



Fiscal Year 2021 Program Report
Thanks for making it all possible

From the director

Every day, the news delivers more dire warnings about the state of our natural world.

Fewer than 400 Right whales remain in the North Atlantic. Fewer than 80 Southern Resident orcas survive in Puget Sound. Nearly 99 percent of western monarch butterflies have disappeared. Climate change is accelerating this loss of wildlife and threatening human life as well.

It would be naive to downplay the scale of these problems and heartless not to mourn the losses. But it would be irresponsible to conclude that there's nothing we can do—especially when solutions are all around us.

Our country has all of the clean, renewable power we need if we choose to use it. We can accelerate the transition to electric vehicles. U.S. corporations can reduce their use of plastic pollution and their sale of pollinator-killing pesticides. And on and on.

Environment California and our national network of 29 state environmental groups made progress on all of these issues and more in the past year. None of these problems are completely solved—not even close. But we keep chipping away, breaking down big problems and making them a little more manageable. Incremental change that leads to concrete results is our stock-in-trade because success, one step at a time, is how we build confidence in—and demand for—the changes that are still to come.

Our action and progress—all of which is made possible by your support—also provide fuel for hope. Not a passive hope, like that of spectators rooting for their team. Our hope is action-oriented, results-oriented, a hope that serves, as an ally once said, “as a hammer that we use in case of emergency to break the glass, sound the alarm and spring into action.”

We're reminded every day about the emergency our natural world faces. And every day, together with you and all of our friends, supporters and allies, we pick up that hammer.

Thanks for making it all possible.



Laura Deehan

Laura Deehan
State Director

Clean, Green & Renewable Energy

We envision a healthier world powered by clean, renewable energy. With support from our members, Environment California and our research partners bolstered the Golden State's chances at harnessing our vast renewable energy potential and speeding up our transition to 100% clean energy.

100 leaders added their voices for 100% Renewable California

MAY 31, 2021: More California leaders are lending their voices to the call for 100% renewable energy.

As we work to win a statewide commitment to 100% clean energy by 2030, every voice on our side counts. Environment California Research & Policy Center launched California Voices for 100% Renewable Energy, bringing together the voices of influential decision-makers, activists, business owners and others who share our goal of shifting the Golden State to clean energy. In May, we welcomed more than 100 leaders who joined our call and signed onto the project.

“The impact of climate change on our state is crystal clear, as is one of the necessary solutions: Transition to 100% renewable energy,” said State Assembly Member David Chiu. “California has always led on the environment, and given the climate crisis, we must continue to lead.”

Environment California Research & Policy Center will continue gathering support and advocating for accelerating our state's clean energy commitment from 2045 to 2030.

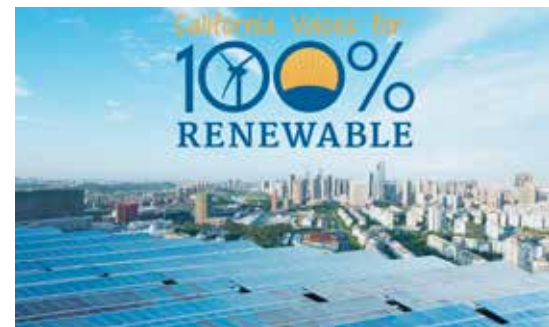
An offshore wind bill sailed through California Legislature

SEPT. 9, 2021: Offshore wind could have met 150% of California's 2019 electricity needs. A new bill promises to harness that potential.

On Sept. 9, the California Legislature passed an Environment California-sponsored offshore wind bill. The landmark legislation would require state agencies to boost the state's offshore wind production and advance the development of the West Coast's first utility-scale offshore wind projects. In California, where the coastal winds blow faster and harder than any other state's, offshore wind will play an important role in the state's transition to 100% renewable energy reliance.

“Investing in offshore wind is an essential piece of building an electricity grid that is resilient, reliable and renewable,” said Environment California Clean Energy Associate Elizabeth Nickerson. “The legislature has put our state on the right path to building our resilience, improving our air quality, and addressing climate impacts.”

The bill heads to the governor's desk, where he is expected to sign it into law.



As Environment California Research & Policy Center rallied new voices for 100% clean energy, state senators, city council members and university students alike took up the call.



