In February, we launched our 2021 campaign to win commitments to 100 percent renewable energy in 13 states. Emma Searson, our director of the campaign, explains why.

To some, it may have seemed like an odd time to launch a multi-state campaign for 100 percent renewable energy. We were in the middle of the first month of a new presidential administration, and the Biden team had been busy with a flurry of climate and energy actions that would impact the energy future of our entire nation. In the midst of all that, some might have found themselves wondering why an advocacy group would be emphasizing state energy policy.

Let me explain why we were so excited to be kicking off this campaign.

For starters, working in the states is essential because we have years of state leadership to thank for the momentum, progress and newfound national ambition we are seeing today. In 2018, California sparked a nationwide trend when it committed to getting 100 percent of its electricity from zero-carbon sources by 2045. To date, seven states and more than 170 cities have similarly committed to achieving 100 percent clean or renewable electricity, and 1 in 3 Americans now lives in a community bound to that vision.

But states didn’t just begin making these commitments in 2018. Thanks to the goals and policies they started passing in the 1990s and early 2000s—from incentives for home solar to earlier renewable energy targets—states have already played an outsized role in increasing the share of renewables in America’s electricity mix 20-fold over the last 20 years. With that kind of track record, it’s no wonder that it makes sense to keep organizing for clean energy in the states.

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Photo credits: Staff. Top photo: Mariusz S. Jurgielewicz via Shutterstock.
Whole Foods earned an ‘F’ on plastic packaging. We’re urging it to do better.

Whole Foods touts its commitment to “planet before profits.” But to live up to that claim, it’ll need to deal with its contribution to the plastic pollution crisis.

Right now, it’s not doing enough. A report by the environmental shareholder advocacy group As You Sow gave the grocer an “F” grade for its policies on single-use plastic packaging. On setting goals to reduce its unnecessary plastic waste, as well as transparency on those efforts, Whole Foods fell behind Target, Kroger and even Walmart.

“Our wildlife, oceans and communities are choking on plastics and deserve better,” said Kelsey Lamp, Protect Our Oceans campaign director for Environment America Research & Policy Center. “We must prioritize wildlife over waste, and we should expect more from a supermarket known for its environmental vision.”

Environment America Research & Policy Center is calling on Whole Foods to lead by example by eliminating single-use plastic packaging from store shelves.

Broken infrastructure is polluting our water. A report shows how to fix that.

The way America does water infrastructure is harming the waters we use for drinking, swimming and fishing, and that we visit with family and friends.

With runoff from roads and parking lots—along with outflow from aging or failing sewage systems—polluting our nation’s waterways and making us sick, our research partners at Environment America Research & Policy Center published a Dec. 2 report on how we can fix our outdated water infrastructure. It summarizes nearly two dozen case studies, from every corner of the country, on projects that are successfully stopping pollution—from “conventional” upgrades to “green” infrastructure such as rain gardens.

“From Texas’ San Marcos River to Washington’s Puget Sound, one thing is clear: Investing in water infrastructure works,” said Laura Miller, co-author of the report and clean water advocate with Environment America Research & Policy Center. “Across America, sewage overflows and runoff pollution are threatening our favorite places to swim, paddle and find peace in nature. But when our nation applies the right resources, we can fix these problems.”

The report highlights cases from all 10 U.S. Environmental Protection Agency regions.

One-year ban on drilling at Chaco Canyon gives a special place some breathing room

A desert sanctuary is getting a year’s reprieve from dirty and destructive oil and gas drilling—a reprieve that will hopefully turn into permanent protection.

Included in a government funding bill passed at the end of 2020 was a measure preventing oil and gas drilling around Chaco Culture National Historical Park, a haven for desert wildlife and home to ruins of immense cultural significance to local tribes. The measure blocked an attempt from the Trump administration to open up the area around the park to oil and gas drilling, threatening Chaco Canyon with air, light and noise pollution.

“This is a welcome reprieve for a beloved place. This year, Congress should act to finally protect it for good,” said Ellen Montgomery, Environment America’s director of public lands campaigns.

The moratorium was introduced by U.S. Rep. Ben Ray Luján (N.M.); Environment America called on Congress to block the drilling plan after its release last year.

On Jan. 12, our research partners at Environment America Research & Policy Center held a virtual press conference launching their campaign to get Whole Foods to move beyond plastic.

Support our work to build a cleaner, greener, healthier future by including a gift to Environment America or Environment America Research & Policy Center in your will, trust or retirement accounts.

For more information call 1-800-841-7299 or send an email to: PlannedGiving@EnvironmentAmerica.org
Despite the progress we’ve made, it won’t be easy to pass a broad, ambitious federal commitment to go 100 percent in the near future. With that in mind, now continues to be a great time to keep doing what we know is already working. State energy leadership is successfully moving us toward the clean and renewable energy future we need, and also fueling a race to the top between states. That’s exactly what we need to lean further into.

Here are some opportunities we’re most excited about:

**California:** While California was one of the first states to pass a legislative commitment to go 100 percent clean, Environment California is now calling on the governor and State Legislature to accelerate the Golden State’s transition and move its existing 100 percent clean electricity target up from 2045 to 2030.

**Minnesota:** Environment Minnesota is advocating for state Rep. Jamie Long’s 100 percent clean energy bill, which requires the state to achieve 100 percent carbon-free electricity by 2040 and sets an interim target of 55 percent renewable electricity by 2035. Those ambitious goals would help Minnesota emerge as a clean energy leader in the Midwest and could help bring others in the region along with it.

**New Jersey:** Environment New Jersey is supporting legislation that would commit the Garden State to reaching 100 percent clean, renewable electricity statewide by 2035. The bill comes as part of an effort to implement the state’s Global Warming Response Act, which requires an 80 percent reduction in carbon emissions statewide by 2050 and would mean tapping into New Jersey’s immense offshore wind energy potential.

**Pennsylvania:** With the help of PennEnvironment, state legislators are gearing up to reintroduce legislation in both the Pennsylvania House and Senate to transition the commonwealth to 100 percent renewable energy by 2050. Last session, the bill was co-sponsored by a bipartisan group of 100 legislators, demonstrating that a clean energy future really is something everyone can get behind.

You can join us by calling on your home state to make the next commitment. Visit our website, then add your name to our One Million for 100% Renewable Energy project today to get started.

By Emma Searson, Director, 100% Renewable Campaign

Thank you for supporting our work to take on the vast environmental challenges we face and to create a greener, healthier, more sustainable world. In these pages, you’ll find the stories of the advocacy you made possible.

Your action and support allow us to keep working for a better world. Thank you.

Emma Searson directs Environment America’s campaigns for 100% renewable energy.
Environment America calls on Amazon to stop the sale of bee-killing pesticides

To save the bees, we’re asking one of the world’s biggest retailers to stop selling the pesticides that kill them.

In March, Environment America kicked off our campaign to call on Amazon to take neonicotinoid pesticides (or “neonics”)—the substances most closely linked to a troubling decline in bee populations over the past two decades—off their (virtual) shelves. Our ask is far from unprecedented: Home Depot and Lowe’s have already 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.

“We need to reduce the use of this pesticide that’s contributing to the collapse of our most important pollinators,” said Malia Libby, Save the Bees campaign associate with Environment America. “Amazon should join other retailers in doing the right thing and taking it off its shelves.”

Environment America and our national network will be gathering petition signatures from thousands of Americans this summer calling on Amazon to act.

Studies show that dangerous herbicide use plays a significant role in bee die-offs.