something strong and sturdy, you start with a solid foundation.

That’s the kind of approach we take to protecting America’s environment. We start by talking to people about the places they know and love. Time and again, we see that environmental awareness is strongest when it begins close to home.

In 2011, for example, we rallied Californians from San Francisco to San Diego to keep 70 state parks from closing. We mobilized Chicagoland residents to reduce sewage discharges into Lake Michigan. And we helped Massachusetts homeowners, from Williamstown to Wellfleet, go solar.

We also know that once people commit their time and energy to their local environment, they’re more likely to stand up for the federal laws and policies that protect our air, water and open spaces across the nation. Tens of thousands of our members and supporters spoke out in 2011—to save the Grand Canyon from uranium mining and to ensure protections for all of our waterways. I believe this also explains why of more than 191 bills pushed in the U.S. House to weaken our nation’s environmental protections, none passed into law. Not one.

While some members of Congress continue to pursue a reckless agenda that prioritizes powerful polluters over our health and our planet, I’m confident that the solid foundation of grassroots support for environmental protection we’ve helped to build across the country will continue to push back.

In 2012, we’ll promote more solar power in California, Minnesota and Massachusetts—and we’ll keep pushing for federal incentives for solar, wind and more. We’ll call for more action to protect and restore waterways from Puget Sound to the Chesapeake Bay—and we’ll keep urging the EPA to update federal clean water standards. We’ll stand up for our state and local parks—and we’ll keep defending Yosemite and other treasures from mining, drilling and other threats.

Thanks for your support which makes our work possible. Together, we’ll build an even sturdier foundation for a cleaner, greener, healthier future.

Margie Alt,
Executive Director
These days, Americans seem to be defined most by what divides us. Red America and Blue America can barely talk to each other, much less find common ground. Occupy Wall Street reminded us of the growing economic divide between the wealthiest and the middle class. The culture of urban, coastal America seems alien to those of us who live in the Heartland and vice versa.

It’s all the more striking, then, that in at least a few cases this past year, people crossed political, economic and cultural lines to take action and achieve positive results for the environment.

In Maine, a Republican-led Legislature joined forces with Democratic lawmakers to pass a law to reduce the state’s dependence on oil by half by 2050. Environment Maine helped forge the agreement.

In Congress, an attempt to thwart an EPA rule limiting air pollution from power plants failed after Republican Sens. Mark Kirk (Ill.), Olympia Snowe (Me.), Susan Collins (Me.), Scott Brown (Mass.), Lamar Alexander (Tenn.) and Kelly Ayotte (N.H.) joined 50 Democratic senators in voting our way. We organized support for the rule in key states.

Finally, President Obama opted to delay a decision on the controversial Keystone XL pipeline, designed to carry tar sands oil from Canada over the Ogallala Aquifer to refineries in Texas. The opposition of environmentalists, who are concerned about the ecological impacts of the pipeline, played a role. Yet so did the concerns of Nebraska’s Republican Gov. Dave Heineman, along with conservative farmers and ranchers, about property rights and threats to water supplies.

Environment America’s mission, in the long term, is to help elevate issues like these so they become standards by which we measure our success as a society. Red states and blue states, the 99% and the 1%, uptown Manhattan and rural Nebraska—we all breathe the same air, drink the same water, experience the same awe at nature’s wonders, and inhabit the same small, blue planet.

Thanks to people like you, we’ll keep inviting people from all walks of American life to help us carry out this mission, with equal measures of passion, pragmatism and perseverance.

Douglas H. Phelps
Board of Directors, Chairman
America’s Great Waters

From the Chesapeake Bay to the Great Lakes, the Gulf of Mexico to Puget Sound, America’s great waters are vital to our ecology, our economy and our quality of life. Yet these waterways still face serious pollution from illegal dumping, reckless development, factory farm runoff and many other sources. Environment America is working in Washington, D.C., and across the country to rein in polluters and secure a cleaner future for our rivers, lakes and streams.
Steps taken to strengthen the Clean Water Act

For nearly 40 years, the Clean Water Act has helped protect America’s rivers, lakes and streams. But a pair of misguided U.S. Supreme Court decisions opened a gaping hole in the law, leaving more than half of the nation’s streams and more than 20 million acres of wetlands without any legal protection. This year, Environment America made significant progress toward restoring protections to all of our waters—and where necessary we used the law’s citizen suit provisions to halt pollution at the source.

In April, EPA moved to close loophole

Polluters used the courts to remove Clean Water Act protections from thousands of streams and millions of acres of wetlands. After five years of campaigning to eliminate the loophole, we made significant progress this year:

• On April 27, EPA Administrator Lisa Jackson came to Milwaukee to announce her proposal to restore clean water protections to streams and wetlands across the country. Wisconsin Environment’s Megan Severson joined Jackson for the announcement.