Clockwise from top: Environment California Research & Policy Center State Director Laura Deehan spoke at a rally in June urging the governor to stand up for rooftop solar; Advocates deliver petitions to Gov. Newsom's office in support of solar.



Saving California Solar

California has tremendous clean energy potential, and for many, that potential can be reached right at home. Across the state, rooftop solar on more than 1 million homes provides clean, renewable energy. Last year, as the three largest utilities in the state tried to dismantle and block our rooftop solar progress, Environment California stood up to protect this key clean energy source.

Anti-solar bill failed in California

JUNE 2, 2021: With more than a million solar roofs across the state, California shouldn't walk back incentives promised to homeowners who have installed or want to install solar roofs.

On June 2, a bill that would stall the growth of rooftop solar in California died in the state Assembly. After the bill's filing, Environment California led environmental opposition to the bill, mobilizing thousands of constituents to oppose the plan that would have reduced solar incentives and awarded utility companies outsized power to raise consumers' electricity rates.

"California is a beautiful, sunny state with some of the best solar potential in the world," said Environment California State Director Laura Deehan. "With so much at stake, it made no sense to slow down rooftop solar."

While Environment California applauds the end of AB 1139, our work to save rooftop solar continues as the California Public Utilities Commission debates the future of solar incentives.

California vote set new standard for solar and storage

AUG. 11, 2021: California took another step toward making solar energy the new standard.

On Aug. 11, the California Energy Commission voted unanimously to advance solar and storage requirements for all new commercial and high-rise residential buildings in the state. If passed by the Building Standards Commission, California will become the first state to adopt these requirements.

"This approval moves California a big step closer to reaching its clean energy goals," said our research partner's Go Solar Campaign Director Bronte Payne. "Rooftop solar is among the best and fastest ways to generate clean energy, and we should be doing everything we can to accelerate its growth."

The move comes as the California Public Utilities Commission weighs a proposal that would slash the benefits that many rooftop solar users earn from the excess energy their panels put back into the grid. Environment California Research & Policy Center strongly opposes the proposal.



Environment California Research & Policy Center State Director Laura Deehan gathered with solar advocates outside of the state Capitol to rally opposition to the legislative attack on solar.



Clockwise from top: Our staff spoke to supporters about the campaign to get Amazon to stop selling bee-killing pesticides; California made a landmark conservation commitment to protect 30% of our lands and waters by 2030.

Conservation

Across California our wildlife and wild places need protection. Last year, as bee populations dropped and development threatened our public lands, tens of thousands of supporters like you took part in campaigns to protect wildlife and the places we love.

Over 47,000 supporters told Amazon: Stop selling bee-killing pesticides

JULY 19, 2021: To save the bees, our staff have asked the world's largest online retailer to stop selling the pesticides that kill them. And we're not alone.

In March, Environment California and our national network kicked off our campaign to convince Amazon to take neonicotinoid pesticides (or “neonics”)—the substances linked to troubling declines in bee populations—off its (virtual) shelves. By August, campaigners with our network had collected more than 47,000 petition signatures online and in 10 communities across the country.

“We need to reduce the use of this pesticide that’s contributing to the collapse of our most important pollinators,” said Malia Libby, our national network’s Save the Bees campaign associate. “Amazon should do the right thing and take neonics off its shelves.”

Our ask is far from unprecedented: The Home Depot and Lowe’s have 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.

30 by ‘30: California’s bold conservation plan

OCT. 7, 2020: California is now committed to keeping more of the state beautiful.

On Oct. 7, Gov. Gavin Newsom issued an executive order that will protect 30% of California’s land and coastal waters by 2030. Environment California Research & Policy Center applauded the governor’s action, dubbed “30 by ‘30” and part of a growing global movement, which protects wildlife, strengthens California’s resilience in the face of climate change, and detoxifies the state’s air and water.

“Protecting key habitats will help store carbon and ensure that the species that live alongside us can adapt to a warming world,” said Steve Blackledge, senior director of our national network’s conservation campaigns.

“By conserving California’s ecosystems, we can help ensure future generations will be able to appreciate all the wild places and wildlife in the Golden State,” Steve added.





Clockwise from top: As of 2014, there were more than 650 oil and gas fracking wells in California—a new law will change that; Our national Destination: Zero Carbon Campaign Director Morgan Folger calls for pro-electric vehicle policies in New Jersey.



