Annual Report
A look back at our work together in fiscal year 2016
“None of our work would be possible if it were not for the passion, energy and support of concerned citizens across Pennsylvania. 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 PennEnvironment show our leaders that the “Clean Power Plan,” the nation’s first regulations to reduce global warming from the largest sources, is essential to reducing emissions and protecting children growing up today.

You helped spread the word and build support across the country with PennEnvironment for saving bees and our food supply, and with the PennEnvironment 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 PennEnvironment 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.

Thanks,

David Masur
PennEnvironment Executive Director
 Millions of bees have been dying off all across the nation, with alarming consequences for our environment and our food supply. More and more studies are correlating this catastrophic bee die-off with the use of harmful pesticides. We rely on bees to pollinate everything from apples to strawberries to the alfalfa used to feed dairy cows. So what happens if the bees disappear? It’s simple: No bees, no food.

**We’re losing our bees at an alarming rate**

In recent years, bees have been disappearing at an unsustainable rate. In fact, beekeepers reported losing nearly 40 percent of their hives last year alone. The consequences are clear, if we lose our bees we lose the foods we know and love. No peaches, fewer strawberries and apples, less coffee… the list goes on.

The growing research from the scientific community points to pesticides chemically related to nicotine called neonicotinoids as a main culprit. Commonly referred to as “neonics,” these pesticides are nearly 6,000 times more toxic to bees than DDT. Sadly, big agrichemical companies continue to use more and more of this pesticide that’s known to kill bees—even as the scientific evidence grows showing the threat posed by neonics.

**You took action to save the bees in 2016**

With bees in mind, you helped launch a massive citizen outreach campaign in 2016. Our staff, volunteers and members like you talked with more than 55,000 concerned Pennsylvanians about this critical issue—and collected over 20,000 petition signatures calling for a ban on the pesticides that are putting our bee colonies on the brink. Not only that, but we also co-hosted an educational event in Pittsburgh with the Phipps Conservatory that was covered by most of the area’s major television networks.

With our members backing us up every step of the way, we are confident we can get healthy, thriving bees back in the hives where they belong.
Executive Director David Masur announced PennEnvironment’s lawsuit against ArcelorMittal, the largest steel company in the world. The goal was to resolve the plant’s air pollution violations as quickly and efficiently as possible to bring relief to local residents.

At times, ArcelorMittal’s violations were so extreme that emission levels were up to eight times higher than legally allowed, causing respiratory problems for residents and their families.

Taking On Illegal Polluters

When it comes to a healthy environment, there are few issues as important as clean air. Sadly, Pennsylvania remains home to some of the nation’s worst air polluters and facilities that regularly violate the health standards of our Clean Air Act. These facilities put the health of local communities at risk, as well as those of us who live further downwind. In 2016, PennEnvironment set out to put an end to some of the state’s most chronic air polluters.

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Action against illegal polluters led to historic victory

In 2016, PennEnvironment litigated a federal Clean Air Act lawsuit against the largest steel company in the world, ArcelorMittal, after uncovering hundreds of environmental violations at the company’s coal processing facility located just outside of Pittsburgh in the city of Monessen, Pa.

Residents of many surrounding towns have felt the impact of the ArcelorMittal facility’s disregard for pollution control. Soot, acidic gases and noxious odors coated these areas since the decades-old facility restarted in April 2014.

“Ever since the Monessen Coke Plant re-opened, local residents have had their quality of life diminished, have endured ongoing odors and soot, and have had to fear for their health,” said David Masur, Executive Director of PennEnvironment. “It is not acceptable that the world’s largest steel company, which brings in $80 billion annually, hasn’t found a way to comply with our cornerstone environmental laws.”

Evidence showed constant and chronic violations

Our lawsuit brought to light hard evidence revealing the dangers of the facility, including:

- Operating for days and weeks at a time without using a key air pollution control device
- More than 225 violations of pollution limits meant to minimize emissions of hydrogen sulfide, sulfur dioxide, and hazardous particulate matter.
- Failure to install a key monitoring device required to track the amount of sulfur coming from the facility’s flare and smokestacks.

