Fiscal Year 2020 Annual Report

Thanks for making it all possible
From the acting president and the chairman of the board

Over the past year, Americans have mourned the loss of hundreds of thousands of loved ones, neighbors and friends to COVID-19. As the crisis altered our daily lives in ways both profound and mundane, Environment America continued to work, online and safely distant, for clean air, clean water, open spaces and a livable climate.

In this report, we share the stories of that work with you: stories of researchers, advocates, attorneys, organizers and citizens striving together to protect and preserve our natural world. We thank you for helping to make that work possible, in normal and not-so-normal times.

This year, we persuaded more cities and states to “go renewable” and to take steps to electrify their transportation systems. We also won more bans on single-use plastic items.

And, in a victory that was years in the making, we celebrated as America reaffirmed its commitment to public lands when the Environment America-backed Great American Outdoors Act became law on Aug. 4, 2020. We also worked to ensure this popular and bipartisan law is correctly implemented.

Over the past four years, the Trump administration dismantled or weakened more than 100 critical protections for the environment. We have a chance to restore and strengthen those protections and we are working with the Biden-Harris team to see this process through.

Your action and support make it all possible. Thank you, as always, for standing with us.

Wendy Wendlandt
Acting President

Doug Phelps
President, The Public Interest Network; Chairman, Board of Directors, Environment America
Earlier this year, we mourned the loss of Ed Johnson—President of Environment America and our dear friend and colleague.

Thirteen years ago, Ed was diagnosed with multiple myeloma, a cancer that accumulates in the bone marrow. The life expectancy for this cancer at that time was four years. Ed beat the odds in his fight with cancer with the same grace and perseverance he displayed in his work. Despite the toll taken by his disease and the treatments it required, Ed barely slowed down, rarely missing a meeting or a phone call and losing none of his passion for the causes he cared about, for his job, for his beloved wife and partner Annie, for his boys Augie and Louie, and for all his extended family and friends.

Before he became president in 2017, Ed directed our national network’s citizen engagement work for nearly three decades. Under his tenure, we recruited millions of people to contribute money, take action or both. It is literally the case that Environment America would not exist as you know us today were it not for Ed’s leadership, commitment and work.

Ed was not just a mentor to everyone he worked with, but a friend. For his humor, his positivity and his tireless dedication, he’ll be missed for a long, long time.
Susan Rakov, chair of our clean energy program (above), and Tony Dutzik, senior policy analyst with our research partner, Frontier Group (below) present on 100% renewable energy to clean energy advocates from across the country.
Clean, Green & Renewable Energy

We are working to move America toward a future powered entirely by renewable energy. In states and cities across the country, our national network advocated for rules to expand rooftop solar, called for stronger clean energy mandates, and raised awareness of clean energy success stories.

**We launched a 10-state campaign to put solar panels on all new homes**

**JULY 13, 2020:** What’s important in a home? Location, location, location—and solar panels.

At least, given all the benefits that come with a solar roof, that’s the way it should be. And indeed, that’s the world that our Homes Go Solar campaign hopes to create: one with solar panels on the roof of every new home.

“The most efficient time to install solar panels is when the builders are on the roof in the first place. The results lead to healthier communities for years to come,” said Bronte Payne, director of Environment America’s Homes Go Solar campaign.

In 2020, our Homes Go Solar campaign is urging 10 states to adopt policies similar to the one that went into effect in California in January 2020, which requires all new homes in the state to be built with solar panels. Installing solar panels on all new homes from 2020 to 2026 would result in more solar energy capacity than we currently have installed in the entire country.

**Environment America Research & Policy Center’s report tells you whether your city is a ‘solar beginner’ or ‘solar star’**

**JUNE 1, 2020:** How does your city rank versus others on solar power development: Is it just getting started? Or is it really starting to shine?

We have answers. On May 27, Environment America Research & Policy Center and Frontier Group released “Shining Cities 2020: The Top U.S. Cities for Solar Energy,” the seventh edition of the most comprehensive survey of installed solar capacity in major U.S. cities. The survey found that 50 cities have more than doubled their solar capacity since 2013 and lists 26 cities as “Solar Stars” for having 50 or more watts of solar capacity installed per capita.

“Cities are leading the charge to install clean, renewable solar energy,” said Environment America Research and Policy Center Acting President Wendy Wendlandt. “Each year of our study, we’ve found that more local leaders are pursuing solar projects and smart local policies to help their constituents tap the power of the sun.”