Global Warming Solutions

The climate crisis is here, now. For years, Environment California has advanced concrete ideas for reducing global warming pollution. This year, we moved forward two critical measures, one that tackles our nation's No. 1 source of global warming pollution and another that moves us closer to a future free of fossil fuels.

Back on course: Biden administration moved to allow states to set stronger vehicle emissions standards

MAY 7, 2021: For nearly 50 years, federal law allowed California to set stronger clean car standards and more than a dozen other states to follow California's lead—until the previous administration tried to revoke our authority.

On April 26, the Biden administration started the process of undoing this action—checking off one of the “First things to fix” called for by Environment California in a series of 20 recommendations shared with the Biden team before they took office.

“Thank you President Biden, for taking this first step,” said Morgan Folger, director of our national network's Destination: Zero Carbon campaign. “Now it's time to reaffirm that states can and should lead the way for clean air and cleaner cars.”

Vehicle tailpipes are a major source of climate-changing, health-harming air pollution. A report from our research partners showed that in 2018, 108 million Americans lived in areas that experienced more than 100 days of degraded air quality.

In historic move, California to end drilling by 2045

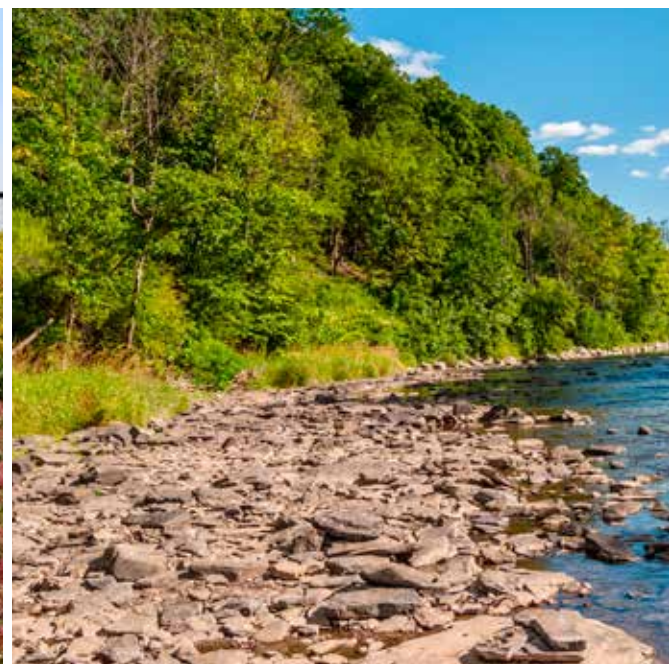
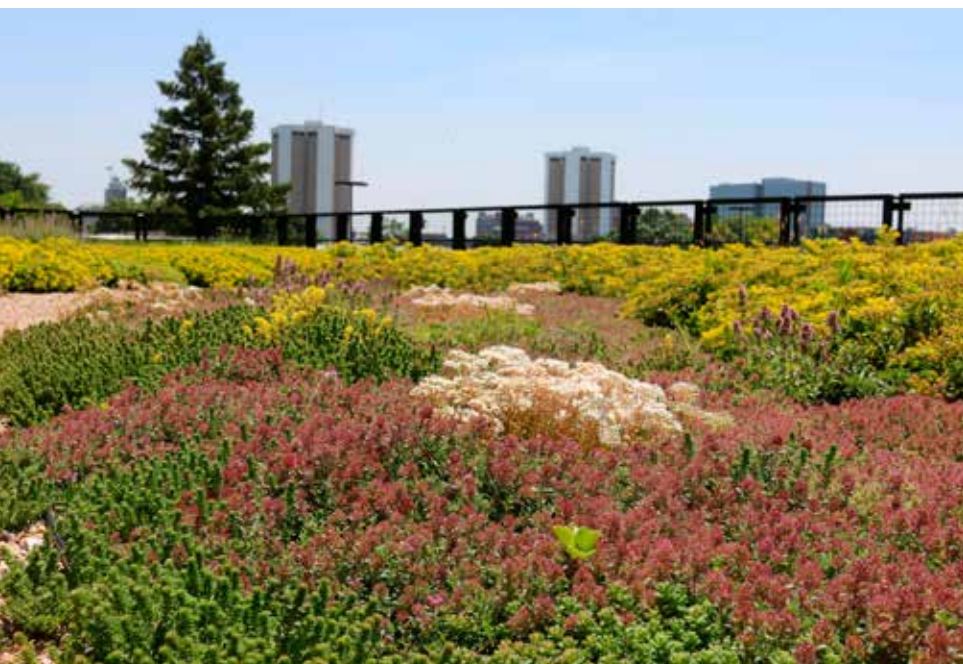
APRIL 23, 2021: We know that drilling inflicts irreversible damage on our environment, and now, Californians can finally look forward to the end of this dangerous practice.

