Ptarmigan Ridge, Mount Baker, Washington

Clean air. Clean water. Open space.

Fiscal Year 2018 Annual Report
Thanks for making it all possible

ENVIRONMENT AMERICA
Clean air. Clean water. Open space.
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In 2018, as you can see in these pages, Environment America focused all across our country on finding ways to protect our natural world.

In times like these, you might wonder why we would focus on anything other than the Trump administration’s moves to dismantle our nation’s environmental protections. After all, these protections are critical. The federal government has unmatched power to prevent and remedy harms to our environment. Yet, the administration’s actions to weaken those protections are doing real and potentially lasting damage to our air, water and public lands, not to mention the climate.

But our system of government gives us recourse, reserving considerable power for local and state governments, as well as the marketplace. When states and cities get involved, their decisions often create the space for national action down the road. Some corporations are still the “bad guys” on major environmental issues. But others are willing to do more to promote renewable energy, reduce the use of plastics, and shift to non-toxic materials.

Taken together, local, state and corporate actors can make enormous progress, even when the federal government is moving backwards. Whether the Trump administration ends in 2020 or 2024, we’re betting that our focus on local, state and corporate actors will result in cleaner air and water, more renewable energy, less climate pollution, and more open spaces than a singular focus on “stopping Trump.”

To be clear: Some of our staff are still working furiously to save the Clean Water Act, the Clean Air Act, the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge and much more, and your action and support fuel their work. But defense is not enough. There’s opportunity right now, everywhere we look, to do good for the planet, and we’re seizing every chance we can.

Read this report to see how.

Ed Johnson
President

Doug Phelps
Chairman, Board of Directors
California commits to 100% clean energy

Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti and members of our national network’s California office at a press conference for the release of the Shining Cities report.

Ben Hellerstein (left), state director of our Massachusetts office, led a campaign that convinced lawmakers to commit to more renewable energy. At right, intern Katherine King.

Clean, Green & Renewable

Our energy program seeks concrete steps toward a world in which we conserve more, use the energy we have more wisely and efficiently, and rely only on sources of energy that are clean, renewable and tread lightly on the planet.

Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti and members of our national network’s California office at a press conference for the release of the Shining Cities report.
Renewable energy just kept winning

Some called it “the most important climate law in U.S. history.” California’s commitment to 100 percent clean energy was the biggest, but certainly not the only, victory in a year full of milestones for renewable energy and our work to promote it.

100% Renewable

In September, as Environment California’s Dan Jacobson looked on (photo left), Gov. Jerry Brown signed Senate Bill 100 into law. The bill committed the world’s fifth largest economy to 60 percent renewable electricity by 2030 and 100 percent zero-carbon electricity by 2045.

Another member of our national network, Environment New Mexico Research & Policy Center, worked closely with the city of Las Cruces to create a plan to get 100 percent of the city’s energy from renewable sources by 2022. The win followed similar victories in Tempe, Arizona; Longmont, Colorado; and Atlanta, Georgia.

Our 100% Renewable campaign also found success on college campuses. In September, the University of California system vowed to go 100 percent renewable by 2025, building on similar decisions we helped spur by Boston University, Cornell University and Colorado State University.

Go Solar

Every year, enough sunlight shines on the U.S. to provide 100 times more power than we need. Last year, our Go Solar campaign moved us closer to realizing that potential.

Our national network is urging 50 of America’s cities to think bigger, act smarter and tap the sun for more power. Environment America Research & Policy Center published a guide titled “Ten Ways Your City Can Go Solar,” providing a roadmap for mayors to make their cities leaders in solar.

Go Big on Offshore Wind

If we fully harnessed all the wind that blows in off the Atlantic Ocean, we’d generate four times the amount of power the region currently uses. Environment America Research & Policy Center’s “Wind Power to Spare” report put a spotlight on the tremendous potential of offshore wind, and showed policymakers how to tap into it.

