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 Oregon 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 Oregon’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.

Celeste Meiffren-Swango
State Director, Environment Oregon
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.

Taking the lead on climate change

Across the country, people are reeling from the brutal impacts of fire and flood worsened by the changing climate. Until recently, scientists told us this was a problem our grandchildren would face. Yet, we are seeing impacts of climate change sooner than we predicted, and the rate of change we are experiencing is unprecedented. As bad as things are today, we still have some time to stave off the worst, and we know exactly what we need to do: act quickly and boldly to reduce carbon pollution. Unfortunately, the Trump administration and Congress are refusing to act, so it’s up to states like Oregon to take the lead.

Historic lobby day

Our Environment Oregon staff, volunteers and students joined more than 500 people at our Capitol in Salem for the Clean Energy Jobs Lobby Day, the largest lobby day in Oregon history. We knocked on thousands of doors to educate Oregonians about the issue. While the legislation didn’t pass this session, we helped to build momentum for the 2019 legislative session and the speaker and senate president have already committed to making this a top priority.

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 national network 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.
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 Oregon 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 Oregon. 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. Environment Oregon supported and will continue working to pass 100 percent renewable legislation here in Oregon.

Meanwhile, Environment Oregon 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 Oregon 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.

Renewables on the Rise

The 2018 edition of Environment Oregon Research & Policy Center’s “Renewables on the Rise” report looked at the past 10 years of growth in the industry, and found that the U.S. generates nearly six times more electricity from the sun and wind than we did a decade ago—enough to power roughly a quarter of homes across the country. The report found that Oregon has made strides on solar generation. We generate 33 times more energy from solar than in 2008. In just one year, we generate enough energy from renewables to power 643 thousand homes. This is great progress, but we’re continuing to work toward a future that runs on renewables.
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—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 Oregon began calling for a statewide ban on polystyrene containers last summer. We also worked to build momentum in cities and towns across Oregon 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.

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 Oregon 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, 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.
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 Oregon 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 Oregon is part of a national network that researches cases of illegal pollution in Oregon 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 Oregon 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 Oregon 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 Oregon 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 Oregon 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.
Charge Ahead, TriMet

Electric buses and vehicles are the transportation of a clean and renewable future, so we set our sights on getting Portland Metro’s TriMet to commit to electrify its bus fleet.

Transitioning all of the diesel-powered transit buses to electric bus fleets in the United States could save more than 2 million tons of greenhouse gas emissions each year.
Oregon is riding into the future of public transit

Every day, thousands of people in the Portland Metro area rely on transit buses to get to work and school through the Tri-County Metropolitan Transportation District of Oregon (TriMet). There were more than 60 million transit trips taken by bus last year alone. Unfortunately, all 683 TriMet transit busses are powered by diesel, and we think it’s time to change that.

Nearly 40 percent of the carbon pollution in Oregon comes from transportation—more than any other sector. To reduce this pollution, we need to kick our dependence on fossil fuels to the curb and transform the way we get around. We launched our “Charge Ahead, TriMet” campaign to convince TriMet to commit to stop buying diesel buses by 2020 and to transition to a zero-emission, fully electric fleet.

TriMet can lead the way

If TriMet moved to an all-electric bus fleet, they would eliminate 39,990 tons of climate-altering pollution each year—the equivalent of taking 7,720 cars off the road. Electrifying our bus fleet is a key step in moving toward a transportation system powered by 100 percent renewable energy, which is necessary to stop the worst impacts of climate change. Electric buses also have zero tailpipe emissions, which would make an immediate impact on air quality in the greater Portland area, allowing people to breathe cleaner air in their neighborhoods and during their daily commutes and other travels.

To encourage TriMet to make the commitment, we collected hundreds of petitions urging them to do so and delivered them to TriMet’s general manager. In May, Environment Oregon Research & Policy Center released a report titled “Electric Buses: Clean Transportation for Healthier Neighborhoods and Cleaner Air,” that illustrated how transit agencies like TriMet can take the lead on bus electrification. Electric buses are four times more energy efficient than diesel or natural gas buses, and average over 17 miles per diesel gallon equivalent, compared to diesel buses that average about four miles a gallon. Our report found that, at a national level, by replacing all of America’s school buses with electric buses our country could avoid more than 5.3 million tons of greenhouse gas emissions each year and save more than $3 billion in diesel costs for school districts. And that transitioning all of the diesel-powered transit buses to electric bus fleets in the United States could save more than 2 million tons of greenhouse gas emissions each year.

Cities and states have the ability to lead the way on the transition to electric vehicles and buses. By expanding transit options and improving bus service, while switching to clean electric buses, cities and towns across the country can help reduce global warming emissions and local air pollution. The market for electric buses is changing rapidly as technology improves and prices continue to fall. Which is why Environment Oregon has focused our efforts on TriMet.

We organized the Bus Line Coalition for Electric Buses. And in August, our coalition reached 100 strong. The coalition, which includes Portland institutions like Black Star Bags and Townshend’s Tea Company, sent a letter to the leadership of TriMet, the Portland area’s transit agency, calling on them commit to electrifying their fleet. Many Environment Oregon members joined us at TriMet budget workshops to advocate for electric buses.

With all the support we were able to build, we made a difference. On Sept. 27, 2018, the TriMet Board of Directors approved the “TriMet Non-Diesel Bus Plan,” committing the agency to buy 80 electric buses over the next five years and adapting a plan for a zero-emission fleet by 2040. This victory is a great start for Portland to lead the state to a cleaner future.
Progress made in child care centers
Oregon’s Early Learning Council (ELC) convened to vote in February on whether child care facilities must test their water for lead. In preparation, we submitted a coalition letter along with other prominent environmental and public health groups, and petitions signed by hundreds of Oregonians urging the council to strengthen the proposal and protect our children from lead in their water. The ELC voted unanimously to require all child care facilities test for lead in the water and set an “action level” of 15 parts per billion of lead—meaning that if the lead test comes back at 15 parts per billion or higher, they are required to mitigate. This is a good starting point, but there’s still more to do because we shouldn’t have any lead in our water. There is no safe level of lead contamination, especially when it comes to our children, so we will be continuing to push the state to adopt a mitigation standard of 1 part per billion, and will make this issue a priority until our children’s drinking water is safe.

Back to school tools for parents
We are also working to make sure that the drinking water in schools across Oregon are also free from lead. Last fall, as Oregon’s kids headed back to school, Environment Oregon 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. We also pulled together a report looking at 100 school districts’ lead test results and found that 88 percent reported finding detectable levels of lead in their drinking water. We must do more to protect Oregon’s children from this potent health threat.

Get The Lead Out
In 2018, we continued our work to ensure a world in which no one has to worry about whether or not the water they drink is contaminated with lead. Environment Oregon used the findings of our “Get the Lead Out” report to put a spotlight on the alarming prevalence of lead contamination in our children’s drinking water and encourage the state to act.
Environment Oregon Supporters

Thousands of citizens supported Environment Oregon, Inc., or Environment Oregon Research & Policy Center, Inc., and/or Environment America’s connected political action committee, Environment America Voter Action, by making contributions in fiscal year 2018. The members listed below were particularly generous in backing the organizations’ research and advocacy. Names that appear in italics denote Monthly Supporters.

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