Annual Report

Recapping our work in fiscal year 2016 for our members
To our members

None of our work would be possible if it were not for the passion, energy and support of concerned citizens across Maryland. 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 Maryland 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 Maryland for saving bees and our food supply, and with Environment Maryland 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 Maryland 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,

Christy Leavitt
Regional Program Director
Global Warming Solutions

You’ve told us how global warming is affecting you—from record-breaking wildfires to increasingly severe storms. At the end of 2015, your support helped us convince President Obama to finalize his Clean Power Plan, which sets the first-ever limits on carbon pollution from power plants. With your help, Environment Maryland is showing our leaders that the Clean Power Plan is essential to reducing emissions and protecting children growing up today.

America needs the Clean Power Plan now

World leaders agreed in December 2015 to reduce carbon emissions under the Paris Agreement, and the Clean Power Plan gave our country the leverage we needed. In February, however, the Supreme Court put the Clean Power Plan on hold while it hears lawsuits from polluters and their allies.

Despite the judicial stay on the Clean Power Plan, the message from our members and supporters is clear: America needs to switch to clean, renewable energy sources.

We’re moving forward with clean energy

We’re taking that message to heart by pushing for strong carbon-reducing policies here in Maryland, even while the Clean Power Plan is on hold. In spring of 2016, Environment Maryland backed the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Act of 2016 (House Bill 610/Senate Bill 323) to update Maryland’s 2009 law. The bill passed with overwhelming bipartisan support and was signed into law by Gov. Hogan.

The new law requires Maryland to reduce carbon pollution economy-wide by 40 percent below 2006 levels by the year 2030. In order to hit the goal, Maryland will need to commit to expanded energy efficiency programs and shift towards clean, renewable energy.
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 Maryland 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.

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.

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.
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 Maryland’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, we 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, Maryland became the first state to restrict bee-killing pesticides for consumers last spring with the Pollinator Protection Act (Senate Bill 198/House Bill 211). The bill limits the use of neonics to those that have been trained to use the pesticide, farmers and veterinarians — consumers will no longer be able to purchase neonics. Since then, several other states have taken action on neonics, including Connecticut, Minnesota and Oregon, with others looking to act soon. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has also committed to phasing out the use of neonics on the 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.

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 Maryland and Environment Maryland 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 Maryland Research & Policy Center and our sister groups in other states released “Shining Cities,” which shows how smart local policies are expanding solar in America.

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. David Freeman, a longtime utility CEO who joined Environment America Research & Policy Center and Frontier Group for an online presentation and discussion of their report, “We Have the Power” said, “We’ve been told by the family doctor, the climatologist, that we have to reduce greenhouse gases to near zero in the next 35 years, or we’re going to cook.”

And why would we wait? 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 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.

In spring of 2016, Environment Maryland backed the Clean Energy Jobs Act (Senate Bill 921/House Bill 1106) to increase our state’s commitment to renewable energy. The legislation, passed by the Maryland General Assembly, would increase Maryland’s renewable portfolio standard from 20 percent by 2022 to 25 percent by 2020. Unfortunately, Gov. Hogan vetoed the bill in May, but with the support of our members, we’re planning on supporting the bill again in 2017.

Educating 1.3 million clean energy activists

Environment Maryland Research & Policy Center spent last year helping to distribute information to more than 1.3 million households across America. Transitioning to 100 percent renewable energy will mean taking on some of the most powerful corporations in the world, and to win, we’re going to need a whole lot of well-informed people behind us.

It’s time to sweep past the big energy interests that are not only standing in the way, but using their financial might and political clout to roll back renewable energy’s progress.

That’s where you, our members and supporters, come in. 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.EnvironmentMarylandCenter.org
Clean Water For Maryland

Last year, we were all shocked to learn about the contamination of drinking water in Flint, Mich. Unfortunately, clean water is threatened in communities across the country. One of the biggest threats to clean water in the United States is pollution from massive factory farms. Environment Maryland and Environment Maryland Research & Policy Center are working to defend the Clean Water Rule and call out agribusiness pollution so we can ensure all Americans have safe water to drink.

Clean water for one in three Americans

Environment Maryland won a massive victory for clean water in 2015 when you helped win protections for the drinking water sources of one in three Americans under the Clean Water Rule. Sadly, polluters are challenging the rule, delaying important action to protect our communities.

Thanks to the support of our members and supporters we’ve been able to fend off these attacks in Congress, but unfortunately, the rule is on hold due to polluter attacks in the courts.

Factory farms are top water polluters

In June, Environment Maryland Research & Policy Center revealed America’s Next Top Polluters in our report, “Corporate Agribusiness and the Fouling of America’s Waterways.” For both measurements we analyzed, Tyson Foods came out on top—with more than 55 million tons of manure in its supply chain and direct dumping of 104 million pounds of toxic pollutants into waterways from 2010 to 2014.

Pollution from agribusiness contributes to the dead zones in the Chesapeake Bay and threatens the long-term recovery of the Bay and Maryland’s other waterways. We’re spreading the word across Maryland and organizing concerned citizens like you to call on Tyson, Purdue and other agribusinesses to limit their pollution.
Conservation America

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 Maryland.

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 Maryland 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 Maryland 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.