Yosemite National Park

Program Report
A look back at our work together in fiscal year 2016
Our members make the difference

None of our work would be possible if it were not for the passion, energy and support of concerned citizens across California. Together, we’re doing big things.

At several points over the last year, I was reminded how rewarding and fulfilling this work can be, thanks to the passion and drive of our members and supporters like you, the hard work of our staff, and the collaboration between our partner groups. Together, we’re doing big things.

You helped Environment California show our leaders that the Clean Power Plan is essential to reducing emissions and protecting children growing up today.

You helped spread the word and build support across the country with Environment California for saving bees and our food supply, and with Environment California Research & Policy Center for leaving dirty energy behind in favor of moving to 100 percent renewable sources that are good for the environment and good for business.

You took part in defending our right to clean water after the tragedy in Flint, Mich., and alerted the nation about the many threats to our drinking water across the country. And you helped Environment California protect America’s beloved special places by speaking up for our most important conservation programs and advocating for more national monuments to protect places like the Grand Canyon.

As you read through this report, remember that while our staff might be in the room when a big environmental victory is won, none of our work would be possible if it were not for the passion, energy and support of millions of concerned citizens. And as critical as this people power was to our victories last year, I can guarantee that this year—with a new president, new Congress, and more challenges to overcome—the same will be true.

Thank you for all you’ve done to make this past year successful, and here’s to many more to come.

Sincerely,

Dan Jacobson
Environment California Legislative Director

Margie Alt
Environment America Executive Director
No Fracking in California

Big Oil wants to use millions of gallons of our water to drill for fracked gas across California. In 2016, Environment California and Environment California Research & Policy Center worked to keep fossil fuels in the ground and call for a statewide fracking ban.

You helped us push to cut fracking

With support from members like you, Environment California was able to educate elected officials on the dangers of fracking and push for cleaner alternatives. We spoke at committee hearings, met with legislators, and shared the latest research and reports with decision-makers.

In addition, we worked to pass SB 1383, a bill that would cut emissions of pollutants like methane and black carbon in half by 2030. We also worked with other environmental and advocacy groups to pass local divestment policies that would help California divest from dirty fossil fuels. Our progress in getting a ban on fracking couldn’t have happened without you.

Research highlighted impact of fracking

Environment California Research & Policy Center researched the effects of fracking and looked into clean energy alternatives, like solar and wind energy. Our research found that in 2014, fracking wells released an estimated total of 140 million pounds of methane within the first few weeks of operation.

Our research was highlighted in media outlets like the Sacramento Bee and the San Diego Union Tribune. Dan Jacobson, Environment California Research & Policy Center legislative director, spoke at a divestment forum about policies that will help us shift away from fossil fuels toward a clean energy future.
No Bees, No Food

Last year, millions of activists stood up to protect bees and our food supply. In June, we participated in the Keep the Hives Alive Tour, a coordinated effort to educate citizens across the nation about colony collapse disorder. The tour culminated with a rally at the Environmental Protection Agency, where Environment California and our partners relayed the message from more than 4.5 million petitions from across the United States: Stop the use of bee-killing pesticides.

Environment America’s Anna Aurilio spoke for more than 4.5 million activists when she told the EPA: If we don’t save the bees, our food supply is at risk.

Citizen outreach staff in several states hosted “Barbecue Without Bees” events last summer to raise awareness of pollinator die-offs, and show how our food supply is largely dependent on bees.
Our best pollinators are dying off

In recent years, bees have been disappearing at an unsustainable rate. In fact, beekeepers reported losing more than 40 percent of their hives last year. While this is certainly bad news for the bees, the real danger lies in our inability to match the pollinating power of these creatures—bees help pollinate a majority of the world’s food, and more than $15 billion a year in U.S. crops.

It’s simple: No bees, no food. No almonds, fewer strawberries and apples, less coffee... the list goes on. Scientists point to several causes behind bee colony collapse, including climate change, parasites and pesticide use. Environment California’s top priority is getting neonicotinoids (neonics)—a type of insecticide that’s chemically related to nicotine and has been linked to colony collapse—off the market.

Millions of you came together to save the bees

Big agrichemical companies are using more and more of these neonics. That’s why we’re raising awareness of the problem and building people power to sway decision-makers to make the right choice: protect the bees and our food supply.