On April 23, Gov. Gavin Newsom issued a directive to phase out oil and gas drilling in California no later than 2045 and ban new permits for fracking by 2024, making the Golden State the first in the nation with a commitment of this kind. The governor has tasked the California Air Resources Board (CARB) with bringing California—a state that produced nearly 150 million barrels of crude oil in 2020—out of the oil age.

“This action is the beginning of the end of fossil fuel's dominance and the environmental and public health problems that it causes,” said Environment California Research & Policy Center State Director Laura Deehan. “The governor's announcement today crowns the state's move away from the dirty technologies of the past.”

“States can and should lead the way for clean air and cleaner cars.”

Morgan Folger
Director, Destination:
Zero Carbon Campaign



Clockwise from top: Clean Water for America Campaign Director John Rumpler, before giving testimony to Congress on funding needed to replace lead pipes and stop sewage overflows in February 2020; Our staff advocated for rain gardens (such as the one above), green roofs and other nature-based infrastructure that keep our waters cleaner by preventing runoff pollution from entering our streams, rivers and lakes.

Clean Water & Air

Keeping on the path to cleaner air and water requires constant vigilance—including making sure that we reinstate bedrock environmental protections that we lost under the Trump administration. Below, you'll find a report on our national network's campaign to restore our nation's strongest clean water protections and a blueprint to keeping our waterways safe with clean, green infrastructure.

Endangered streams, wetlands moved closer to regaining federal protection

JUNE 25, 2021: Polluters have been quick to take advantage of the Dirty Water Rule, which weakened protections for our nation's waterways. But these protections could be on their way back.

On June 9, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) announced it would take steps toward repealing and replacing the Trump administration's "Navigable Waters Protection Rule." This rule stripped Clean Water Act protections from thousands of streams and wetlands, and allowed companies to win rulings stating that no protections applied to more than 750 waterways.

"Repealing and replacing the Dirty Water Rule is a vital step for America's rivers, lakes and bays—and for the drinking water of millions of Americans," said John Rumpler, senior attorney and clean water program director for our national research partner, Environment America Research & Policy Center.

Environment America Research & Policy Center now calls on the EPA and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to strengthen waterway protections.

'A Path to Cleaner Water': Our research partners showed how repairing infrastructure can help make our waters safe for swimming

DEC. 7, 2020: With billions of gallons of sewage and runoff polluting our nation's waterways and making us sick, something needs to change.

On Dec. 2, our national research partners at Environment America Research & Policy Center published a report on how to fix our outdated water infrastructure. It summarized nearly two dozen case studies on projects that stop pollution—from conventional repairs to "green" infrastructure such as rain gardens.

The report helped educate the public and policymakers as Congress considered major infrastructure investments.

"Investing in water infrastructure works," said John Rumpler, co-author of the report and clean water director with Environment America Research & Policy Center. "We have the tools to stop sewage overflows and make our waterways safe for swimming."

Member Spotlight:

Sara Rahimian



None of our work would be possible without the support of our members. In this report, we're highlighting the story of one of our national network's members, in her own words.

I was born in Tehran, Iran, and grew up in Sacramento, California. When I visited Iran as a teenager, I saw my grandparents help the poor in meaningful ways. Contributing to solutions is part of my family's DNA. Mankind's unsustainable relationship with the planet is deeply worrisome because, to me, nature is the truest manifestation of magic in our world. The Earth is full of natural marvels such as the many plants, animals and geographies that have emerged over billions of years. To see us so callously counting extinctions is devastating. I support Environment America because I think we need more than individual action. Every person who joins this movement to save our Earth has so much to gain in knowing that they are part of an existential solution at a critical moment.

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