With strong support from members like you, PennEnvironment’s previous environmental litigation led to the two largest polluter fines of their kind in Pennsylvania history. Now, our lawsuit has focused the attention of the U.S. EPA, the Department of Justice, and Pennsylvania environmental officials on ArcelorMittal. A settlement is now in sight that will require the company to upgrade the facility, reduce its pollution, pay a significant civil penalty, and comply at last with the Clean Air Act. This case is another major achievement in our effort to rein in illegal pollution. We will continue to need your help taking down harmful polluters in Pennsylvania and across the country.
PennEnvironment Research & Policy Center Director David Masur was joined by doctors and nurses from Physicians for Social Responsibility to release our new report on fracking and public health.

Fracking waste pits like this will soon become obsolete, under new protections pushed by PennEnvironment.

Keep Pennsylvania Safe From Drilling

When it comes to the issue of fracking, Pennsylvanians have seen first-hand the pollution and destruction it causes across the state. That’s why PennEnvironment and PennEnvironment Research & Policy Center has called for a ban on fracking, to protect our health, environment and communities. In 2016, you helped us continue to shine a spotlight on the threats posed by fracking and the worst actors in the fracking industry and made headway to protect our environment when positive action seemed so hard to come by.
We’re slowing down fracking in Pennsylvania

We all know what’s at stake if we don’t stop fracking from destroying our air, water and beautiful landscapes. But you have to look no further than the threat it poses to our most vulnerable residents, like our children and elderly Pennsylvanians, to feel the urgency in halting fracking. In 2016, PennEnvironment Research & Policy Center released a new hard-hitting study to put a fine point on this threat.

Protecting vulnerable communities from fracking

Last year, PennEnvironment Research & Policy Center drew public recognition to the threat that fracking poses to Pennsylvania’s most vulnerable residents, and the growing concern about fracking’s health effects from experts we trust.

We wrote and released “Dangerous and Close,” a new study that uncovered the proximity of fracking operations to Pennsylvania’s children and other at-risk community members. Our study showed 166 schools and 165 childcare providers—and more than 50,000 Pennsylvania children under the age of 10—live within one mile of a permitted fracking well site. We also recruited more than 1,000 Pennsylvanian health experts to join our campaign and publicly call for greater action to address the health impacts from fracking. We mobilized doctors, nurses and other health professionals from across Pennsylvania to speak with one voice against fracking.

Making headway in the fight against fracking

It’s no secret that the powerful fracking companies and their industry lobbyists in Harrisburg are working day-and-night to convince our politicians to turn a blind eye to their destruction and violations of environmental laws. But even when we’re up against these hurdles, together with our members, we are able to deliver concrete results that will help protect us from fracking.

We saw this earlier in 2016, when a new set of environmental and health safeguards were added to the books to help protect Pennsylvanians from fracking. This included a policy that PennEnvironment Research & Policy Center pushed for over many years: banning fracking’s dangerous open-air waste pits. These toxic pits can be larger than a football field, and hold millions of gallons of fracking wastewater laced with all types of contaminants and carcinogens.

You’ve stuck with us through nearly five years of mobilizing the public, submitting testimony and input to state officials, and highlighting the threats posed by these waste pits in the media. In 2016 we finally saw new regulations implemented to outlaw this practice for good. There is always more work to be done to protect Pennsylvania from fracking, but 2016 saw an important step in the right direction.
From extreme weather to rising sea levels and other dire effects, we owe it to our kids and future generations to do everything in our power to tackle this challenge. In 2016, PennEnvironment launched an all-out organizing effort to send a clear message to our elected officials: the time for action on climate change is now.
Standing up to climate polluters

We’re fast approaching the point when scientists say climate change could tip toward catastrophe, with sea levels rising faster along our coasts, storms growing more powerful, and other forms of extreme weather more disruptive. When we mobilize supporters like you, we have the power to stand up to climate polluters and work toward positive change for our future.

Promoting solutions to climate change

PennEnvironment knows that if we’re truly going to tackle climate change, we need to implement the solutions at our fingertips to promote clean energy instead of continuing to invest in dirty fossil fuels.