In 2016, our national federation launched a massive effort to speak with millions of Americans about the urgency of banning bee-killing pesticides and provide concerned citizens with ways to get involved. We had canvassers going door-to-door in 18 states, staff on the phone calling members like you, and we coordinated our efforts with scientists, beekeepers, farmers and coalition partners to make sure we could make the biggest difference possible.

States are taking action, but EPA needs to lead

The good news is that thanks in part to our members’ activism, several states have taken action on neonics, including Connecticut, Maryland, Minnesota and Oregon, with others looking to act soon. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has committed to phasing out the use of neonics on the public lands they manage, and Home Depot and BJ’s Wholesale Club have taken steps to limit the sale of plants treated with neonics, label the plants, or both. And the EPA has put a temporary moratorium on approving any new uses of the neonics.

But we must do more! We’ll continue to update and mobilize our members and supporters to make sure the EPA ultimately takes these bee-killing pesticides off the market altogether. So raise your megaphone—or your cellphone—and help save the bees and our food supply.
All In For 100% Renewable

We can have healthier communities and a better future for our children, but to get there, we need to transform the way we produce and consume energy. That’s why Environment California Research & Policy Center is calling for a nationwide commitment to 100 percent renewable power. It’s a big, bold goal—one that would make America a world leader in the race toward a cleaner, healthier future—and it’s a goal that’s 100 percent possible.

In April, Environment California Research & Policy Center and CALPIRG alum and NBA legend Bill Walton released “Shining Cities,” which shows how smart local policies are expanding solar in California and across the country.

Our citizen outreach staff distributed information about how America can transition to 100 percent renewable energy to more than 1.3 million households.
100% renewable is 100% possible

To avoid the worst impacts of climate change, we must avoid burning a majority of the world’s fossil fuel reserves and instead transition to 100 percent renewable energy.

“To have healthier and more economically vibrant communities right now, and a livable future for our kids, we need to transform the way we produce and consume energy,” said Michelle Kinman, clean energy advocate for Environment California Research & Policy Center. “The good news we’re spreading is that 100 percent renewable is 100 percent possible.”

And why would we wait? Los Angeles hasn’t, and now leads the nation in total installed solar capacity, followed by San Diego. We can have a cleaner, healthier planet for children growing up today, and we already have the resources and ability to shift to 100 percent renewable energy right now.

Almost all new energy capacity is coming from renewables

Solar power has tripled in America in just the last two years—with a new home or business going solar every one and a half minutes. In many states, wind power is now cheaper than gas or coal—in fact, we celebrated the completion of our nation’s first offshore wind farm off the Rhode Island coast last summer. Even better, 98.6 percent of all new energy capacity brought online in the first quarter of 2016 came from renewable energy.

Cities, counties and states, and dozens of major companies like Apple, Johnson & Johnson and Google have already made commitments to 100 percent renewable energy. It’s also becoming cheaper and therefore, better for business. The bottom line: 100 percent renewable energy is 100 percent possible.

Starting local to educate 1.3 million clean energy activists

Canvassers from offices in El Cerrito, Santa Cruz, Santa Barbara, Los Angeles and San Diego distributed brochures, flyers and other information to more than 250,000 California households in order to reach 1.3 million Americans nationwide. These efforts showed the country we have the tools to transition entirely off dirty fuels and onto clean sources.

The more people who join our call for 100 percent renewable power, the more local, state, national and corporate leaders will step up and take action. Visit our website to learn more and join the call: www.EnvironmentCaliforniaCenter.org
Save the California Bag Ban

For decades, plastic trash has been polluting the Pacific, littering our waters and endangering wildlife. In 2014, you helped us win a statewide bill to ban single-use plastic bags, but now a few out-of-state companies are spending millions to repeal the bag ban before it even takes effect. This year, Environment California worked to save California’s first-in-the-nation plastic bag ban.

▲ Environment California State Director Dan Jacobson spoke at a press conference about the bag ban.

▲ Nothing we use for a few minutes should be allowed to pollute our ocean for hundreds of years.
7 billion fewer plastic bags trashed

Nothing we use for a few minutes should be allowed to pollute our ocean for hundreds of years. But before California communities started banning plastic bags, we used nearly 19 billion plastic bags each year, with less than 5 percent recycled.

