



Winter Report

Don't shortchange America's national parks

Important program for our parks under attack

From the North Cascades in Washington, to the Florida Everglades and Acadia in Maine, too many of America's national parks and other special places are threatened by overdevelopment and pollution from mining, logging and drilling.

Nearly 50 years ago, Congress created the Land and Water Conservation Fund to buy and preserve lands and waters across the country with \$900 million each year, raised via oil company royalties.

Congress has only fully funded the program once since its inception, and in 2012, we saw what would have been the most reckless cut yet: House leaders moved to slash 93 percent of the Fund.

North Cascades among parks at risk

"This was a drastic move, even for the most anti-environmental Congress in recent memory," said Environment America Conservation Advocate Aaron Weil.

The consequences of these cuts could be severe. Along the North Cascades, gray wolf, grizzly bear and salmon habitats are facing increasing threats from toxic gold mining and logging. Near the Rocky Mountains, oil and gas drilling operations could imperil water and wildlife. Along the Everglades, and within Maine's Acadia National Park, developers could spoil the land and water.

Environment America and our supporters have managed to fight off similar threats at other parks. Last year, we helped protect over 1 million acres around the Grand Canyon from new toxic uranium mining. We've



Andy Porter / Creative Commons

▲ *The mountains of North Cascades National Park*

also helped expand Mt. Rainier National Park, protecting a rare North American rainforest; gain national monument status for Colorado's Chimney Rock; and preserve funding for state and local parks throughout the country.

In Washington, D.C., Weil and other Environment America advocates are setting up meetings with members of Congress and

their aides. Outside of Washington, our staff and members are building grassroots support for our parks. The writer Wallace Stegner once called our national parks "America's best idea." We're ready to defend that idea and protect and preserve our parks for future generations.



Staff

take action

◀ *Washington, D.C., Office Director Anna Aurilio and her daughter, Renata, enjoying Great Falls National Park in Virginia.*

To join our call to protect our parks and restore the Land and Water Conservation Fund, visit www.EnvironmentAmerica.org.

To our members

As President Obama began his second term, he renewed his promise to tackle global warming, saying, “the failure to do so would betray our children and future generations.” He took that a step further in his State of the Union address when he added, “If Congress won’t act soon to protect future generations, I will.”

Bravo! His strong words to the nation and Congress are just what we want to hear. Yet you and I know that words—no matter how strong and how heartfelt—are not enough.

The president’s commitment is appreciated, but even that won’t solve the global warming crisis. Sustained by your action and support, we’ll keep knocking on doors, lobbying lawmakers, and sparking the grassroots energy it will take to counter powerful polluters and win real results for the places we love, the air and water we depend on, and the planet we share. I’m so glad you’re with us.

Sincerely,

Margie Alt
Executive Director

Recent action

Another wake-up call on global warming

When Superstorm Sandy slammed the Mid-Atlantic in late October, it claimed dozens of lives and caused tens of billions of dollars in damage. It also brought more attention to scientists’ warnings that global warming will cause intense storms like Sandy to become more frequent.

To slow this trend, it is critical that we stop creating the carbon pollution that fuels global warming. As this newsletter goes to print, the Obama administration is on the verge of taking a critical step in that direction. The Environmental Protection Agency is expected to soon finalize the first-ever carbon pollution standards for new coal-fired power plants. Environment America and our state groups helped demonstrate historic support for these standards and will continue to push to limit carbon for existing plants as well.

The cost of fracking

As the oil and gas industry aggressively seeks to expand its fracking boom, states are pushing back on the rush to drill.

In Colorado, after we helped defeat an attempt to strip local control over nearby gas drilling operations, citizens of Longmont voted this November to pass a local ban on fracking. In the Midwest, Environment Illinois’ work to build opposition to dirty drilling reached a critical point as 30 state legislators agreed to co-sponsor a moratorium on fracking.

To educate more people and decision makers on the dangers of fracking, we researched and wrote a report in September. “The Costs of Fracking” shows that as dirty drilling threatens our water and our health, it also drains dollars from our communities—with ruined roads, added health burdens and cleanup costs.

The climate is changing – are your investments?

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▲ Satellite image of Superstorm Sandy, which ravaged the East Coast in October 2012.

NASA (inset) Pam Andrade/Creative Commons



Wind power for a cleaner America

In 2012, renewable energy projects accounted for almost half of the new power generation installed in the United States. With clean energy growing rapidly, we are on our way to a future run not on polluting fossil fuels, but by wind turbines, solar panels and super-efficient buildings that produce all the energy they use.

