Fiscal Year 2021 Program Report

Thanks for making it all possible
Every day, the news delivers more dire warnings about the state of our natural world.

Fewer than 400 Right whales remain in the North Atlantic. Fewer than 80 Southern Resident orcas survive in Puget Sound. Nearly 99 percent of western monarch butterflies have disappeared. Climate change is accelerating this loss of wildlife and threatening human life as well.

It would be naive to downplay the scale of these problems and heartless not to mourn the losses. But it would be irresponsible to conclude that there’s nothing we can do—especially when solutions are all around us.

Our country has all of the clean, renewable power we need if we choose to use it. We can accelerate the transition to electric vehicles. U.S. corporations can reduce their use of plastic pollution and their sale of pollinator-killing pesticides. And on and on.

Environment America and our national network of 29 state environmental groups made progress on all of these issues and more in the past year. None of these problems are completely solved—not even close. But we keep chipping away, breaking down big problems and making them a little more manageable. Incremental change that leads to concrete results is our stock-in-trade because success, one step at a time, is how we build confidence in—and demand for—the changes that are still to come.

Our action and progress—all of which is made possible by your support—also provide fuel for hope. Not a passive hope, like that of spectators rooting for their team. Our hope is action-oriented, results-oriented, a hope that serves, as an ally once said, “as a hammer that we use in case of emergency to break the glass, sound the alarm and spring into action.”

We’re reminded every day about the emergency our natural world faces. And every day, together with you and all of our friends, supporters and allies, we pick up that hammer.

Thanks for making it all possible.

Wendy Wendlandt
President
Federal Priorities

From Yosemite to the Everglades, the wonders of our great outdoors are irreplaceable. But with great outdoors comes great responsibility. That’s why, time and time again, Environment America has led the way toward stronger protections for our parks and public lands.

The Tongass, America’s largest national forest, moved closer to regaining full protection

JULY 28, 2021: Massive old-growth trees that predate the United States itself may soon be spared from logging in the Tongass, the nation’s wildest and largest national forest, spanning most of southeast Alaska.

On July 15, the U.S. Forest Service moved to restore protections for the Tongass, a big step toward declaring logging off-limits in millions of acres of this singular wilderness.

“This is great news for the hundreds of species of wildlife that live in the roadless areas, the ancient trees, and the people who live in and visit the Tongass to hunt, fish and enjoy nature,” said Environment America’s Public Lands Campaign Director Ellen Montgomery.

Protections for the Tongass have been contested since 2001, when Americans submitted more than 1.6 million public comments in favor of the Roadless Rule, designed to protect nearly 60 million acres—including 9 million in the Tongass—of still-wild national forests. Our members submitted nearly half the comments.

President Biden restored Great American Outdoors Act protections for public lands

FEB. 23, 2021: The greatest conservation victory in a generation has been saved from a last-ditch effort to undermine it.

On Feb. 12, 2021, the Biden administration undid last-minute changes that the Trump administration made to the Land and Water Conservation Fund, which provides crucial investments in parks, public lands and even ballfields all across the country. The changes would have created procedural hurdles to gum up the Great American Outdoors Act, passed in August 2020 to guarantee $900 million annually for land and water conservation projects.

“We’re thrilled to see the new administration fix this problem,” said Alex Petersen, conservation advocate with Environment America. “Americans love the great outdoors, and there’s nothing more American than conserving the natural wonders that surround us all.”

Passed with bipartisan support, the Great American Outdoors Act secured billions in funding for the places we cherish and visit with family and friends.
Clockwise from top: Our staff spoke with legislators at our national network’s “United States Against Plastic” virtual rally; Staff talk to supporters about the campaign to get Amazon to stop selling bee-killing pesticides; Environment Colorado’s Rex Wilmouth (far left) looks on as Gov. Jared Polis signs Colorado’s Plastic Pollution Reduction Act into law.

Photo credits: (clockwise from top left) Staff; Staff; Haley Hawn Photo
Across our nation, our wildlife and wild places need protection. This year, as bee populations dropped at alarming rates and our plastic waste crisis worsened, we mobilized tens of thousands of grassroots supporters like you to take part in campaigns that put our planet first.

