



2021 Legislative Agenda



Each year, Environment North Carolina sets out goals for the legislative session and beyond. In addition to helping us measure our progress, the legislative agenda lets decision-makers know which high-priority environmental items our members want us to tackle.

Protecting our air and water

Clean air and water is vital to the health of our environment and all North Carolinians. In past years scientists have found rising levels of air and water pollution in the state. It's clearer than ever that our vital natural resources and our health are threatened on multiple fronts by known pollutants as well as emerging contaminants. North Carolina has taken steps forward to deal with the serious threat of PFAS chemicals. Alongside our partners and the NC Department of Environmental Quality, we have held the Chemours chemical manufacturing plant to the standards agreed upon in the 2019 consent order. This consent order achieved the first step in dealing with these chemicals, but similarly to many of the threats that face our environment, stronger action needs to be taken to address the entirety of these problems.

We support:

- Ending the proliferation of PFAS chemicals, like GenX, across our state and holding Chemours accountable for their pollution. We are seeking legislation that would ban the use of PFAS in firefighting foams.
- The clean up and the creation of a management plan for the toxic chemicals in firefighting foam that already exists in North Carolina and may be sent to our state in the future.

- Educational training for all firefighters, including volunteers, about how they are affected by PFAS chemicals.
- Restoring the clean air and water protections that have been rolled back over the past decade.
- Ensuring our Department of Environmental Quality has adequate funding to do its job of safeguarding our environment.
- Holding large-scale factory farming companies accountable for their harmful air and water pollution.

Building and protecting a Cleaner, Greener Old North State

Infrastructure will play a critical part in the future of North Carolina, in the 21st Century and beyond. In order to protect our environment while also improving quality of life for all, we support:

- Increasing public transportation options.
- Enacting policies that lead to affordable, efficient, solar ready homes and buildings.
- Ensuring all North Carolinians have access to bountiful and pristine public lands.

Seizing the opportunities provided by clean energy

Right now, we have the opportunity to power our communities with renewable energy sources that make us more independent and don't threaten our families with polluted air and water. North Carolina has more solar capacity than all but one other state in the country. Clean energy production and installation already employ more people in our state than the fossil fuel industry. By enacting smart policies that support innovative technologies, we can dramatically cut pollution and be a leader for the rest of the country. There's massive potential in the wind off our coast and emerging technologies, like battery storage, making it possible for us to get 100% of our energy from renewable resources. We're working towards:

- Opportunities for households and major energy users to increase their reliance on renewables and energy storage.
- Protecting solar and wind energy from political attacks at the federal, state, and local level.
- The development of wind farms on and off the coast of North Carolina to generate clean energy in a responsible way that also brings good clean jobs to rural parts of the state.
- Encouraging the state, along with local governments and major energy users to transition to 100% clean energy.

Protecting our coast and the Atlantic Ocean

North Carolina has some of the most pristine beaches in the country and our Outer Banks are world-renowned for their unique beauty. Protecting our coast is critically important to marine life, aquatic ecosystems, and our citizens, as well as our state's robust fishing and tourism industries. We need to protect the coast for generations to come while making it accessible for all North Carolinians. We can do this by:

- Organizing to stop offshore drilling and seismic testing, and any other destructive industrialization that would harm our coast.
- Maintaining safeguards that keep our coast pristine.

Combating climate change

The science is clear: climate change is real and it's happening now. However, it can be addressed with expanded renewable energy, energy efficiency, and cleaner transportation options. As the impacts of climate change intensify, we oppose attempts to roll back North Carolina's clean energy laws and we support policies that increase our state's resiliency in order to safeguard our children's future. We support:

- Utilizing money provided by the federal settlement with Volkswagen to support policies that reduce harmful air pollution and increase electric vehicle use. This includes new electric car charging stations, cleaner engines for school buses and public transit, and technology to decrease emissions from airport vehicles, tug boats and trains.
- Opposing dirty fuels infrastructure that would keep our state reliant on dangerous fossil fuels for decades to come.

Putting Wildlife Over Waste

Every day, Americans throw away hundreds of millions of plastic cups, containers and other single-use items. Among the worst forms of plastic pollution is polystyrene foam, the stuff most of us call Styrofoam. Like all plastics, polystyrene doesn't biodegrade, rather it breaks down into smaller and smaller pieces, which means that every piece of foam ever made is still out there. It's been found ingested by literally hundreds of different species, including 86% of all sea turtle species, and nearly half of all seabird and marine mammal species. Nothing we use for a few minutes should be allowed to pollute our rivers, lakes, and oceans for hundreds of years. That's why we're calling for a statewide ban on polystyrene cups and containers, as well as single-use plastic bags. We can stop this pollution by:

- Calling on businesses and NC state leaders to reduce harmful single-use plastics like take-out foam cups and containers, as well as single-use plastic bags.
- Working with groups to reduce the flow of plastic pollution into our rivers, streams, and the Atlantic.



Getting the Lead Out

Lead is a potent neurotoxin that harms how our children learn, grow and behave. Yet faucets, fountains, and other water delivery components at most, if not all, North Carolina schools contain lead, putting our children at risk of exposure. To prevent further contamination of water at North Carolina schools, we support:

- Strengthening the NC statute by reducing the acceptable level of lead in drinking water from 15 part per billion to 5 part per billion.
- Increasing testing for lead at schools all across North Carolina, including marginalized and rural areas.
- Testing and remediation of taps in schools where water contains more lead than one part per billion, as recommended by the American Academy of Pediatrics.
- Installing certified filters on faucets or fountains used for drinking or cooking at schools.

Protecting Our Food

Pesticides called neonicotinoids (neonics) are killing bees across our country, which threatens our food supplies and our culture. The food industry is also misusing antibiotic drugs, therefore breeding bacteria that is resistant to our medications and causing our antibiotics to fail. From apples to soybeans, milk to meats, we need to ensure our food sources remain stable and free from pesticides and the overuse of antibiotics. We support:

- A ban on neonicotinoid pesticides to protect our pollinators and food system.
- Reducing the overuse of antibiotics in our food system to protect our health and our food supply.

Environment North Carolina's 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. That's the idea behind Environment North Carolina. We speak out and take action at the local, state and national levels to improve the quality of our environment and our lives.