



## Your Fall Report

# Protecting our shared air, water and climate

## Together, we're defending the places we love

Most Americans want more, not fewer, protections for the people and places we love. After all, we all breathe the same air, drink the same water, and love the same mountains, rivers and forests.

This summer, people across the country joined Environment Virginia and our national network to save our environmental protections from rollbacks.

We spoke with more than 1 million people at their doorsteps, and together, we flooded our senators with more than 350,000 petitions, phone calls and emails, urging them to stand up for our environment.

## You stood up against rollbacks

After the president announced he would withdraw the United States from the Paris climate agreement, governors, mayors, business leaders and citizens across the country replied, "We're still in." Twelve states and nearly 300 cities have pledged to uphold the Paris agreement—and more are joining every day.

In June, Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Scott Pruitt proposed the repeal of the Clean Water Rule, which our members helped us win back in 2015. Environment Virginia and our allies gathered more than 800,000 comments and united more than 1,000 farmers, business owners and elected officials to help restore federal protections to half our nation's streams, and we're doing the same to protect them now.

And after the president ordered a review of 27 of our national monuments to determine if they could be stripped of their protected status, Environment Virginia and our



Credit: Jenny Nordstrom, Side Door Studios

▲ This summer, our members helped Environment Virginia and our allies deliver more than 2.7 million public comments to the Department of the Interior to protect our national monuments.

members took action. We joined coalition partners to deliver more than 2.7 million comments calling on the Department of the Interior to save our monuments, from Bears Ears to Giant Sequoia.

## Drawing a green line of defense

In May, the U.S. Senate successfully blocked an attempt to roll back an Obama-era rule

that limited methane emissions from oil and gas wells in a close 51-49 vote. It was a good indicator that strong public support for our environment can, in fact, win the day. With your support and action, we're working to build a green line of defense in the Senate, where 51 votes will be enough to keep our environmental protections in place.



Credit: Suzannah Hoover Photography

## take action

Take action online to urge our senators to stand up for the people and places we love in Virginia at:

[www.EnvironmentVirginia.org](http://www.EnvironmentVirginia.org)

◀ Our national citizen outreach team spoke with more than 1 million people this summer, asking them to take action to defend our environment and our health.



## You make the difference

I spoke with a lot of people this past summer who shared my concerns about the threats facing our environment. We're all worried. But together, I'm confident we can hold the line against the worst setbacks in Washington, D.C., and even make progress on tackling climate change, transitioning to clean, renewable energy, protecting our drinking water, and more.

Since our last update, we joined our national network to speak with more than 1 million folks across the country to unite them in defense of our environment. And they took action, helping us deliver more than 350,000 petitions calling on our senators to stand up for our air, water, climate and health.

We couldn't have done it without you. As a member of Environment Virginia, you're helping us win real results for our environment, and build a cleaner, greener future for kids growing up today.

Thanks for standing with us,



Anna Aurilio  
Federal Legislative Director

## Your Impact

### Working to reduce air pollution and protect health

Despite decades of progress under the Clean Air Act, Americans across the country continue to breathe unhealthy air, according to the latest report from Environment Virginia Research & Policy Center. "Our Health At Risk" finds that urgent action is needed to address air pollution problems affecting our communities.

Fortunately, the solutions are within our grasp. Environment Virginia is working to commit more and more cities, businesses, universities and our state to 100 percent renewable energy; and to defend the tailpipe emissions standards that were implemented nationwide in 2009.

And in the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic, our national network is urging elected officials to double the strength of the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative, the nation's best regional clean air and climate protection program. In June, 18 mayors joined 546 health professionals, businesses, academics and community leaders calling for a stronger Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative.

### You're standing up to save the bees

Millions of bees are dying off, with alarming consequences for our environment and our food supply. That's why, with your support, Environment Virginia is going all out to ban the pesticides that are harming bees and other pollinators. After all, it's bees, not pesticides, that make our farms and food possible.

This year, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) announced it would conduct a risk assessment of four types of neonicotinoids, a widely used class of bee-killing pesticides, and opened a 60-day public comment period. Our members leapt at the opportunity to save our pollinators, and by the end of July, Environment Virginia and our coalition partners delivered more than 164,000 comments urging the EPA to declare a moratorium on bee-killing pesticides.

We also held bee-friendly BBQ and picnic events over the summer to highlight the many foods we enjoy that depend on bees for pollination—everything from strawberries and watermelons to the alfalfa grown to feed dairy cows.

## Toward a greener future

Environment Virginia and Environment Virginia 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 x310 or send an email to: [PlannedGiving@EnvironmentVirginia.org](mailto:PlannedGiving@EnvironmentVirginia.org).

Photo: Lou Taylor, Shutterstock



Credit: Joette Maroto

▲ Our members are making their voices heard at the Environmental Protection Agency by submitting tens of thousands of public comments calling for a moratorium on bee-killing pesticides.