**Over 47,000 supporters told Amazon: Stop selling bee-killing pesticides**

**AUG. 19, 2021:** To save the bees, our staff have asked the world’s largest online retailer to stop selling the pesticides that kill them. And we’re not alone.

In March, Environment America and our national network kicked off our campaign to convince Amazon to take neonicotinoid pesticides (or “neonics”)—the substances linked to troubling bee declines—off its (virtual) shelves. By August, campaigners with our network had collected more than 47,000 petition signatures online and in communities across the country.

“We need to reduce the use of pesticides that contribute to the collapse of our best pollinators,” said Malia Libby, our national network’s Save the Bees campaign associate. “Amazon should take neonics off its site.”

Our ask is far from unprecedented: The Home Depot and Lowe’s have pledged to phase out the use of neonics on their live plants, and Lowe’s has committed to taking the pesticides off its shelves altogether.

**Colorado and Washington banned some of the worst single-use plastics; Maine made plastic producers more responsible for their waste**

**JULY 23, 2021:** When Gov. Jared Polis signed the Plastic Pollution Reduction Act into law on July 6, Colorado became the 10th state to ban single-use plastic bags—and the eighth to ban polystyrene foam food containers, around one month after Washington state took the same step.

Meanwhile, Maine established the Extended Producer Responsibility for Packaging program, which requires plastic producers to pay for recycling and waste disposal. Our network backed a similar bill in Oregon, which passed on Aug. 9.

Our state partners helped advance these bills. Environment Colorado, for instance, hosted 400 at its annual Plastic Pollution Youth Lobby Day and submitted petition signatures from 21,000 Coloradans.

Environment Washington connected constituents with legislators to support their bill, and rallied citizens around “Washingtonians Against Waste,” an online collection of stories from Washingtonians who put wildlife over waste.
Clockwise from top: In January 2021, Environment America supporters shared their electric vehicle (EV) stories in a series of EV testimonial videos; Our national Destination: Zero Carbon Campaign Director Morgan Folger calls for pro-electric vehicle policies in New Jersey.
Global Warming Solutions

The climate crisis is here, now. For years, Environment America has advanced some of the best tools for avoiding the worst consequences of climate change. This year, we took bolder steps toward tackling our nation’s No. 1 source of global warming pollution and shedding our dependence on dirty fossil fuels.

Back on course: Biden administration moved to allow states to set stronger vehicle emissions standards

MAY 7, 2021: For nearly 50 years, federal law allowed California to set stronger clean car standards and more than a dozen other states to follow California’s lead—until the previous administration tried to revoke their authority.

On April 26, the Biden administration started the process of undoing this action—checking off one of the “First things to fix” called for by Environment America in a series of 20 recommendations shared with the Biden team before they took office.

“Thank you President Biden, for taking this first step,” said Environment America’s Destination: Zero Carbon Campaign Director Morgan Folger. “Now it’s time to reaffirm that states can and should lead the way for clean air and cleaner cars.”

Vehicle tailpipes are a major source of climate-changing, health-harming air pollution. A report from our research partners showed that in 2018, 108 million Americans lived in areas that experienced more than 100 days of degraded air quality.

Calif. and Mass. set goal for all new car sales to be zero-emission by 2035, the states’ latest bold actions on climate

JAN. 14, 2021: You can expect to see a sharp rise in the numbers of clean electric cars in the Golden State and the Bay State in the coming years.

On Sept. 23, 2020, California Gov. Gavin Newsom announced plans to phase out the sale of new gas-powered cars in California by 2035; and on Dec. 10, Gov. Charlie Baker announced that Massachusetts would do the same. The commitments will drastically curtail both states’ carbon pollution, since their transportation sectors are their biggest emitters.

“We cannot address climate change without phasing out gas-powered cars, and Massachusetts’ plan for all new cars to be electric will drive us in the right direction,” said Environment Massachusetts State Director Ben Hellerstein. “We applaud Gov. Baker’s actions, but we urge him to keep his foot on the accelerator on the road to comprehensive clean energy.”