In 2016, we released three new hard-hitting studies to show opportunities to promote clean energy alternatives instead of the current mix that contributes so heavily to climate change. Here are some highlights:

- “Turning to the Wind” showed the potential of wind power in Pennsylvania, which could eliminate global warming pollution equal to that produced by more than 300,000 cars.
- PennEnvironment found that 84 percent of Pennsylvanians live in counties recently affected by weather-related disasters in the report, “Hitting Close to Home.” To protect residents, Pennsylvania needs to expand its energy efficiency programs, adopt net-zero building codes, and retrofit standards to meet climate goals.
- The transformation to a zero-carbon transportation system is possible, according to “A New Way Forward.” With emerging technologies and social trends, cutting pollution and reducing emissions from greenhouse gases is becoming a reality.

PennEnvironment “Climate Defenders” travel to Harrisburg for Lobby Day

We’ve always known that in the fight to solve climate change, we’ll never be able to go dollar-for-dollar with the deep pockets of the largest global warming polluters. But what we lack in well-funded lobbyists, campaign contributions and slick advertising campaigns, we make up in broad public support.

In 2016, we brought this fight directly to our elected officials in the state capitol when PennEnvironment joined with our partner groups to hold our “Climate Defenders Lobby Day” in Harrisburg. Hundreds of PennEnvironment members and activists boarded buses and spent the day meeting face-to-face with their state representatives and senators, attending briefings and news conferences on issues related to climate change. Elected officials from both sides of the aisle noted that flooding the capitol with concerned constituents reminded them to double their effort to support policies addressing climate change—and that while they may hear from high-powered Harrisburg lobbyists representing climate polluters every day, they need to listen to their constituents.
Go Solar, Pennsylvania

If we’re ever going to get off of dirty fossil fuels—and tackle climate change once and for all—we must develop and promote workable, clean alternatives. In 2016, PennEnvironment Research & Policy Center created a blueprint for Philadelphia’s schools to “go solar,” and started a groundbreaking dialogue for clean energy that can be emulated in cities across the nation.

Report highlights big potential for solar progress in Philadelphia

Working with researchers and representatives from the solar industry, PennEnvironment Research & Policy Center released the new study, “Solar Schools for Philadelphia,” which analyzes the economic, public health, job creation and environmental benefits of installing solar on the rooftops of Philadelphia’s public schools. Benefits include:

• Funding nearly 40 percent of the Philadelphia school district’s annual electricity needs with solar energy.
• Offsetting 62,000 tons of carbon dioxide emissions per year (equivalent to the annual emissions from 13,700 cars).
• Saving taxpayers more than $13 million over the lifetime of installations.

Public support strengthens future of solar

Leaders in the Philadelphia City Council fully embraced the report’s findings. Councilman Derek Green called for hearings on the new information, and experts from the solar industry, labor unions, educators and public health experts all testified in support of moving ahead. Media outlets throughout Pennsylvania’s largest media market explored the opportunities that could be created if Philadelphia became a national leader in solar schools. As we go into 2017, we are continuing to work with local and state officials, business leaders and others to make this vision a reality.
Clean Water for Pennsylvania

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 Pennsylvania is the presence of lead. PennEnvironment and members like you are working to defend our water and call out polluters so we can ensure all Americans have safe water to drink.

First Flint, now Philly?
Safe drinking water is a right, not a privilege. That’s why everyone’s worst fears came to light when the drinking water disaster in Flint, Mich., was just the tip of the toxic iceberg for the threat posed by lead in our drinking water.

Soon after, Philadelphia quickly became front-and-center as ongoing news stories revealed how the city’s water department has produced inadequate testing protocols, withheld information, and failed to comply with federal regulatory requirements when assessing the safety of our drinking water in relation to lead. In this time of crisis and concern, PennEnvironment mobilized and empowered concerned citizens to take action.

Citizens for safe drinking water
PennEnvironment organized quickly to get communities the information they needed to know and engage them. After our staff worked with members of the Philadelphia City Council to hold hearings to uncover the facts and risks posed to the city’s residents, we worked with partner groups to develop and implement a citizen monitoring program to help concerned citizens quickly and cheaply test their own tap water for lead. We’ll continue to protect clean water in 2017 and look forward to doing so with you by our side.