# Solar power surges in our cities

Solar power grew at a record-breaking pace in 2016. The United States now has 42 gigawatts of solar photovoltaic energy capacity, enough to power 8.3 million homes and reduce carbon dioxide emissions by 52.3 million metric tons each year.

Hundreds of thousands of Americans have invested in their own solar panels or solar projects in their communities, and millions more are ready to join them.

In April, Environment Virginia Research & Policy Center and Frontier Group released a new report, “Shining Cities 2017,” revealing the top U.S. cities for solar capacity, and explored how smart local policies are expanding solar power in America.

## Cities are leading the way

America’s cities have played a key role in the clean energy revolution and stand to reap tremendous benefits from solar energy. As population centers, they are major sources of electricity demand and, with millions of rooftops suitable for solar panels, they have the potential to be major sources of clean energy as well.

By the end of 2016, just 20 cities accounted for nearly as much solar power as the entire country had installed at the end of 2010.

San Diego leads the nation in total installed solar capacity among the 66 cities surveyed, surpassing Los Angeles, which had been the national leader for the past three years. Honolulu rose from sixth place for total solar capacity in 2015 to third place by the end of 2016. Other top 20 cities for solar capacity include Indianapolis, New York, San Antonio, Denver, New Orleans, Portland, Ore., and Newark, N.J.

## Untapped solar energy potential

Even the cities that have seen the greatest solar success still have vast amounts of untapped solar energy potential. According to National Renewable Energy Laboratory analysis, cities such as Los Angeles,

New York, Chicago and San Antonio have the technical potential to generate tens to hundreds of times more solar energy than they currently do.

To take advantage of that potential, city, state and federal governments should adopt a series of pro-solar policies, such as:

- Leading by example, and meeting 100 percent of government energy needs with renewable sources.
- Expanding access to solar energy through community solar programs.
- Adopting policies to make solar energy the default, such as requiring new construction projects to include solar energy systems.
- Expanding and protecting net metering, tax credits and other powerful incentives for customers to switch to solar power.
- Increasing investments in research, development and deployment programs designed to reduce the cost of solar energy.

To achieve the nation’s full solar potential, we need strong public policies at every level of government to promote solar energy adoption and protect the pro-solar policies already in place.



▲ Environment Texas members Pat and Dale Bulla installed solar panels on their home in Austin, Texas, to reduce their carbon footprint. They produce more electricity than they use, even while cooling their home during scorching Texas summers and charging their electric car.

Voices for  
100%  
RENEWABLE ENERGY



**Rep. Nydia M. Velázquez**

House of Representatives | New York

*“A shift to 100% renewable energy can revitalize our communities, make us healthier, leave a livable future for our children and grandchildren, all while creating good jobs in the process.”*



**Jane Kleeb**

Founder & President | Bold Alliance

*“Rural America is ready for clean energy jobs that protect our land and water while fueling our economy. The power lies in our communities and urging our elected officials to stand with us as we transition to 100% clean energy.”*



**Rep. Raúl M. Grijalva**

House of Representatives | Arizona

*“To continue to depend on fossil fuels is to continue to endanger all life on this planet. This is not about politics—it’s about survival.”*

To read more stories, visit:

[www.100percentrenewable.org](http://www.100percentrenewable.org)



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# Environment Virginia

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ENVIRONMENT  
**VIRGINIA**

Clean air. Clean water. Open space.

## Your Fall Report

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## Environment Virginia

### 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 Virginia, Inc., a project of Environment America, Inc. We focus exclusively on protecting Virginia'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.

## Your support is bringing polluters to justice

Over the past 25 years, Environment Virginia and our partners have found dozens of cases where companies have dumped illegal amounts of pollution into our air, rivers, bays and harbors.

In April, our sister group, Environment Texas, secured a \$19.95 million penalty against ExxonMobil after filing an environmental "citizen suit" against the oil giant for violating the Clean Air Act on more than 16,000 days at its Baytown, Texas, petrochemical complex. A federal judge found that Exxon had profited to the tune of \$14 million by delaying pollution control measures, and released more than 10 million pounds of illegal emissions into the air, including carcinogens and other toxic air pollutants.

Our lawsuits have resulted in more than \$250 million in court-ordered penalties and pollution reduction actions. And with the Trump administration giving a free pass to polluting industries, we're launching an Environmental Enforcement Initiative to hold polluters accountable. With support from our members, we'll continue taking illegal polluters to task when they break the law.



Credit: Staff



## Support our efforts

**Support efforts to make polluters pay.  
Donate online at:**

**[www.EnvironmentVirginia.org](http://www.EnvironmentVirginia.org)**

◀ We're working on active lawsuits in five states, including against Casella Waste Systems for contaminating Massachusetts drinking water with arsenic, heavy metals and a suspected carcinogen.