Powering 13 million homes

Wind energy already powers nearly 13 million homes across the country—about as many homes as are in the entire state of California—offsetting the need for 44 coal-fired power plants and providing huge benefits for our environment and health.

Savvy public policy has helped make wind power's success possible. Renewable energy standards, which Environment America affiliates helped win in many states, require utilities to derive a certain percentage of their power from clean sources, such as wind. Federal tax incentives have also spurred investment in wind.

As 2012 came to a close, however, some in Congress threatened to end federal tax credits for wind power, a move that would have meant less wind power, more pollution and layoffs for 37,000 Americans.

Wind energy reduces pollution

In response, we released our report "Wind Power for a Cleaner America." We found that each year, wind energy displaces as much global warming pollution as taking 13 million cars off the road, and saves enough water to meet the needs of a city the size of Boston.

We also found that if the wind industry continues to grow at a rate similar to that of recent years, by 2016, wind power will displace as much global warming pollution as taking an additional 11 million cars off the road.

Our staff released the report at news events across the country. Standing with our allies, from public health officials and wind company CEOs, to farmers and elected

leaders, we garnered coverage in more than 150 news outlets, including the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, Des Moines Register, Baltimore Sun and Bakersfield Californian.

Koch brothers, Exelon work to end incentives

While we see wind power as a win-win for our environment and health, the oil tycoon Koch Brothers and nuclear giant Exelon lobbied Congress last year to let the clock run out on wind tax credits—a particularly brash move given that the oil and nuclear industries still receive enormous subsidies from the federal government.

Confident of public support for wind power, we worked to engage thousands of citizens and stakeholders from key states to convince Congress to act. In the end, President Obama and Congress agreed to extend the wind power tax credits as part of their deal to avert the fiscal cliff.

Wind energy has already helped America make significant strides for our health and environment. Thanks to the actions of our staff, supporters and allies, wind energy will continue to grow and thrive in this country.



Environment Colorado Research & Policy Center's Jeanne Bassett released "Cool Breeze," a report about how wind power is saving water and curbing pollution in Colorado.



Atlantic offshore wind on the horizon

We are on the cusp of seeing the first offshore wind farms in U.S. waters spinning off the Atlantic Coast.

Offshore wind has potential to be a major factor in moving our country away from polluting fossil fuels. The National Renewable Energy Laboratory estimates that we have enough feasible offshore wind potential off the Atlantic coast to power 55 million households, the equivalent energy produced by more than 200 large coal plants. But despite this potential, offshore wind power remains completely untapped in the United States.

However, thanks in part to our advocacy, the Obama administration made strides on this front last year. The Department of the Interior announced in December the first two areas off the Atlantic coast to be leased for wind development—an area off the coast of Massachusetts and Rhode Island and an area off the coast of Virginia—which together could produce enough wind energy to power 1.4 million homes.

In addition, the Department of Energy just announced seven grants totalling \$168 million over the next six years for new demonstration projects to advance offshore wind. The projects will be in Texas, New Jersey, Ohio, Oregon, Maine and Virginia.

 Download our report on the benefits of offshore wind at: www.EnvironmentAmerica.org/reports

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Environment America

Our mission

We all want clean air, clean water and open space. 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 America. We focus exclusively on protecting America's air, water and open space. We speak out and take action at the local, state and national levels to improve the quality of our environment and our lives.

Presidential action urged on clean water

This year, from the Colorado River to the Long Island Sound, droughts, floods, hydraulic fracturing, and the devastating effects of Superstorm Sandy have meant that our waterways need our help even more than before.

Yet, we are still waiting for President Obama to finalize critical clean water guidelines that his Environmental Protection Agency proposed last year. These guidelines, which would be the most significant step forward for our waterways in decades, would restore Clean Water Act protections to rivers, lakes, streams and wetlands across the country.

Environment America and our state affiliates are mobilizing farmers, local elected officials and our grassroots network across the nation to give the president the support he needs to finalize these important protections for our waterways.



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◀ *Blue heron in flight. Wildlife depend on clean streams and wetlands, too many of which lack Clean Water Act protection.*

To urge President Obama to act now to restore full Clean Water Act protection to all of America's streams and wetlands, visit www.EnvironmentAmerica.org.