The top five leaders per capita overall are Honolulu; San Diego; Albuquerque, New Mexico; San Jose, California; and Burlington, Vermont.
Our staff and members rallied support across the country for the historic Great American Outdoors Act. Clockwise from top left: U.S. Sen. Joe Manchin (W.V.), flanked by Environment America’s Jamie Lockwood and Wendy Wendlandt. An organizer distributes a pro-public lands lawn sign to a member. U.S. Rep. Joe Cunningham (S.C.), with Jamie. On another front, we also supported the Break Free from Plastic Pollution Act, sponsored by U.S. Sen. Tom Udall (N.M.), bottom left. Senior director of our conservation campaigns, Steve Blackledge, oversaw both efforts.
Conservation

Our country’s lands and waters are precious beyond measure. This year, Environment America and Environment America Research and Policy Center worked to defend and expand protections for our special places and the wildlife that live in them, standing up for bees and other pollinators, national parks, and our oceans. In July, we celebrated a major victory for public lands.

**Great American Outdoors Act dedicates $900 million per year to conservation**

**JULY 27, 2020:** After years of tireless work, our advocates, members, supporters and allies celebrated a massive win for public lands.

On July 22, the U.S. House of Representatives followed the U.S. Senate in approving the Great American Outdoors Act, which will fully fund the long-neglected, but highly effective, Land and Water Conservation Fund. That means $900 million per year for our public lands, along with billions in short-term funding to clear a backlog of maintenance issues at our national parks.

“The Great American Outdoors Act embraces what we all know to be true: Protecting and enhancing our public lands is an essential part of the American ethos,” said Steve Blackledge, senior director of our national network’s Conservation America campaign. “By locking in $900 million a year for outdoor projects, plus providing a short-term infusion of money to address maintenance issues, the House is reaffirming that commitment to the natural world.”

The bill now heads to President Trump’s desk, where we expect it to be signed.

**20,000 take action to save the bees**

**MAY 1, 2020:** Though we couldn’t be together in person on Earth Day, people across the country still spoke up for saving the bees.

Twenty thousand Americans joined Environment America’s Earth Day campaign to send public comments to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), urging it to protect bees by banning the most dangerous uses of bee-killing pesticides.

“There are three things we need to do right now to save the bees,” said Steve Blackledge, senior director of our national network’s Conservation America campaign. “We need to expand their habitat by growing pollinator-friendly plants on public lands, we need to stop using neonicotinoid pesticides on lawns and landscaping, and we need to move toward more sustainable agricultural practices that reduce our overall need for pesticides.”

Our public comments coincided with the EPA’s review of neonics as registered pesticides, which is mandatory every 15 years.
Above: Morgan Folger (left), director of our Destination: Zero Carbon campaign, is joined by Pennsylvania State Rep. Malcolm Kenyatta (center) and PennEnvironment Climate Defender Organizer Alex Lola at a January 2020 media event. Top right: As New Jersey Gov. Phil Murphy signs a bill into law promoting electric vehicles, Doug O’Malley, state director of our sister group Environment New Jersey, speaks on behalf of the coalition that supported the bill. Bottom right and below: Our staff and members rally opposition to the Trump administration’s rollback of Clean Car standards.
Global Warming Solutions

Global warming is the most profound symptom of our unhealthy relationship with the Earth. Thanks to our advocates and members, many states have committed to major action to reduce their carbon pollution. As power generation gets cleaner, we focused this year on the transportation sector, America’s number one source of global warming pollution.

We filed a lawsuit to protect Clean Car standards

JUNE 2, 2020: In May, we took the Trump administration to court for clean air.

On May 27, Environment America and 10 other public interest organizations filed a lawsuit opposing the Trump administration’s action to weaken federal Clean Car standards. The petition challenges a rule by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and Department of Transportation’s National Highway Traffic Safety Administration that violates several federal statutes, including the Clean Air Act, the Energy Procedure Act and the Administrative Procedure Act.

“The EPA’s own analysis shows that this will reverse climate progress. The Clean Car standards should protect our climate, our health and the future of our children and grandchildren,” said Environment America Clean Cars Associate Eleanor Reynolds.

“This plan is unacceptable. Not only does it fail to adequately address the climate crisis—it sets us back years when we have no time to lose.”

