



# 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 Oregon 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.*



Celeste Meiffren-Swango  
State Director

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Celeste'.

# Clean, Green & Renewable Energy

We envision a healthier world powered by clean, renewable energy. With support from Environment Oregon's members, our state bolstered our chances at harnessing our vast renewable energy potential. From our rooftops to our coasts, last year we took huge strides on the road to a 100% clean energy future.

## Oregon committed to 100% clean energy

**JULY 27, 2021:** Today, 1 in 3 Americans live in a place committed to 100% clean energy. This year, Oregonians finally joined this environment-friendly club.

On July 27, Gov. Kate Brown signed a bill committing the state to 100% clean electricity by 2040. The policy marks one of the fastest transitions to emission-free electricity to date, requiring an 80% greenhouse emission reduction by 2030, a 90% reduction by 2035, and a 100% reduction by 2040. Environment Oregon built support for clean energy by distributing educational materials to more than 400,000 Oregonians.

"It's thrilling to see Oregon once again leading the country on clean energy and climate action," said Celeste Meiffren-Swango, Environment Oregon state director. "Powering our state with clean energy, instead of dirty fossil fuels, cuts climate-changing emissions and helps keep our air and water clean, ensuring a green and healthy future for all Oregonians."

Renewables are set to deliver the vast majority of the zero-emissions electricity target.

## Oregon strengthened appliance efficiency standards

**JUNE 1, 2021:** Looking to save energy, water and money? Oregonians found a way: energy-efficient appliances.

On June 1, Gov. Kate Brown signed a bill that strengthens the state's appliance efficiency standards into law. The law promises a meaningful impact for our planet, our health—and even our wallets—by reducing the energy, water waste and harmful emissions that come from our appliances. Environment Oregon advocated for strengthened appliance efficiency standards, connecting citizens with legislators and providing templates to share the bill's benefits on social media.

"Passing this bill is a big win. Embracing efficient appliances is an incredibly simple and cost-effective way for Oregon to both reduce dirty greenhouse gas emissions as well as our utility bills," said Environment Oregon State Director Celeste Meiffren-Swango. "We hope that Oregon leaders will continue to push forward policies to take advantage of cleaner energy."



*Environment Oregon State Director Celeste Meiffren-Swango and her daughter celebrated the commitment.*



Reino Hyyppa



Mandy Apa



Celeste Meiffren-Swango



State Rep. Janeen Sollman



State Rep. Diane Herrin



Faran Savitz



*Clockwise from top: Our staff spoke with legislators at our national network’s “United States Against Plastic” virtual rally; Staff talk to supporters about the campaign to get Amazon to stop selling bee-killing pesticides.*

## Conservation: Wildlife

Across Oregon, our wildlife and wild places need protection. This year, as bee populations dropped at alarming rates and our plastic waste crisis worsened, 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 Oregon 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.

### Oregon passed the nation's second-ever producer responsibility law

AUG. 6, 2021: For decades, Oregonians and our environment have paid the price for plastic pollution. A new law shifts some of that cost to the plastic producers.

On Aug. 6, Gov. Kate Brown signed our nation's second-ever producer responsibility bill into law. The legislation requires plastic producers to cover some of the costs of managing the waste their products become and updates the state's recycling system. The passage of Oregon and Maine's producer responsibility laws this summer signals a shift to one of the most effective ways to remedy our plastic crisis and protect wildlife.

"For years, producers of single-use plastics have somehow avoided paying up," said Environment Oregon State Director Celeste Meiffren-Swango. "This law begins to change that by requiring producers to start bearing some of the costs of the waste management system."

Environment Oregon will continue to champion policies that keep our wildlife safe from single-use plastic pollution.



State Sen. Ben Allen



State Sen. Mona Das





*Environment Oregon canvassers spoke to thousands of Oregonians about the importance of bringing the sea otters back, which would stop the uninhibited growth of purple sea urchins and restore balance to our ocean ecosystems.*

# Bring Back the Sea Otters

More than a hundred years ago, people hunted sea otters—a keystone species—to near-extinction off Oregon’s coast. And we, along with our ocean, are still paying the price. That’s why, this summer, Environment Oregon launched a door-to-door campaign to rally support around bringing sea otters back to our coast.

