In our second year facing a president and a Congress who seem hostile toward our environmental goals, we at Environment Florida made a conscious decision to do more than just play defense.

We pursued a strong, forward-looking agenda for three reasons:

First, the planet can’t wait. The survival of wildlife in our oceans depends on whether we curb plastic pollution now, not two or six years from now. Ditto for the quality of the air we breathe and the water we drink, the sources of the energy that powers our lives and the stability and suitability of our climate.

Second, success breeds success. When one community or college campus commits to renewable energy, another is more likely to follow their lead. When litigation compels one company to curb its pollution, others feel greater pressure to fall in line. When citizens succeed in reducing the use of one form of single-use plastics, they’re emboldened to try to reduce the next.

Third, ultimately winning—and defending—strong environmental protections depends on us winning enough hearts and minds to our cause to make any politician think twice about devaluing the environment, no matter the pressure applied by polluting industries or other interests.

In these pages, you’ll find reports on our vigorous efforts to defend Florida’s clean water and air laws, our national parks and other public lands and our progress on global warming. But you’ll also find examples of our work with cities and communities to reduce plastic pollution, with companies to reduce deforestation and comply with pollution limits, with college campuses to embrace renewable power, and much more—work that’s paying off in positive results now for our environment.

The places we love will always need defending. But defending what we’ve already won isn’t enough. We want to live in, and leave to our children, a greener, healthier world than the one we live in today. That’s what we’re working for. Your action and support make it all possible, and for that we are deeply grateful.

Jennifer Rubiello
State Director, Environment Florida
Global Warming Solutions

From working to stop fracking to accelerating the transition to cars that don’t pollute, our global warming program is working to eliminate the pollution and practices that are warming the planet and changing our climate.

Floridians spoke out against fracking

Fracking is a highly polluting and destructive industrial process that shoots toxic chemicals underground to get at oil and gas locked beneath the earth’s surface. The fracking process releases methane, a global warming pollutant 86 times more powerful than carbon dioxide over 20 years, into our atmosphere. Fracking prospectors have targeted some of the most biodiverse regions in Florida.

As a steering committee member of the Floridians Against Fracking coalition, Environment Florida has helped win local resolutions and ordinances in cities and counties throughout the state, and worked with bipartisan legislators on a bill that would ban fracking statewide. Yet fracking companies continue to push through policies that would expose millions of gallons of Florida’s water and some of our most prized natural landscapes to the dangers of fracking.

Currently, 90 counties and cities have ordinances or resolutions opposing or outright banning the practice. In August, more than 100 local officials joined 60 Floridian organizations and 200 businesses in calling for the state Legislature to pass a statewide ban on fracking.

Environmental Defense: Our Climate

The Trump administration hinted at plans to roll back federal clean car standards aimed at keeping greenhouse emissions at bay. Our team was ready, holding rallies around the country in support of clean car standards. National media picked up on our citation sign, and it became the face of opposition to the clean cars rollback.
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.

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

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

It was a year full of milestones for renewable energy and our work to promote it. Environment Florida worked to make our state part of the renewable revolution, and our national network did the same nationwide.

100% Renewable

Our national network’s success in California set a shining example for us to follow here in Florida. More than two years of work came to fruition in September when California passed Senate Bill 100, legislation committing the Golden State to 60 percent renewable electricity by 2030 and 100 percent zero-carbon electricity by 2045.

California is the world’s fifth largest economy, which means its shift toward clean, renewable energy will have major benefits beyond the state’s borders. This breakthrough also sets an example for leaders in our state: If California can do it, so can Florida.

Meanwhile, Environment Florida Research & Policy Center pointed the way for our cities, universities and communities join the 100 percent renewable movement. In October, we published “Renewable Energy 101,” a guide for university leaders seeking to transition their campuses to 100 percent clean energy.

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 Florida 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 Florida 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.
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 Environment Florida, 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—what most people call Styrofoam—which is one of the worst, and most common, forms of plastic pollution.

Though we only use polystyrene products like foam cups and take-out containers for a few minutes, they can persist in our environment and harm wildlife for centuries. That’s why Environment Florida began calling for a statewide ban on polystyrene containers last summer. We also worked to build momentum in cities and towns across Florida to pass local bans on polystyrene.

Across the country, our national network has already seen results. In Texas, major sandwich chain Thundercloud Subs committed to phasing out polystyrene. In Maryland, Baltimore and Anne Arundel County both passed polystyrene bans.

Ban Offshore Drilling

At the start of 2018, the Trump administration announced plans to open 90 percent of U.S. coastlines to drilling, putting Florida’s shores and marine life at risk. The plan is a disaster, because we know that when we drill, we spill. Our coasts are too beautiful and the risks are too great to open our shores to drilling.

Once the plan was announced, debate swirled around whether Florida would be exempt or not. But we’re not waiting around for Secretary of the Interior Ryan Zinke’s plan to seal our state’s fate. Our first priority is to keep our waters safe, but even if Florida is protected, that doesn’t mean our coastline is. To truly protect Florida we need to keep drilling out of the entire coast.

Environment Florida organizers have been gathering petition signatures, talking to local businesses, taking photo petitions and generating media attention in coastal communities throughout Florida to elevate the voices of Floridians. We’ve met with the offices of Sen. Marco Rubio, Rep. Gus Bilirakis, Rep. Mario Diaz-Balart and Rep. Carlos Curbelo to discuss this widespread opposition to offshore drilling.

No Bees, No Food

Bees are in decline, and the potential consequences for our food supply are devastating. All across the country, our national network pushed for bans on a class of bee-killing insecticides known as neonicotinoids (or neonicos), which have been linked to bee die-offs. We gathered 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 neonicos.
Clean Water & Air

From holding water and air polluters accountable to uniting local clean water champions, our national network’s 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 Florida and our national network 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.

Environment Florida sued chicken producer Pilgrim’s Pride over discharges of toxic wastewater into the Suwannee River, ultimately reaching a $1.42 million settlement—$1.3 million of which will be used to clean up the Suwannee Basin. In Pennsylvania, our state affiliate 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. 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 Florida 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 Florida 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 Florida 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 Florida 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.
Our staff (partial list)

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