Fiscal Year 2018 Annual Report
Thanks for making it all possible
In our second year facing a president and a Congress who seem hostile toward our environmental goals, we at Environment Georgia 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 Georgia’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.

Jennette Gayer
State Director, Environment Georgia
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.

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 Georgia Research & Policy Center was ready, holding rallies in support of clean car standards and citing then-Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Scott Pruitt for recklessly endangering our climate and health.

Environment Georgia, 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 national network’s 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 Georgia 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 could 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 could save more than 2 million tons of greenhouse gas emissions each year.
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.
Renewable energy just kept winning

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

100% Renewable

All across America—East Coast, West Coast and deep in the heart of the country—renewable energy is booming. The 2018 edition of Environment Georgia Research & Policy Center’s “Renewables on the Rise” report looked at the past 10 years of growth in the industry, and found that Georgia generates nearly 3,882-fold more electricity from the sun than we did a decade ago—enough to power roughly 220,000 homes across the state.

Environment Georgia envisions a future where this progress continues and we get 100 percent of our energy from clean and renewable resources and, in Georgia, we are moving towards that future one city at a time. In Atlanta, our advocacy helped pass a resolution that commits the city to generating 100 percent of its electricity from clean and renewable sources in May 2017. Beyond Atlanta, we’ve also hosted panel discussions in Athens and Columbus that have helped launch movements towards 100 percent clean and renewable energy.

Go Solar

Every year enough sunlight shines on America to provide 100 times more power than we need. Last year, Environment Georgia’s Go Solar campaign moved us closer to realizing that potential. America’s major cities stand to reap tremendous benefits from solar energy, and our Shining Cities project is urging 50 of them to think bigger, act smarter, and tap the sun for more power. Environment Georgia Research & Policy Center published a guide titled “Ten Ways Your City Can Go Solar” providing a roadmap for mayors to making their cities leaders in solar, which Mayor Hardie Davis Jr. of Augusta has already signed on with almost 200 other mayors to support.

This year Environment Georgia Research & Policy Center also launched our Solarize Atlanta project which had a record number of signups months before its official launch in April. Solarize programs create savings for participants by negotiating a pricing schedule that drops the price of solar as more people in the community participate. Atlanta is the fifth Community Solarize program we’ve helped launch in Georgia but the largest to date and with the goal of 100 plus new solar roofs in Atlanta and a solar roof in every neighborhood. Solarize not only saves participants money, but encourages growth in the solar market.
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.

Environment Georgia and State Sen. Lester Jackson at a Protect Our Coasts rally against 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 Georgia began calling for a statewide ban on polystyrene containers last summer. We also worked to build momentum in cities and towns across Georgia 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

A Trump administration proposal would open up the Atlantic Coast to oil drilling, putting Georgia’s coasts and marine life at risk. We opposed the plan and rallied Georgians to show that the public’s opinion should count. To show public opposition, we held a rally outside of the state Capitol and encouraged people to turn out to the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) hearing in Atlanta. We also worked to urge the governor and Georgia Legislature to come out against drilling and protecting our coasts. We were unsuccessful during the 2018 legislative session but are continuing our efforts into the new year and new legislative session.

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 neonics), 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 neonics.
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 Georgia 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

Environment Georgia is part of a national network that researches cases of illegal pollution in Georgia and across the country, and takes polluters to court if necessary. Our litigation team had a banner year nationally, settling three major lawsuits.

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. Our partner group 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. 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 Georgia 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 Georgia 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 Georgia 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 Georgia 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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