## Going door to door to bring the sea otters back

**JULY 1, 2020:** For years, a keystone species has been missing from our coasts. This summer, we worked to change that.

In June, we relaunched Environment Oregon’s door-to-door canvassing offices. With a full set of health precautions in place, our staff visited neighborhoods across Oregon to build support for reintroducing sea otters to the Oregon coast.

Like the gray wolves that famously changed the ecology of Yellowstone National Park when reintroduced in 1995, sea otters are a keystone species. These otters eat sea urchins and help to maintain balance in the kelp ecosystem.

Without otters around to keep sea urchins in check, the urchins will mow down kelp forests and create a kind of wasteland called an “urchin barren.” This is happening at an alarming rate off the Oregon coast, with one count finding 350 million purple sea urchins in a reef. As warming waters kill off sunflower sea stars, the other natural predator of the purple sea urchin, kelp is left defenseless.

Every day without sea otters is another day of an ecosystem out of balance—one that is biologically poorer, less resilient and less helpful in our fight against climate change.

The good news is that there will soon be a proposal before the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to reintroduce sea otters. We’re confident that the science will support both the need to bring the sea otters back and the feasibility of doing so. But, especially with so much competition for scarce attention and resources, we know it will make a difference if the Fish and Wildlife Service understands that this restoration effort enjoys strong public support among Oregon residents.

That’s why this summer we went door to door across our state, talking to tens of thousands of Oregonians about what’s happening to the kelp ecosystems off of our coast, and building public support for reintroducing sea otters.





*Clockwise from top: Our national network called for protections for the Tongass, America's largest national forest; The Great American Outdoors Act will protect national parks, including our very own Crater Lake National Park.*





# Conservation: Special Places

From Yosemite to the Everglades, the wonders of our great outdoors are irreplaceable. But with great outdoors comes great responsibility. That's why, time and time again, Environment Oregon has led in protecting our parks and public lands from harmful development.

## The Tongass, America's largest national forest, moved closer to regaining full protection

**JULY 28, 2021:** Massive old-growth trees that predate the United States itself may soon be spared from logging in the Tongass, the nation's wildest and largest national forest, spanning most of southeast Alaska.

On July 15, the U.S. Forest Service moved to restore protections for the Tongass, a big step toward declaring logging off-limits in millions of acres of this singular wilderness.

"This is great news for the hundreds of species of wildlife that live in the roadless areas, the ancient trees, and the people who live in and visit the Tongass to hunt, fish and enjoy nature," said our national network's Public Lands Campaign Director Ellen Montgomery.

Protections for the Tongass have been contested since 2001, when Americans submitted more than 1.6 million public comments in favor of the Roadless Rule, designed to protect nearly 60 million acres—including 9 million in the Tongass—of still-wild national forests. Members of our national network submitted nearly half the comments.

## President Biden restored Great American Outdoors Act to protect public lands

**FEB. 23, 2021:** The greatest conservation victory in a generation has been saved from a last-ditch effort to undermine it.

On Feb. 12, 2021, the Biden administration undid last-minute changes that the Trump administration made to the Land and Water Conservation Fund, which provides crucial investments in parks, public lands and even ballfields all across the country. The changes would have created procedural hurdles to gum up the Great American Outdoors Act, passed in August 2020 to guarantee \$900 million annually for land and water conservation projects.

"We're thrilled to see the new administration fix this problem," said Alex Petersen, conservation advocate with our national network. "Americans love the great outdoors, and there's nothing more American than conserving the natural wonders that surround us all."

Passed with bipartisan support, the Great American Outdoors Act secured billions in funding for the places we cherish and visit with family and friends.