Environment America Research & Policy Center’s report provides a roadmap to ‘Destination Zero Carbon’

MARCH 3, 2020: Transportation is the largest source of global warming pollution in the U.S., making it climate enemy number one. A report describes how we can build a zero-carbon transportation future—all while making our air cleaner and creating safer, healthier communities.

“Destination: Zero Carbon,” released Feb. 25 by Environment America Research & Policy Center and Frontier Group, looks at the factors underlying high transportation emissions. It also proposes solutions to expand electric vehicle use and double by 2030 the number of people who travel by foot, bike or transit.

“Climate change is the most urgent challenge of our generation,” said Morgan Folger, Clean Car Communities campaign director with Environment America Research & Policy Center. “While there’s no excuse for waiting to act in any sector, this is especially true with transportation.”

Along with policy recommendations, the report also highlights state and local governments around the country that are already taking action to create a more sustainable transportation system.
Top left: On August 27, John Rumpler, senior director of our clean water campaigns, participates in a virtual panel on the environmental and health impacts of the Trump administration’s “pause” on enforcement of clean air and water protections. Bottom left: Jenna Stevens releases a factsheet, created by Environment Florida Research & Policy Center, on the risks posed by weakened clean water protections to the state’s waterways.

Photo credits: (clockwise from top left): Staff, Mr. James Kelley via Shutterstock, Staff, Felix Lipov via Shutterstock

The Everglades
The price of a clean and healthy environment is eternal vigilance—especially as President Trump pushed to dismantle protections for our rivers, our public lands, our oceans and our climate. This year, Environment America and our research partners at Environment America Research and Policy Center bolstered our green firewall in defense of America’s environmental protections.

**After advocates took action, the Trump EPA backed down on suspending enforcement**

**APRIL 14, 2020:** By suspending enforcement during the COVID-19 pandemic, the Trump administration’s Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) risked putting Americans’ health at further risk. So Environment America Research and Policy Center spoke out until it reversed its decision.

On March 26, the EPA released a policy that stopped enforcement of key provisions of our nation’s environmental laws during the COVID-19 pandemic. The decision came on the heels of requests from the oil and gas industry and others seeking exemptions at this time.

“Refineries release millions of pounds of air pollution—including fugitive emissions or leaks—that would go undetected without stringent monitoring requirements,” John Rumpler, senior attorney for our national network, told USA Today at the time.

After months of advocacy, during which thousands of Americans called on Congress or the courts to compel the EPA to do its duty and protect communities, the agency terminated its pandemic polluter loophole.

**We went to court to defend clean water protections**

**MAY 5, 2020:** Environment America went to court to stop the Trump administration’s Dirty Water Rule, which puts rivers and drinking water at risk.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and Army Corps of Engineers have revoked federal protections for thousands of waterways across the country. On April 29, Environment America, with the Southern Environmental Law Center, filed suit to challenge the Dirty Water Rule in court. From the Great Lakes to the Chesapeake Bay, the streams and wetlands that lost protections under the rule are crucial to the health of the nation’s most iconic waterways—providing habitat for wildlife, filtering pollutants and absorbing floodwaters.

“As surely as water flows downstream, the Dirty Water Rule endangers the waterways where millions of Americans swim, fish, boat and draw their drinking water,” said John Rumpler, senior director of our national network’s Clean Water for America campaign. “We will not allow it to stand.”
Our staff (partial list)

- Wendy Wendlandt
  Acting President

- Doug Phelps
  President, The Public Interest Network; Chairman, Board of Directors, Environment America

- John Rumpler
  Senior Director, Clean Water for America Campaign and Senior Attorney

- Andrea McGimsey
  Senior Director, Global Warming Solutions Campaign

- Johanna Neumann
  Senior Director, Campaign for 100% Renewable Energy

- Steve Blackledge
  Senior Director, Conservation Campaign

- Alex Petersen
  Conservation Campaign, Advocate

- Bronte Payne
  Director, Go Solar Campaign

- Kelsey Lamp
  Protect Our Oceans, Advocate

- Emma Searson
  Director, Campaign for 100% Renewable Energy

- Morgan Folger
  Director, Destination: Zero Carbon Campaign

- Susan Rakov
  Director, Research & Reports

- Chuck Caldart
  Litigation Director and Senior Attorney; National Environmental Law Center

- Doug Casler
  Director, Membership

- Marcia Eldridge
  Deputy Director, Digital

- Rich Hennigan
  Senior Communications Manager and Editorial Director

- Amy Floyd
  Senior Director, Grants

- Pam Clough
  Director, Donor Program