In 2016, thanks in part to our research and advocacy, the nation’s first offshore wind farm opened off the coast of Rhode Island. Last May, Massachusetts officials announced that Vineyard Wind would develop the state’s first offshore wind farm.
Conservation

In a world of incredible material abundance, our conservation campaigns work to bring more nature into our lives and to protect and preserve our open spaces, wild places and wildlife for their own sake.

Jennifer Rubiello, state director of our network’s Florida office, spoke at Clearwater Beach to rally the public to protect our oceans from offshore drilling.

Alaska’s Tongass National Forest, the world’s largest temperate rainforest, is protected by the Roadless Area Conservation Rule. Our national network was instrumental in putting those protections in place 17 years ago, and we defended them last year from attempts to take them away.
Action in defense of wildlife

Last year, we ran campaigns to defend and promote more open spaces, wild places and wildlife. We pushed for concrete solutions to the world’s plastic waste problem, and to keep our beaches and coastal waters safe from offshore drilling. We put our expertise and people power to work to protect bees and other pollinators from lethal pesticides and to keep our public lands safe from destructive development.

Wildlife Over Waste

Last year, we launched our campaign to ban polystyrene foam—which most people call Styrofoam—which makes up some of the worst plastic pollution.

In California, we partnered with National Geographic, the Leonardo DiCaprio Foundation and more to brief lawmakers on the impacts of plastic pollution and to call for action. Inland, our Pennsylvania group cleaned plastic trash from the marshes of the John Heinz National Wildlife Refuge and joined lawmakers and conservationists in a press conference calling for a statewide ban on polystyrene cups and containers.

In Texas, we secured a commitment from Austin-based sandwich chain Thundercloud Subs to phase out polystyrene, then went to work on iconic Texas burger chain Whataburger asking it to follow suit. In Maryland, Baltimore and Anne Arundel County both passed polystyrene bans.

Tropical Forest Protection

Every hour, our planet loses 1,000 acres of forests—along with the animals that depend on these forests for their survival. That’s why Environment America launched a new campaign last year to convince U.S. companies to stop cutting down any tropical forest—a commitment known as “zero deforestation.”

Through blogs and social media campaigns, our staff made the case for tropical forests as vital resources to be protected, not slashed and burned for profit.

Our organizers focused their efforts on Cargill, a major player in the global food industry headquartered here in the United States. More than 13,900 people signed our petition urging the company to lead the shift to zero deforestation.

No Bees, No Food

Bees are in decline, and the potential consequences for our food supply are devastating. All across the country, we pushed for bans on a class of bee-killing insecticides known as neonicotinoids (or neonics), which have been linked to bee die-offs. We helped gather 219,000 public comments to the Environmental Protection Agency calling for a neonic ban, and urged states to join Connecticut, Maryland, Minnesota, New Jersey and Oregon in taking action against neonics.
Clean Water & Air

From holding water and air polluters accountable to uniting local clean water champions, our Clean Water & Air program promotes a world in which these precious, life-giving resources are no longer treated as dumping grounds for our waste.

Victory No. 1: A $1.4 million settlement to clean up the Suwannee River Basin in Florida.

Victory No. 2: A $2 million agreement to curb pollution from the world’s largest steel company in Pennsylvania.

Victory No. 3: A $3 million settlement in Texas to stop clean air violations at an oil refinery near Houston.
Illegal pollution stopped, action taken on lead contamination

Last year, Environment America provided the action, research and advocacy to protect the water we drink and the air we breathe.

Environment America Litigation Project

It was a banner year for our national litigation team, who settled three lawsuits against major polluters last year.

In Pennsylvania, PennEnvironment took ArcelorMittal, the world’s largest steel company, to court over hundreds of violations of the Clean Air Act. The company eventually agreed to a $2 million settlement. Our state group Environment Florida sued chicken producer Pilgrim’s Pride over discharges of toxic wastewater into the Suwannee River, and ultimately reached a $1.42 million settlement—$1.3 million of which will be used to clean up the Suwannee Basin. Environment Texas won a major settlement in our Clean Air Act lawsuit against Pasadena Refining System Inc., a subsidiary of Brazilian state-controlled oil company Petrobras. The terms included pollution reduction upgrades and $3,525,000 in civil penalties, most of which will go to fund a clean vehicles project.