*The Tongass is home to some of the world's last intact old-growth temperate rainforest.*



*Clockwise from top: Portland General Electric's coal-fired power plant in Boardman—which produced about 2 million tons of greenhouse gas emissions every year—permanently closed on Oct. 15; Environment Oregon State Director Celeste Meiffren-Swango (left) joined staff and advocates to thank U.S. Rep. Peter DeFazio for being a climate champion.*



# Global Warming Solutions

The climate crisis is here, now. For years, Environment Oregon has advanced concrete ideas for reducing global warming pollution. Last year, we celebrated two critical measures, one that keeps coal out of our energy equation and another that moves us closer to a future free of fossil fuels.

## Oregon's last coal plant closed 20 years ahead of deadline

OCT. 15, 2020: In a victory for Oregon's air quality, the state's last coal-fired power plant has officially closed.

On Oct. 15, Portland General Electric (PGE) permanently closed its Boardman coal-fired power plant, 20 years ahead of the deadline mandated by a 2010 legal agreement to settle charges that the plant was violating the federal Clean Air Act. Operational since 1980, the plant produced about 2 million tons of greenhouse gas emissions every year. PGE had also worked to reduce mercury and sulfur dioxide emissions from the plant in recent years to combat air pollution in the surrounding communities.

"Burning coal is now officially a thing of the past here in Oregon," said Celeste Meiffren-Swango, state director of Environment Oregon. "We're moving closer to a future powered by 100% clean energy—and that's something to celebrate."

PGE is currently developing hydro, solar and wind power projects to replace the power from the Boardman plant.

## As Congress reached spending deal, climate and energy advocates notched key wins

JAN. 4, 2021: In December, Congress passed a major energy bill that prioritized clean energy over dirty fossil fuel options as part of the omnibus package to fund the federal government.

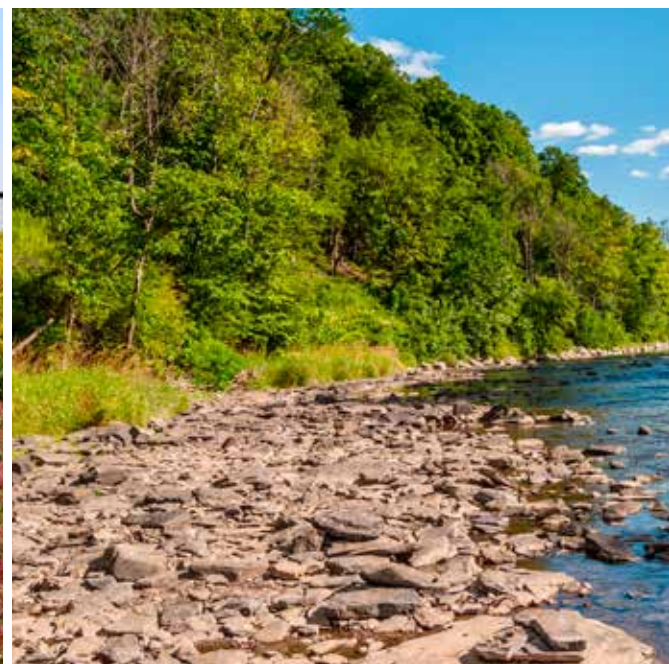
The measures, passed with bipartisan support, included big boosts in funding for renewable energy and energy efficiency programs; the phase-out of a class of potent greenhouse gasses called hydrofluorocarbons; funding to get the dirtiest diesel vehicles off our roads; money for clean energy research; and much more.

"This energy bill marks an American inflection point between our dirty energy past and our clean energy future," said Johanna Neumann, senior director of our national Campaign for 100% Renewable Energy. "With the potential to do even more, we look forward to working with Congress in the new year to continue the drive toward a nation powered by clean, renewable energy."

The bill was signed into law on Dec. 27.

**This energy bill marks an American inflection point between our dirty energy past and our clean energy future.**

*Johanna Neumann  
Senior Director, Campaign for  
100% Renewable Energy*



*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.

## Our staff (partial list)

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