• Mining companies, developers and other polluters attacked the plan in the media and urged their allies in Congress to stop the EPA. ExxonMobil lobbyists threatened the White House with “legal warfare” over the issue.

• In response, we launched a national grassroots campaign to build enough public support to defend the EPA’s clean water plan from Congress. We talked to 450,000 people about threats to clean water and won media coverage in newspapers, TV and radio stations from Denver to Boston.

Illegal polluters held accountable

• For waters where the Clean Water Act remains in force, it is a powerful tool to bring polluters to justice. This year, our staff in Pennsylvania and Rhode Island won two precedent-setting Clean Water Act victories:

  • For years, GenOn Energy dumped selenium, boron and other pollutants into western Pennsylvania’s Conemaugh River, with toxic effects on local wildlife. PennEnvironment, the Sierra Club and several of our members sued in 2007 to stop the pollution. In 2011, after a judge ruled the company liable for a staggering 8,684 Clean Water Act violations, GenOn was ordered to end the pollution and pay $3.75 million to restore the Conemaugh—the largest penalty of its kind in Pennsylvania history.

  • Four years after suing the city of Newport to end illegal sewage overflows that contaminated Newport’s harbor and beaches, Environment Rhode Island got the city to agree to a comprehensive plan to end its pollution.
America’s Great Outdoors

The breathtaking chasms of the Grand Canyon, the rocky coasts of Acadia National Park in Maine, Mount Rainier’s snow-capped peaks … It’s easy to see why our national parks have been called America’s best idea. But far too often, the parks, forests and wild places we love are threatened by mining, logging and over development.
From the Grand Canyon to Maine’s North Woods, places we love defended

“The Grand Canyon fills me with awe. It is beyond comparison, beyond description.” Theodore Roosevelt

Theodore Roosevelt’s awestruck reaction to the Grand Canyon still rings true for the 4 million people who visit the canyon every year. Millions more experience the same sense of wonder exploring parks and forests closer to home. But mining companies, loggers and developers have set their sights on many of our country’s most beloved places. Our staff and supporters are working to defend the places we love from the short-sighted exploitation that threatens too many of them.

Interior Dept. backed ban on mining near Grand Canyon

Mining companies have staked over 1,100 claims to mine for uranium within five miles of Grand Canyon National Park. The mining process uses cyanide and sulfuric acid, posing grave risks to the canyon, the Colorado River and the 25 million people who rely on the river for drinking water. This year, our staff and members tackled the threat:

• In July, Anna Aurilio, director of our Washington, D.C., office, released a report on the risks of mining near the canyon alongside Arizona Reps. Raul Grijalva and Ed Pastor. The report, “Grand Canyon At Risk,” exposed the devastating legacy of mining near the canyon and throughout the West.

• After we helped mobilize more than 300,000 Americans to demand stronger protections for the canyon, Interior Secretary Ken Salazar announced that he would consider a plan to put 1 million acres around the park off-limits to mining for 20 years.

Our lands kept wild, from Maine to Texas

From Maine’s North Woods to Texas’ Christmas Mountains, our staff are working across the country to protect the places that mean so much to so many of us.

• In 2011, Gov. Paul LePage pushed to open Maine’s North Woods—the largest undeveloped forest east of the Rocky Mountains, home to local treasures like Mount Katahdin and Rangeley Lake—to unrestricted development. After Environment Maine members inundated their legislators with phone calls and emails, the Legislature rejected the governor’s most egregious proposals.

• Texas’s pristine Christmas Mountains, near Big Bend National Park, will stay wild despite the state government’s efforts to sell the land to a private owner. Environment Texas’ Luke Metzger helped negotiate a deal to turn over control of the mountains to the Texas State University System, which will preserve the rugged wilderness and leave it open to the public.

• Environment Washington’s staff have spoken to thousands of people about the opportunity to expand Mount Rainier National Park to include the threatened Carbon River Valley, one of the nation’s last rainforests. In June, we delivered more than 2,000 petition signatures urging Sens. Maria Cantwell and Patty Murray to expand the park—the next day both senators committed to support the program that would make it possible.

“From the Grand Canyon to Maine’s North Woods, places we love defended”
Tackling Global Warming

If we want to spare our children and grandchildren and our planet from the worst consequences of global warming, we must dramatically reduce the carbon pollution we pump into the atmosphere—and, as most scientists agree, we had better do it soon. Yet Washington is not doing enough, deterred by the influence of Big Oil and the coal industry, short-term partisan politics in Congress, and a stubborn economic recession. In 2011, our staff and members helped find a way forward.

