



Fall Report

Communities rally against offshore drilling

Coastal towns highlight risks of offshore drilling

North Carolina's coast is one of the most beautiful parts of our state—from the Outer Banks to Sunset Beach, travelers from around the globe visit our world-class beaches. Unfortunately, proposals to allow offshore oil drilling have put our coast at risk.

In January, the Obama administration announced plans to include the South Atlantic, from Virginia to the Georgia-Florida border, in its 2017–2021 five-year drilling program. Even before this announcement, coastal communities such as Kill Devil Hills and Carolina Beach have expressed concerns about offshore drilling.

Tourism industry raises concerns

After the announcement of the drilling program, the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) held a series of hearings to gather public feedback on the plan. Environment North Carolina, along with our allies—including the NC Sierra Club, NC Conservation Network, Oceana and local Surfrider Foundation chapters—worked to empower hundreds of our members at these hearings.

Additionally, the hearings marked the beginning of an effort to educate and mobilize the tourism industry around the risks that drilling poses to the coastal tourism economy. In 2013, more than 11 million people visited the North Carolina coast and spent roughly \$4 billion.



Wendy Merrill

▲ Environment North Carolina set up an event at Hammocks Beach State Park to let Gov. Pat McCrory know what coastal communities think of drilling on the coast.

At a press conference held at the Kill Devil Hills public hearing, Outer Banks Visitors Bureau President Lee Nettles stated, “Offshore drilling does not make sense for North Carolina and most certainly does not make sense for Dare County. Why would we gamble with a proven industry?”

Thanks to members like you, Environment North Carolina has worked to broaden that base of business support, circulating a letter opposing offshore drilling that will be sent to Gov. Pat McCrory and President Obama. To date, more than 100 businesses have signed onto the letter.

10,000 yard signs across North Carolina

As you travel the state, you might see yard signs opposing offshore drilling. Those

signs are part of a statewide education and visibility effort to spread the coastal opposition inland. Along with our partners, we're distributing 10,000 yard signs across the state.

“Public opposition to drilling continues to grow,” said Field Director Liz Kazal. “We’re working to let the Obama administration know that our governor and senators aren’t representing the voices of the people.”

take action

If you'd like to get a yard sign, please contact Dave Rogers at:

Dave@EnvironmentNorthCarolina.org



To our members

The Obama administration's announcement last year to potentially open up our coast to drilling was a frustrating step back in the effort to move away from fossil fuels. While the president has been a champion on a number of environmental issues, we feel he's got it wrong this time.

In spite of this, I'm confident we can stop this latest threat to our coastal communities. My confidence comes from you, our members. Thousands of you have turned out to hearings and other events, and so many of you volunteers have worked hard to engage others in this effort. Thanks to you, cities up and down our coast are speaking out against drilling, with more speaking up every month.

So while we are up against powerful opposition, I know we can win. And I look forward to hearing our message, "Don't Drill NC," echoing through the halls in Raleigh and Washington, D.C.

Thanks,

Dave Rogers, Director

Recent action

Day of action calls for halt on Arctic drilling plan

A reckless proposal to allow Shell to drill for oil in the pristine Arctic Ocean could put a precious ecosystem at risk, threatening one-fifth of the world's polar bear population, as well as beluga whales, ice seals and other marine life that call the Arctic home.

So we're turning up the pressure on the Obama administration to stop approval of Shell's plan, before it's too late. On July 18, we held a day of action with our members, where we collected photo petitions from passionate people like you to show Shell that we oppose their plans.

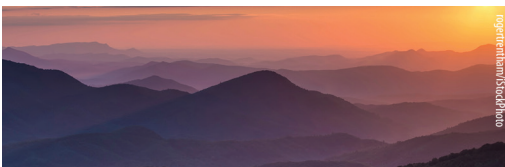
"The sad fact is: When you drill, you spill," said Rachel Richardson, director of our Stop Drilling Program. "Failing to protect one of the most precious areas of our planet from this often devastating practice is a mistake."

EPA study underestimates fracking impacts

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) released a long-awaited fracking study this June. Unfortunately, the study understates the drilling technique's impact on drinking water. It found that fracking poses no "widespread, systemic" risks and stands in contrast to a mounting body of scientific evidence demonstrating fracking's threat to water resources and public health.

Despite industry secrecy and a lack of adequate testing, a growing number of studies have found a clear link between fracking and water contamination, including documented cases of contamination reported by state regulators in Pennsylvania, Colorado and New Mexico.

The study was limited due to oil and gas companies' refusal to allow baseline testing for chemicals that were present before drilling. The EPA did acknowledge that treatment of toxic wastewater is a "vulnerability" of fracking. Other vulnerabilities identified include the strain fracking puts on water resources, the potential for chemicals to migrate underground and instances of water contamination.



www.EnvironmentNorthCarolina.org

Toward a greener future

Environment North Carolina and Environment North Carolina Research & Policy Center gratefully accept bequests, beneficiary designations of IRAs and life insurance, and gifts of securities to support our work to build a cleaner, greener, healthier future.

For more information, call 1-800-841-7299 x312 or send an email to: PlannedGiving@EnvironmentNorthCarolina.org.



