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 Oregon. 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 Oregon 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 Oregon for saving bees and our food supply, and with Environment Oregon 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 Oregon 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,

Celeste Meiffren-Swango
Campaign Organizing Director

Margie Alt
Environment America Executive Director
The National Park Service celebrated its 100th anniversary last year. Unfortunately, the land surrounding Oregon’s only national park, Crater Lake, is at risk. Year after year, logging companies push to clearcut old-growth forest on this land. With your support, Environment Oregon is pushing our congressional delegation to protect Crater Lake by declaring a 500,000-acre, 75-mile wildlife corridor around the park.

Kids growing up deserve protected parks

Oregon’s outdoors are part of what makes this state special. Wildlife thrives in the open space, our families take vacations that open children’s eyes to the wonders of the wild, and in today’s world, we often need reminders of the awesome power of nature.

This year, more than 30,000 members and activists like you signed a petition calling on Sen. Ron Wyden to introduce a bill in Congress to protect Crater Lake. We delivered many of them to Sen. Wyden’s office in Eugene along with a mosaic of Crater Lake made up of photo petitions from outdoor enthusiasts from across the state.

“The response has been overwhelmingly positive,” said Miles Van Reed, citizen outreach director for Environment Oregon. “Just this year, our staff spoke face-to-face with more than 80,000 Oregonians about this effort. Crater Lake is Oregon’s crown jewel, and Oregonians from all walks of life are calling for action in order to protect it.”

Let’s protect Crater Lake for good

Working with coalition partners, we also hosted seven different hikes for members and supporters in the proposed wilderness area to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the National Park Service. With your support and action, we can protect Crater Lake for generations to come and set a precedent for protecting other special places across the country from reckless threats.
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 Oregon 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.
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 Oregon’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 agribusiness 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, Oregon has taken important action on neonics along with Maryland, Connecticut and Minnesota, 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.
In 2015, Environment Oregon joined with a broad coalition of organizations from around the state to push for aggressive action on global warming. Thanks to your support, lawmakers passed the Clean Electricity and Coal Transition Act in February, which gets Oregon off coal, doubles Oregon’s commitment to renewable energy to 50 percent, and expands solar options for people across the state. Oregon is proving once again that we can lead the way in passing strong policies that protect our environment.

Student activists from around the state joined with Environment Oregon to meet with their local legislators in support of the Clean Electricity and Coal Transition Act.

Environment Oregon’s Charlie Fisher spoke at our “Green Ideas and Ham” breakfast forum at Chez Machin in March to discuss opportunities for strong renewable policies during Oregon’s 2016 legislative session.
We’re eliminating coal, doubling renewable energy in Oregon

In the past year, Environment Oregon prioritized several bills focused on repowering Oregon with clean, renewable energy. With your support, we helped win Senate Bill 1547, which eliminates all coal-fired energy by 2035, and doubles Oregon’s commitment to renewable energy to 50 percent by 2040.

The bill also created a community solar program—allowing people who can’t put solar panels on their home to purchase panels located elsewhere in the state and get the same credits on their utility bill as if the panels were located on their own roof. This opens the market to the three out of four Oregonians who currently don’t have access to solar energy.

Your support made it all possible

The bill was supported by a diverse coalition of local elected officials, utilities, consumer groups, businesses, low-income groups and environmental organizations. In support of the clean energy bill, Environment Oregon members sent hundreds of emails and made dozens of phone calls to their legislators, and we even brought our members, local solar business owners and local elected officials (including the Mayor of Milwaukie, Mark Gamba) to Salem to lobby decision-makers.

We also organized a student lobby day that brought 35 students from three college campuses across the state to Salem to meet with their legislators and deliver 3,300 signatures they collected over four days in support of the bill. Whether you made a phone call, signed a petition or lobbied legislators in person, the widespread public pressure from Oregonians was crucial to passing this important climate measure.

A victory for our planet, our communities and our future

It’s becoming increasingly clear that climate change is a real threat to the health of Oregon communities and families across the state, from more intense and frequent forest fires to extreme summer drought. With the passing of the Clean Electricity and Coal Transition Act, Oregon’s leaders showed that we are serious about combatting this issue.

Environment Oregon Energy Program Director Rob Sargent said, “Our lawmakers have stepped up to the plate and put Oregon on a plan to shift away from fossil fuels and tap into the power of the wind and sun. This is a significant victory for Oregon’s environment, and for the health of our planet.”

What is the Clean Electricity and Coal Transition Act?

Eliminates all energy from coal-fired power plants by 2035

Doubles renewable energy to 50 percent by 2040

Establishes a community solar program to provide solar access for all Oregonians
Go Solar, Oregon

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 2016, with the support of our members, Environment Oregon convinced Lake Oswego, Milwaukie, Corvallis and Ashland to take actions that will make solar more affordable and accessible for Oregonians. With your continued support, we can help more people receive the benefits of solar power and decrease global warming emissions.

Oregonians go solar one city at a time

Last year, our supporters helped four cities make commitments that will help more Oregonians go solar:

• We helped Lake Oswego and Milwaukie set goals of tripling solar in the next five years. Milwaukie also committed to run a “Solarize” program to streamline and bring down the upfront cost of going solar.
• Corvallis gave a $100,000 loan to a local group, Seeds for the Sol, which helps low-income households purchase solar panels
• The City of Ashland co-hosted a solar workshop with Environment Oregon to show businesses and residents how they could save money and reduce carbon emissions with solar.

Standing up for strong solar policies

To win these victories for our environment, we got more than 60 local businesses to call on their local leaders to pass pro-solar policies and we coordinated testimony from our members, local businesses and solar installers in front of city councils before votes were cast. We also launched a campaign in Lincoln County where we hosted a “Solar Power Happy Hour,” with speakers including Lincoln County Commissioner Bill Hall and local solar installer Rio Davidson.

But we couldn’t have done any of this without the support of our members. You provided us with the financial backing to build support in these cities and the people power to win policies that will help regular Oregonians receive the benefits of solar power.
Clean Water For Oregon

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 Oregon and Environment Oregon 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 Oregon 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 Oregon 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 is responsible for some of America’s most intractable water quality problems, the contamination of countless streams and lakes, and poses serious threats to our drinking water. We’re spreading the word across the country and organizing concerned citizens like you to call on Tyson and other agribusinesses to limit their pollution.