Fiscal Year 2018 Annual Report
Thanks for making it all possible

Bish Bash Falls, Mt. Washington, Mass.
In our second year facing a president and a Congress who seem hostile toward our environmental goals, we at Environment Massachusetts 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 Massachusetts’ 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.

Ben Hellerstein
State Director, Environment Massachusetts
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 Massachusetts 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 Massachusetts, 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 Massachusetts 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.

▲ Environment Massachusetts State Director Ben Hellerstein (left) led a campaign that helped convince lawmakers to commit to more renewable energy. At right, intern Katherine King.

▲ State Sen. Adam Hinds (Pittsfield) gives opening remarks at our Berkshires 100% Renewable Energy Summit in Pittsfield.
Getting to 100% renewable

This year Environment Massachusetts Research & Policy Center and Frontier Group released two reports that illustrate how far we’ve come on renewable energy. According to the “Wind Power to Spare” report, Massachusetts could produce more energy from offshore wind than any other state. “Renewables on the Rise” found that, since 2008, Massachusetts has seen a 246-fold increase in solar energy generation. Our progress in renewables shows that running on 100 percent clean, renewable energy can come sooner than expected in Massachusetts.

Building support from civic leaders

Environment Massachusetts convened more than 250 civic and business leaders to strategize for a transition to 100 percent renewable energy. By partnering with local groups in the Berkshires, the Pioneer Valley, Central Massachusetts, the North Shore and the Cape & Islands, we organized 100 Percent Renewable Energy Summits to educate local leaders about our clean energy potential. We partnered with the lead sponsors of 100% renewable energy legislation at the State House to organize a legislative briefing about businesses that are leading the way to 100 percent renewable energy.

100% renewable cities and campuses

By the summer of 2018, we helped convince seven cities and towns, including Amherst and Lowell, to commit to 100 percent renewable energy through warrant articles or resolution. We helped develop a toolkit to help activists implement clean energy policies in their communities, and organized a webinar to share resources developed by the Metropolitan Area Planning Council and Northeast Energy Efficiency Partnerships.

Last year, our organizers worked with students and faculty members on 20 campuses to campaign for clean energy commitments. Boston University pledged to purchase 100 percent of its electricity from renewable sources by the end of 2018.

Final push for clean energy legislation

In June, we reached a major milestone as the state Senate passed a bill committing Massachusetts to 100 percent renewable electricity by 2050.

As the bill moved on to the next round for approval, Environment Massachusetts immediately sprang into action by mobilizing grassroots supporters to generate hundreds of emails and phone calls urging legislators to go all-in on clean energy. We drafted a letter calling for strong clean energy policy from 100 organizations, businesses and civic leaders.

Ultimately, legislators passed a clean energy bill that will get us to 35 percent renewable electricity by 2030, while opening the door to doubling Massachusetts’ offshore wind commitment. It isn’t as bold of a commitment as we wanted, but it’s an important step toward cleaner air, healthier communities and a safer future for our children.

This summer Environment Massachusetts Research & Policy Center published our “100% Renewable Energy Agenda,” with more than 30 recommendations for state leaders to accelerate our transition to clean, renewable energy, across all sectors. California just passed a 100 percent renewable electricity law, so we know it’s possible here. Now that we have our plan, it’s time to put it into action.
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.
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 keep our public lands from destructive development.

Wildlife Over Waste

Americans throw away 70 million polystyrene foam cups—what most of us call Styrofoam—every day, too much of which ends up in our waterways, where it can harm wildlife. Plastic doesn’t biodegrade, but instead breaks down into tiny pieces called microplastics. Too often, this plastic pollution is ingested by hundreds of different species. Right now, a floating patch of plastic trash in the Pacific Ocean is approximately 57 times the size of Massachusetts.

Here in Massachusetts, our citizen outreach team knocked on thousands of doors across the Bay State this summer calling for a ban on single-use plastic food containers, a major source of this plastic pollution. By the end of the summer we’d had 54,000 conversations with Bay Staters, and had gathered 17,000 petition signatures.

To highlight our campaign, we took to the shores of the Mystic River in Medford and hosted up a river clean up with the Mystic River Watershed Association, our members and State Rep. Mike Connolly (26th Middlesex). While we were cleaning up plastic waste that was already in the river, we spread the word on how we can prevent the waste in the first place with a statewide ban on single-use polystyrene containers.

There’s already growing momentum to clean up plastic pollution at the local level. So far, 81 cities and towns in Massachusetts have approved local policies restricting the use of plastic bags, and 29 municipalities have adopted regulations on polystyrene. That’s a great start, but we need to keep working toward a statewide ban and a future with less plastic.

No Bees, No Food

We rely on bees to pollinate everything from almonds to strawberries to the alfalfa used to feed dairy cows. Now, bees are in decline and the potential consequences for our food supply are devastating. All across the country, our national network pushed for a ban on a class of bee-killing insecticides known as neonicotinoids (or neonics) known to be contributing to bee die-offs. When seeds are treated with these neonics, the chemicals work their way into the pollen and nectar of plants—which is bad news for bees. 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 Massachusetts 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 Massachusetts is part of a national network that researches cases of illegal pollution in Massachusetts 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 Massachusetts 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 Massachusetts 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 Massachusetts 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 Massachusetts 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.