WCN 2477 via Flickr, CC BY-NC 2.0

▲ A Marcellus Shale fracking rig

Report finds utilities selling us short on solar

More and more of us are going solar, meeting our energy needs in a way that's clean, local and independent. Yet, according to new research conducted by Environment North Carolina Research & Policy Center, homes and businesses with solar panels may be delivering more benefits to the electrical grid than they receive in exchange from their utility companies—countering increasing complaints from utilities that solar homeowners don't pay their fair share.

The new report, “Shining Rewards: The Value of Rooftop Solar Power for Consumers and Society,” was released at the end of June as at least a dozen states across the country hotly debated this very issue with their citizens and utility providers.

Rewards of solar greater than costs

One of the most debated programs that promotes rooftop solar is net metering, which credits solar panel owners at a fixed rate for providing an excess of power to the grid. Programs like this have helped solar energy skyrocket across the country by making solar more economically attractive, but utilities have increasingly begun to attack them as unjustified “subsidies.”

“Shining Rewards” found that utilities were actually underpaying solar panel owners—not subsidizing them. Of the 11 net metering studies reviewed, eight found that the value of solar energy was higher than the local retail electricity rate. And, the median value of solar power across all 11 studies was nearly 17 cents per unit, compared to the nation's average retail rate of 12 cents.

“While some utilities claim they're subsidizing solar panel owners, our report shows the opposite is probably true,” said Dave Rogers, director of Environment North Carolina Research & Policy Center. “If anything, utilities should be paying people who go solar more, not less.”

Of course, solar power's benefits extend beyond the economic—they also include valuable benefits for the environment and

society at large. Solar avoids greenhouse gas emissions, reduces air pollution that harms public health, creates jobs and spurs local economies.

More pro-solar policies needed

The report sheds light on the debate raging in more than a dozen states across the country over how much solar panel owners should be compensated for the power they produce. For example, Nevada is considering imposing a new fee for solar panel owners who sell excess power. Arizona Public Service wants to lower the reimbursement rates for solar power. In North Carolina, Duke Energy has expressed interest in lowering net metering rates, and questioned whether solar panel owners are “paying their fair share” of the grid.

Solar power is widely popular with the public, and policies such as net metering have encouraged a wide and varied distribution of rooftop solar. Yet, such debates often stall pro-solar policies, keeping residents from taking advantage of solar power, and states from growing their use of renewable energy.

“Solar power's rewards are far greater than its costs,” Rogers concluded. “That's why we should be encouraging more of it across the country, not penalizing it.”



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Read more

To read the full “Shining Rewards” report, visit:

www.EnvironmentNorthCarolinaCenter.org

Increasing solar access for all

Low and moderate-income Americans, and those renting their homes and businesses, will have more access to solar and play a bigger role in moving America toward a future that is powered entirely with pollution-free energy, thanks to a new plan federal officials announced in July to increase access to solar energy for all Americans. Environment North Carolina Research & Policy Center has been urging President Obama to set bold goals that raise the bar for pollution-free renewable energy.

The program triples the Obama Administration's previous goal to install 300 megawatts of solar on federally subsidized housing, provides more tools for affordable housing projects to install and finance solar installations, promotes community solar programs through local partnerships, and increases local job training programs in the solar industry in low income communities.

“This announcement is another big step toward a future where all Americans can access renewable and affordable solar electricity,” said Environment North Carolina Research & Policy Center Solar Program Coordinator Bret Fanshaw. “The progress we're making on solar and renewable energy should give us the confidence that we can do much more, including eventually achieving a goal of 100 percent clean energy.”

The plan will not only continue to push the United States toward a future powered by clean energy, but will also improve the lives of millions of people by cutting the costs of their utility bills. We still have a long way to go, but with this plan in place, we're one step closer to a future where we can all access renewable and affordable electricity.

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Environment North Carolina

Our mission

We all want clean air, clean water and green spaces. But it takes independent research and tough-minded advocacy to win concrete results for our environment, especially when powerful interests stand in the way of environmental progress.

That's the idea behind Environment North Carolina. We focus exclusively on protecting North Carolina's air, water and green spaces. We speak out and take action at the local, state and national levels to improve the quality of our environment and our lives.

North Carolinians celebrate "Trails Day"

Environment North Carolina members and citizen outreach staff celebrated Trails Day this summer by visiting some of the great state parks across our state. Hikes were hosted at Mt. Mitchell, Eno River and Umstead State Parks, and the Jordan Lake State Recreation Area.

Our state parks are some of the most beautiful areas in North Carolina, but unfortunately, massive funding cuts have led to some parks falling into disrepair, and the General Assembly considered closing our parks for part of the year.

Over the summer, thanks to your backing, Environment North Carolina's citizen outreach team talked to more than 40,000 North Carolinians from Asheville to Kill Devil Hills, and gathered more than 11,000 petitions to send to Gov. Pat McCrory asking him to fully fund the Parks and Recreation Trust Fund, one of the key sources of funding for our state parks.



more inside

Read more about Environment North Carolina's work to promote solar energy, protect our coasts from drilling, and more, inside.

◀ *Environment North Carolina staff getting ready for a hike to celebrate Trails Day.*