States lead the way
Despite the lack of action in Washington, D.C., there is a way forward on global warming—and it starts in the states:

• State and local governments from Maryland to Colorado have adopted clean energy and climate policies projected to cut over 500 million tons of carbon per year by 2020—nearly 10 percent of our current emissions.

• We can go even further: Energy Program Director Rob Sargent unveiled a study showing that states can cut carbon pollution 20 percent by 2020 by adopting clean energy and transportation policies.

Global warming laws defended, from Calif. to N.H.
Unfortunately, the more progress states make to limit global warming pollution, the harder oil and coal companies fight to stop them.

• In 2010, Valero and other Texas oil companies sponsored Proposition 23, a ballot proposal to overturn California’s landmark global warming law. Environment California and our allies spoke to hundreds of thousands of Californians to build opposition to Prop. 23. Thanks to the effort, California voters overwhelmingly rejected the attack.

• At the urging of polluters, legislators in New Hampshire and Maine moved to withdraw from the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative, a program to cut global warming pollution. Working with our members, veterans groups and other allies, our staff defeated the RGGI rollback—at least for now.
Our families should be able to breathe clean air. We should not have to worry about mercury in our bodies or soot in our lungs. Yet coal-fired power plants and other industrial polluters spew hundreds of thousands of tons of lead, mercury, soot and other dangerous pollutants into our atmosphere every year. We need to protect our health and our children’s health by requiring polluters to clean up their act.

EPA to cut mercury, save 25,000 lives

In 2011, the Environmental Protection Agency moved to significantly cut mercury, soot and smog pollution from power plants. We expect these standards to save more than 25,000 lives each year. Environment America’s staff built support across the country to ensure these rules were adopted:

- We released reports detailing the health impacts of smog and mercury pollution, and the amount of pollution power plants emit nationwide.

- Thanks to our efforts, together with those of our environmental and public health allies, more than 800,000 people sent comments to the EPA in support of strong action on mercury—no other single EPA rule has ever received so much public support.

Congressional attacks voted down

Unfortunately, polluters and their allies in Congress launched a coordinated attack to block these critical safeguards. But working closely with our allies in the conservation and public health communities, lobbying key senators and rallying thousands of our online activists to speak out, we held the line against some of the worst attacks:

- In March, the U.S. Senate rejected a bill that would have blocked standards for soot, mercury and carbon pollution.

- In April, the Senate defeated four more bills that would have prevented the EPA from reducing the pollution that causes global warming.
Protecting our ocean legacy

From whales to turtles to dolphins, our oceans sustain an amazingly diverse array of wildlife. Yet our oceans face serious challenges ranging from pollution to overfishing to offshore drilling. Environment America works to address each of these threats, to halt the decline of our oceans and ensure that their magnificent creatures can thrive for generations to come. This year, we began to make progress on one of the most intractable threats facing the Pacific Ocean—plastic pollution.

Taking on a problem twice the size of Texas

After decades of using Styrofoam, plastic bags and other trash, billions of pounds of plastic have formed a toxic soup in the Pacific Ocean known as the Pacific Garbage Patch. Each year, this pollution kills millions of sea turtles, sea birds and marine mammals who mistake plastic debris for food.

- Already, the swirling mass of plastic in the Pacific is approximately twice the size of Texas. And unless action is taken, scientists predict the problem will double in the next ten years. Plastic bags are a significant part of this problem—California alone uses approximately 16 billion bags each year.

Pacific Coast communities ban the bag

As part of our Great Pacific Cleanup campaign, Environment America has been running a coordinated effort to ban plastic bags up and down the West coast. Although chemical industry lobbyists have so far been able to stave off statewide bans, we’re beating the plastic bag city by city:

- Environment California launched a huge grassroots campaign to ban the bag, talking to 200,000 citizens and holding “Turtle Tour” media events up and down the coast. Thanks in part to our efforts, 12 cities and towns in California have adopted local bag bans so far.

- We’ve followed suit in Washington with a bag ban in Bellingham and late in the year a major victory in Seattle; and in Oregon, where Portland will soon say goodbye to the bag.
Repowering America

We use too much energy and too much of it comes from coal, oil and other sources that wreak havoc on our environment. The good news is that we are surrounded by an abundance of clean energy options—the power of the sun, the movement of wind and waves, the heat of the earth, to name a few. By using energy more efficiently and tapping our country’s vast renewable energy resources, we can move toward 100 percent clean energy that doesn’t pollute and never runs out.

More wind and solar across the country
From Colorado to Connecticut, our staff have won significant victories to ramp up clean energy and phase out dirty coal plants.