Water threats identified

Environment America Research & Policy Center worked to put a spotlight on threats to our water. Our “Get the Lead Out” report sounded the alarm about the unacceptable prevalence of lead contamination in the drinking water of schools all across the country. As kids headed back to school last fall, Environment America Research & Policy Center released a toolkit to help parents take action at the local level to get the lead out of their children’s drinking water.

Environment America Research & Policy Center also released a report titled “Troubled Waters,” which identified industrial pollution threats to waters throughout the country, and launched an interactive map to help pinpoint pollutants in the Delaware River.

When the Trump administration proposed cutting the Environmental Protection Agency’s budget by nearly a third, Environment America Research & Policy Center released a series of reports titled “Rough Waters Ahead,” illustrating the damage those cuts would cause to our waterways in a way budget numbers alone couldn’t capture.

Clean Water Network

Through the Clean Water Network (CWN), Environment America Research & Policy Center brings together more than 250 local and regional groups dedicated to protecting clean water across the country, allowing them to build deep networks of coordinated support. Last year, we expanded the CWN into Alabama, uniting experienced watershed groups into a coalition.
Global Warming Solutions

From defending our existing climate protections to promoting policies to reduce emissions, our global warming program is working to eliminate the pollution and practices that are warming the planet and changing our climate.

▲ Equipped with signs decrying “Wrong Way” and a traffic citation for Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Administrator Scott Pruitt, Environment America Research & Policy Center Clean Cars Campaign Director Morgan Folger (center) and interns Elliot Ayres and Courtney Lorey (left and right) captured the spotlight outside the EPA headquarters in Washington, D.C.

▲ From left: former Vice President Al Gore, Environment New Jersey State Director Doug O’Malley and New Jersey Gov. Phil Murphy. In January 2018, Gov. Murphy made good on a campaign promise to rejoin the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative.
Progress made on the planet’s biggest challenge

Global warming is a symptom of our unhealthy relationship to our environment. Last year, Environment America worked to win real solutions that put the environment first.

Regional Climate Action

America’s most successful regional clean air and climate protection program got even better last year. Since 2009, a group of Northeastern and Mid-Atlantic states have cut dangerous pollution from power plants and generated billions in funding for clean energy programs through the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI). Environment America helped shape RGGI from the very beginning, and we’ve been working to strengthen it ever since.

New Jersey was one of the 10 original states in RGGI, but left the partnership in 2011. Last January, thanks to newly elected Gov. Phil Murphy and years of work by Environment New Jersey, the state rejoined RGGI, getting back in the fight against climate change.

Environmental Defense: Our Climate

For much of the early part of 2018, the Trump administration hinted at plans to roll back federal clean car standards aimed at keeping greenhouse emissions at bay. Environment America Research & Policy Center was ready, holding rallies across the country in support of clean car standards and citing then-Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Scott Pruitt for recklessly endangering our climate and health. Our citation sign struck a chord, and it appeared frequently in national media coverage of the clean car standards debate.

Environment America, our members and coalition partners submitted hundreds of thousands of public comments to the Trump administration opposing rollbacks of the clean car standards and other crucial environmental protections. In Washington, D.C., our advocates stood up for climate science and worked to defend the Clean Power Plan, one of the best tools we have for reducing global warming pollution from power plants.

Clean transportation

In May, Environment America Research & Policy Center published a report outlining a major step we can take to cut global warming emissions. Titled “Electric Buses: Clean Transportation for Healthier Neighborhoods and Cleaner Air,” the report found that replacing all of America’s school buses with electric buses would avoid an average of 5.3 million tons of greenhouse gas emissions each year, and that replacing all of our diesel-powered transit buses with electric buses would save more than 2 million tons of greenhouse gas emissions each year.