



Your Winter Report

Clean water blocked across the country

Court suspends protections we helped win

For more than a decade, loopholes in the Clean Water Act left streams that flow into many of the waterways we love and rely on in Georgia and across the country vulnerable to pollution.

More than 800,000 of you took action with Environment Georgia to close these loopholes in the Clean Water Act—and President Obama’s Clean Water Rule, released in August, did just that, restoring protections to 2 million miles of streams and the drinking water sources for 1 in 3 Americans.

But now, the historic clean water protections that you helped win have been suspended nationwide, and could be overturned, due to lawsuits brought by polluters, with the support of more than 20 attorneys general across the country—including Georgia Attorney General Sam Olens.

Polluters attack rule in court

Within hours of the Clean Water Rule’s September release, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) was hit with a flood of lawsuits from giant corporate polluters. In October, a U.S. Appeals Court suspended the rule nationwide, and may vote to overturn it.

“For more than a decade, the courts left thousands of our streams and wetlands in a precarious legal limbo, vulnerable to pollution and development,” said John Rumpfer, senior attorney for Environment Georgia. “Now they’ve done it again.”



Credit: Staff

▲ Clean water supporters turned out to a kayaking event to raise awareness about the threats facing our favorite waterways.

Your support helps us respond

We can’t allow our country to go backwards on clean water. So in 2016, we’re doubling down on our efforts to protect this critical rule.

With your support, Environment Georgia is organizing legal scholars to speak up about the legal soundness of the Clean

Water Rule. At the same time, we’re keeping the pressure on our leaders in Congress to beat back polluters’ attempts to pass legislation weakening the rule.

Most importantly, you’re helping us keep the debate focused on what this issue is really about: clean water for our families.



NASA Earth Observatory

take action

We need your help to move forward on clean water. Take action online to urge our attorneys general to stand up for the Clean Water Rule:

www.EnvironmentGeorgia.org

◀ Algae blooms, like this one on Lake Erie, are worsened by runoff pollution in streams.



Credit: Staff

You make the difference

As a member of Environment Georgia, you're helping us win tangible results for our environment. We all want the next generation to be able to enjoy the same great parks we treasure, clean air and water, and a safer world free from the threats of global warming.

That's why in the face of discouraging setbacks in Washington, or opposition from powerful special interests, I'm counting on members like you, who share these values, to stand with us as we work for a greener future.

The advances we make for our environment are shaped by people like you who translate their hope for a better future into action and advocacy. So, even though at times the road feels riddled with obstacles, I feel hopeful. Together, we're making strides on global warming, clean water and protecting the places we love by building people power and amplifying the call on our elected officials to be champions for our environment.

Thanks for standing with us.

Jennette Gayer
Director

Recent action

Keeping Georgia's coast safe from drilling

A proposal to drill for oil and gas off Georgia's shores is putting our coast at risk. The Bureau of Ocean and Energy Management's (BOEM) offshore drilling plan threatens Georgia's coast with oil spills, refineries and other infrastructure, as well as the thousands of local jobs that rely on coastal tourism.

In November, together with our allies, Environment Georgia met with Abigail Hopper, director of BOEM, to express our concern and deliver a letter signed by more than 25 coastal businesses in Georgia calling on BOEM to stop offshore drilling. The letter highlights the BP Deepwater Horizon spill in the Gulf of Mexico just five years ago as a tragic reminder of the risks associated with offshore drilling. We need to act now to protect our quality of life, wildlife, jobs, tourism and other industries along our coast. We expect the further opportunity to comment on oil and gas drilling off the coast of Georgia this spring.

How we're defending the Clean Power Plan

Across Georgia, you've shared with us the effects you've felt from global warming—like October's flood that submerged the only road to Tybee Island. And this fall, your support helped Environment Georgia continue our work to ensure the success of President Obama's Clean Power Plan, which sets the first-ever limits on America's largest source of global warming pollution—dirty power plants.

The Clean Power Plan is not only crucial to America's ability to effectively solve global warming, but also sets a precedent for other world leaders to do their part to address this urgent challenge. Unfortunately, the fossil fuel industry and their allies in Washington are determined to block this meaningful action.

Members like you are playing a key role in demonstrating widespread public support for the Clean Power Plan, calling on our representatives in Congress to stand up for the plan, and supporting our work at the state level to ensure strong policies are in place to implement it.

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Because her future matters.**

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▲ Environment Georgia and our allies joined forces to hold a People's Climate March in Atlanta this past November.

Credit: Erik Voss

Who's standing in the way of you going solar?

Solar energy is booming across the country. In just the last three years, America's solar photovoltaic capacity tripled, largely driven by just 10 states, according to recent research by Environment Georgia Research & Policy Center.