- In Connecticut we passed a comprehensive energy bill that will help Connecticut families and businesses install solar on their rooftops.

- In December 2010, Environment Colorado’s Pam Kiely helped win a precedent-setting decision by Colorado regulators to shut down four aging coal plants and replace them with less-polluting energy sources.

- Environment New Jersey staff helped pass a law supporting enough wind energy off the Jersey Shore to power roughly 350,000 homes.

New building codes will spur energy savings
With too much energy escaping out of drafty attics and windows, we can use less energy by giving our homes an efficiency upgrade. Our staff are educating the public and winning the policies to get us there.

- This summer, our outreach staff directed hundreds of thousands of people to our online “Plug Into Clean Energy” guide, which provides helpful tips and resources on the best ways to start using less energy.

- Working alongside our state partners, forward-thinking builders, and state and local officials, we helped win an historic 30 percent improvement in efficiency for model building codes.
Slowing the rush to drill

As gas drilling rapidly expands across the country, the use of a dangerous new form of drilling—hydraulic fracturing or “fracking”—is emerging as one of the fastest-growing threats to our health and environment. Toxic fracking fluid and wastewater threaten our rivers, streams and drinking water supplies. The construction of new well pads and roads is turning pristine forests and fields into industrial zones, bringing more air pollution to places like Pittsburgh and Dallas. Environment America is working to protect the water we drink, the air we breathe and the places we love from the rush to drill.

Pennsylvania in the shadow of the Marcellus boom
Gas companies have built over 3,000 wells to tap Pennsylvania’s Marcellus Shale, with devastating consequences—spills, explosions, poisoned drinking water, clearcuts, and more than 2,700 environmental violations in just two years. PennEnvironment has won protections against some of the worst threats, and is now building support for a permanent ban.

• Clean Water Advocate Erika Staaf produced a documentary about residents living on the front lines of gas drilling, and sent a copy to every legislator in Harrisburg. Staaf also wrote a report detailing how drilling operations threaten schools, hospitals and daycare centers.

• We pressed Gov. Tom Corbett to end the industry practice of dumping toxic wastewater at public treatment plants.

Stopping gas drilling before it’s too late
In states like New York, New Jersey and North Carolina, we’re working to stop fracking before it starts.

• In 2010, Environment New York helped win the nation’s first temporary drilling ban. When the ban expired in 2011, our advocacy helped push officials to keep New York City’s watershed and state forests off-limits to drilling. We are working now toward a broader ban.

• We defended de facto drilling bans in Maryland and North Carolina, pending further study of the practice.
Getting America Off Oil

The environmental costs of our oil dependence are out of control—accidents and spills that wreak havoc from the Gulf Coast to the Yellowstone River, the smog that pollutes our air, and the threat of catastrophic climate change to name a few. With American families paying high prices at the pump, there has never been a better time to put this country on a path to getting off oil for good. We can get there through investments in fuel-efficient cars and trucks, new technologies like electric vehicles, and a first-class system of public transportation.

Our report, “Getting Off Oil: A 50 state Roadmap,” found we can reduce our oil consumption by more than 80 billion gallons per year by 2030 through concrete steps like:

- Improving fuel efficiency standards (395 million barrels by 2030)
- Deploying electric vehicles and expanding public transit (455 million barrels by 2030)
- Planning our communities around mass transit (41 million barrels by 2030)

At 54.5 mpg, a big move to get America off oil

This summer, after our staff and allies mobilized thousands to voice their support for clean cars, the Obama administration announced two big steps toward getting America off oil:

- The administration announced new fuel economy standards that will ensure that the average new car or light truck meets a 54.5-mpg standard by 2025. This is the single biggest step ever taken to reduce oil consumption and global warming pollution. We helped keep the standards as strong as possible by organizing state leaders and delivering tens of thousands of comments from the public demonstrating that Americans want cleaner cars.

- The administration also announced the first-ever standard for trucks, which will save more than 20 billion gallons of gasoline by 2018.

Environment Maine wins law to cut oil dependence

Offering a precedent for bold state action, in June, the Maine Legislature unanimously passed a bill to reduce the state’s dependence on oil. The new law, spearheaded by Environment Maine, sets ambitious goals to cut Maine’s oil use 30 percent by 2030 and 50 percent by 2050, and requires the state to develop a comprehensive plan to achieve the goals.

Maine is the fourth most oil-dependent state in the nation. If we can win there, we can win across the country—and our staff are organizing veterans, public health advocates, and transportation reformers to do just that.
Environment America
1543 Wazee St., Ste. 430
Denver CO 80202

Address Service Requested