Our national network has long supported the Clean Car standards that served as the basis for the governors’ announcements.
Clockwise from top: Clean Water for America Campaign Director John Rumpler, before giving testimony to Congress on funding needed to replace lead pipes and stop sewage overflows in February 2020; Our staff advocated for rain gardens (such as the one above), green roofs and other nature-based infrastructure that keep our waters cleaner by preventing runoff pollution from entering our streams, rivers and lakes.
Keeping on the path to cleaner air and water requires constant vigilance—including making sure that we reinstate bedrock environmental protections that we lost under the Trump administration. Below, you’ll find a report on our national network’s campaign to restore our nation’s strongest clean water protections and a blueprint to keeping our waterways safe with clean, green infrastructure.

Endangered streams, wetlands moved closer to regaining federal protection

JUNE 25, 2021: Polluters have been quick to take advantage of the Dirty Water Rule, which weakened protections for our nation’s waterways. But these protections could be on their way back.

On June 9, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) announced it would take steps toward repealing and replacing the Trump administration’s “Navigable Waters Protection Rule.” In effect since June 2020, this rule removed Clean Water Act protections from thousands of streams and wetlands. So far, companies have won rulings stating that no federal protection applies to 758 out of 1,085 waterways examined by officials.

“By committing to repeal and replace the Dirty Water Rule, the EPA has taken a vital step for America’s rivers, lakes and bays—and for the drinking water of millions,” said John Rumpler, senior attorney and clean water program director for Environment America Research & Policy Center. “But the EPA must move quickly, before more pollution or development threatens our waterways.”

‘A Path to Cleaner Water’: Our research partners showed how repairing infrastructure can help make our waters safe for swimming

DEC. 7, 2020: With billions of gallons of sewage and runoff polluting our nation’s waterways and making us sick, something needs to change.

On Dec. 2, our national research partners at Environment America Research & Policy Center published a report on how to fix our outdated water infrastructure. It summarized nearly two dozen case studies on projects that stop pollution—from conventional repairs to “green” infrastructure such as rain gardens.

The report helped educate the public and policymakers alike, as Congress considered the scope of major infrastructure investments.

“Investing in water infrastructure works,” said John Rumpler, co-author of the report and clean water director with Environment America Research & Policy Center. “We have the tools to stop sewage overflows and make our waterways safe for swimming.”

The report highlights cases from all 10 EPA regions.
Our national network’s staff and supporters participated in a “Offshore Wind for America: The promise and potential of clean energy off our coasts,” a webinar discussing our clean energy potential.
Clean, Green & Renewable Energy

We’re promoting a bold vision of a healthier world powered by clean, renewable energy. This year, with support from Environment America’s members, we bolstered our nation’s chances at harnessing our vast renewable energy potential. From our rooftops to our coasts, we’ve taken major steps toward a future powered by 100% clean energy.

After years of advancement in clean technology, it’s clear that ‘We Have The Power’

JUNE 16, 2021: It’s time for America to move beyond fossil fuels, and fortunately, we have the power to realize our clean, renewable energy potential.

That was the finding of the 2021 edition of Environment America Research & Policy Center’s “We Have The Power” report, released in June. According to the report, America has the technical potential to meet all its electricity needs many times over with wind and solar energy.

“To a visitor from an earlier century, America in 2021 would be unimaginably advanced in all ways but one: We still rely on dirty and dangerous fossil fuels to meet our energy needs,” said Susan Rakov, chair of Environment America Research & Policy Center’s Clean Energy program.

“But it doesn’t have to be that way. This report shows that between the sunshine and the wind, we have the potential to run our society on clean energy, today and in the future.”

Oregon committed to 100% clean electricity

AUG. 9, 2021: Today, 1 in 3 Americans live in a place committed to 100% clean energy. This year, Oregonians joined this environment-friendly club.

On July 27, Gov. Kate Brown signed a bill committing the state to 100% clean electricity by 2040. The policy ties the mark for the fastest transition to emission-free electricity to date, requiring an 80% greenhouse emission reduction by 2030, a 90% reduction by 2035, and a 100% reduction by 2040. Environment Oregon has helped build support for these policies, including through the efforts of our Climate Defender volunteers.

“It’s thrilling to see Oregon once again leading the country on clean energy and climate action,” said Celeste Meiffren-Swango, state director with Environment Oregon. “Powering our state with clean energy, instead of dirty fossil fuels, cuts climate emissions from the electricity sector and helps keep our air and water clean, ensuring a greener, healthier future for all Oregonians.”

Renewables are set to deliver the vast majority of the new zero-emissions electricity target.
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