Yet, as solar grows and generates increasing amounts of clean energy at increasingly affordable prices, electric utilities, fossil fuel interests and powerful industry front groups have begun chipping away at the key policies that have put solar energy on the map in the United States—often in the face of strong objections from a supportive public.

Leading states have strong policies

Environment Georgia Research & Policy Center's annual report "Lighting the Way," released for the third time in September, found that solar's recent and growing success is due not to the nation's solar potential but rather to policies that have allowed increasing numbers of homeowners, businesses, communities and utilities to "go solar."

Of the top 10 states in the report for solar capacity per capita—Hawaii, Arizona, Nevada, California, New Jersey, New Mexico, Vermont, Massachusetts, North Carolina and Colorado—all have renewable energy requirements and nine have laws that allow solar customers to connect to the electrical grid, or earn credit for excess electricity sent back to the grid. These 10 states are responsible for 86 percent of today's solar electricity capacity.

Special interests stand in the way

The continued success of solar power, however, has been threatened by recent attacks on key solar policies. Environment Georgia Research & Policy Center's report, "Blocking the Sun," released in October, documented 12 fossil-fuel-backed groups and electric utilities that are running some of the most aggressive campaigns to slow the growth of solar energy in the United States.

These campaigns are often waged in the dark, with industry-funded think tanks providing model legislation and political cover that allow in-state electric utilities to attack key solar energy policies.

In mid-2015, at least 21 states had either ongoing or recently resolved proceedings around policies to slow the growth of solar energy.

"By wide margins, Americans support pro-solar policies," said Bret Fanshaw, Environment Georgia Research & Policy Center solar program coordinator. "That's why fossil fuel interests and their front groups have resorted to shady and deceptive tactics to undermine them. Ultimately, it's up to state leaders to reject these attacks and support a clean energy future."

Our research recommends that state decision-makers resist utility and fossil fuel industry influence by rejecting policies that place restrictions or tariffs on solar or rollback renewable electricity standards. In addition, state leaders can do more to encourage solar energy's growth by embracing ambitious goals for solar energy and adopting policies that will help meet them.



Read the reports

▲ *Releasing the "Lighting the Way" report*

To read our research on solar's growth and the obstacles it faces, visit:
www.EnvironmentGeorgiaCenter.org

Credit: Elena Elisseeva/Shutterstock



Credit: Staff

Environment Georgia launches "Solarize" program

You're helping Environment Georgia bring more solar to Georgia, one city and county at a time.

Together with a coalition, Environment Georgia launched "Solarize Athens," in October, a new project that will offer solar at a reduced cost to homeowners and business owners in Athens-Clarke County, Oconee County, and neighboring communities. Solarize programs are a way for communities to band together and buy solar from the same installer within the same time frame, reducing the cost for individuals to install solar power.

Solarize Athens is only the second solarize program to be launched in Georgia. The City of Tybee Island launched the first in 2014, and it has been wildly successful with 60 residents going solar through the program. Across the region, other cities are also launching solarize projects. Solarize Asheville in North Carolina prompted more than 100 new solar installations within just the first few months.

Environment Georgia and our allies launched the solarize program at a town hall meeting with members of the Athens community, giving them an opportunity to join us in helping to shape the program.

"Community input is a necessary component of a solarize program," said Colleen McLoughlin, solar campaign organizer for Environment Georgia and project lead manager for Solarize Athens. "We want to make sure the people of Athens and surrounding communities are the ones driving this program. After all, its success depends on community participation."

▲ *Environment Georgia Research & Policy Center Director Jennette Gayer speaks at a solar town hall meeting.*

Credit: Staff

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Environment Georgia

Our mission

We all want clean air, clean water and open 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 Georgia Citizen Lobby, a project of Environment America, Inc. We focus on protecting Georgia's air, water and open spaces. We speak out and take action at the local, state and national levels to improve the quality of our environment and our lives.

Credit: Staff



How you can help save the bees

Millions of bees are dying off with alarming consequences for our environment and our food supply. We rely on bees to pollinate major crops, from almonds to strawberries to the alfalfa used to feed dairy cows. No bees means no food.

This fall, you helped Environment Georgia launch our grassroots efforts to protect our pollinators from this threat, making it possible for us to canvass on the street and go door-to-door to educate people about what's at stake. Scientists point to several causes behind the die-off, including a class of pesticides known as neonicotinoids, which are toxic to bees. We need your continued help to convince the Environmental Protection Agency to declare a moratorium on bee-killing pesticides.

Please go to www.EnvironmentGeorgia.org to learn more about how you can keep up the fight with us in 2016.

No bees, no food?

Support our efforts to save the bees.
Donate online at:
www.EnvironmentGeorgia.org.

◀ Supporters of all ages joined our call to save the bees.