Thanks to your support, Environment California fought to save our statewide bag ban and continued to build support for local bag bans. Now, nearly 150 communities, representing one-third of the state's population, have gone plastic bag-free.

California takes the lead to protect the bag ban

Environment California was a lead member of the coalition working to save the bag ban. Last year, we organized hundreds of Californians to join Bag Ban Action Teams, to educate the public and build support for the bag ban. When the plastic industry spent millions of dollars to put out misleading ads or send deceptive mailings, we jumped into action to tell the public the truth.

Thanks to your support this year, we built teams all over California to help inform voters and encourage them to turn out to the polls and vote yes on Prop 67, which will ban single-use plastic bags.

Your support keeps plastic out of our oceans

We'll continue our fight to save the bag ban, so that we can protect the thousands of birds, mammals and sea turtles threatened by plastic pollution each year, and stop plastic from polluting our water. We’ve been able to achieve a lot this year thanks to support from members like you.

• More than 150 communities in California have already made the decision to ban single-use plastic bags.

• We worked with editorial boards, members of the arts and entertainment community, and local activists to take action in support of the bag ban.

Special interest groups have threatened to spend up to $50 million to defeat the ban, but we will continue to work with the environmental community, local grocers, elected officials and you to get the word out.

Did you know?

- Ninety percent of ocean debris, which harms more than 660 marine species, is made up of plastic trash.

- In some areas of the Pacific Ocean, plastic outweighs plankton six to one.

- The California Plastic Bag Ban Referendum (Prop 67) was on the ballot on Nov. 8, 2016.
Exhaust from cars, trucks and other transportation makes up the single largest source of global warming pollution in California. To combat this, Environment California Research & Policy Center is working with a diverse coalition of partners to place 1.5 million electric vehicles on California’s roads by 2025. With your support, last year we educated the public, released key research and hundreds of elected officials endorsed our goal.

More than 250 leaders joined our call
California is well on the way to putting 1.5 million electric vehicles on the road by 2025. By August 2016, our state had more than 224,000 electric vehicles on the road—more than any other state in the country. But we can’t slow down yet.

So this year, Environment California Research & Policy Center worked to get local elected leaders and decision-makers to support the 1.5 million electric vehicle goal. More than 250 mayors, city council members and supervisors joined us, and we delivered the list of supporters to the California Air Resources Board.

Californians learn the benefits of going electric
In addition to getting support from our decision-makers, Environment California Research & Policy Center also worked to educate Californians. At events from Oakland to Los Angeles, members of the community were able to test-drive electric cars, learn about different financing options, and gain a better understanding of the impacts of burning fossil fuels.

We also released a report in July 2016 that found electric vehicles are great for both consumers’ wallets and the environment. These vehicles are a cost-effective way for Californians to help the environment, with the average electric vehicle saving owners more than $3,500 in gas costs over the lifetime of the car.
On the 100th anniversary of the National Park Service last year, President Obama created the Katahdin Woods and Waters National Monument to protect more than 87,000 acres in Maine. Yet sensitive landscapes surrounding many of our national parks still remain unprotected and face threats from mining, drilling and logging companies. It’s happening just six miles from the Grand Canyon, and perhaps even near your favorite outdoor places right here in California.

**Kids growing up deserve protected parks**

America’s outdoors are part of what makes this country special, and in today’s world, we often need reminders of the awesome power of nature. Families can take vacations in our great outdoors that open children’s eyes to the wonders of the wild, and wildlife thrives in the open space.

That’s why, with your support, Environment California helped restore the Land and Water Conservation Fund in late 2015, which for 50 years has protected natural treasures in every state. It’s also why we called on the president to establish several new national monuments, from the Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks to the San Juan Islands. And it’s why we launched a coalition effort to protect the best of America: the Grand Canyon.

**Protecting the Grand Canyon from mining**

With you by our side, Environment California and our national federation called on the president to designate the Greater Grand Canyon Heritage National Monument. This designation would protect 1.7 million acres around the Grand Canyon from uranium mining and other threats. This land includes the habitat for unique species of wildlife, the drinking water sources for millions of people downstream, and land that is sacred to several Tribal Nations.

With your support and action, we can protect the Grand Canyon for generations to come and set a precedent for protecting special places across the country from reckless threats.