

## Your Fall Report

# Let our oldest trees grow older

Ellen Montgomery, our national advocate for public lands, authored this article. Ellen is directing several campaigns to protect forests and our nation's oldest trees.

You might not know it by looking, but trees are some of the oldest known organisms on Earth. And of the top 10 oldest living trees with known ages, seven are right here in the U.S. (and that doesn't even include the aspen colony called Pando, which at arguably a million years old is the largest, heaviest organism known to humanity).

It almost goes without saying that we have to protect these ancient wonders. At 4,853 years old, a Great Basin Bristlecone Pine known as Methusalah holds the title of the oldest known living tree in the world. Methusalah is protected by the Inyo National Forest in California and by the U.S. Forest Service, which keeps its exact location a carefully guarded secret.

But millions of acres of other wizened trees are increasingly at risk of being cut down.

### One of our strongest climate allies

We know instinctively that these trees are worth protecting just for their own sake. But we also know that our ancient forests are our strongest bulwark against climate change. These noble trees have absorbed huge amounts of carbon over their lifetimes—and they continue to keep it from being released into the atmosphere. When we fell them, we send that carbon right back into the air, intensifying the greenhouse effect that is so critical to fight.

Our forests have withstood every challenge thrown at them for millenia. They've proven time and time again that they are resilient, adaptive and even collaborative (we sometimes wonder just what trees talk about). But even Methusalah, with all his



*Ellen Montgomery directs our national campaigns to protect America's beautiful places—from local beachfronts to remote mountain peaks—and the amazing natural life, such as centuries-old trees, within them.*

long years, can't stand up to logging, megafires and development.

### What it'll take to protect these giants

We have to do more to protect our oldest and most valuable forests. And we need to protect all the mature forests that are just nearing their 100th birthdays, too. But there are a lot of mature trees in the United States, and it's going to take a coordinated effort to protect them.

Continued on page 3 ►

Thanks  
for making it  
all possible

## Will the Supreme Court overturn waterway protections we worked for?

With key protections of the Clean Water Act at risk of being stripped away, we're pulling out all the stops to keep Americans' waterways from once again becoming polluters' playgrounds.

On June 17, our national partners at Environment America and more than 100 other organizations signed onto a brief urging the

On June 14, the U.S. House of Representatives approved funding for all 50 states, territories and the District of Columbia to protect more than 12,000 at-risk fish and wildlife species. At a time when one-third of the fish and wildlife species in the United States are at risk of becoming threatened or endangered, the Recovering America's Wildlife Act aims to recover populations before they reach the brink of extinction.

"This funding would ensure that wildlife action plans are actually implemented on the ground where they're needed," said Steve Blackledge, senior director of our national conservation campaigns. "To protect all of the iconic wildlife that our country has to offer, we call on the Senate to quickly take up this bill."

Wisconsin Environment and more than 1,000 groups have pledged their support, including state wildlife agencies, hunter and angler groups, and outdoor recreation retailers.

## Here's how the Inflation Reduction Act will help solve climate change

Midway through a summer marked by brutal heat waves, flash floods and drought, Congress took historic action on climate and clean energy.

The Inflation Reduction Act, signed into law by President Joe Biden on Aug. 17, includes a \$369 billion investment toward reducing global warming pollution by 40% by 2030. The new law will provide \$9 billion in consumer home energy rebate programs; \$10 billion for facilities that make electric vehicles and solar panels; and \$50 million to inventory and protect old-growth forests.

"As the saying goes, we do not inherit the Earth from our ancestors, we borrow it from our children," said Environment America Washington Legislative Office Executive Director Lisa Frank. "While not everything in the bill is perfect, it does an awful lot to make it affordable for Americans of all stripes to switch to clean energy home and transportation solutions."

Wisconsin Environment and our national network have won similar policies at the state and local levels that helped pave the way for these historic investments.

Get more updates on our work online at <http://wisconsinenvironment.org>.

Staff



Our staff on the grounds of the White House in September for a celebration event marking the passage of the Inflation Reduction Act.

U.S. Supreme Court to uphold the long-standing scope of the Clean Water Act and reject industry attempts to eliminate federal clean water protections that have kept families, communities, and rivers and lakes safe from pollution for decades. As of this writing, in the case *Sackett v. EPA*, the court is considering gutting the Clean Water Act by excluding critical streams and wetlands, allowing them to be filled in and subjected to industrial pollution.

"Clean water is vital to all Americans—from the waterways where we fish and swim to the sources of our drinking water," said John Rumpler, senior clean water program director with Environment America. "It's crucial that the Court follows the science and the law so that the Clean Water Act retains its power to keep our waterways clean."

The case will be heard before the Supreme Court this fall.

## Action helps advance a potential lifeline for wildlife

From bison to bumblebees, all sorts of vulnerable species would benefit from the bipartisan Recovering America's Wildlife Act—and it's making headway in Congress.



## Toward a greener future

Support our work to build a cleaner, greener, healthier future by including a gift to Wisconsin Environment or Wisconsin Environment Research & Policy Center in your will, trust or retirement accounts.

For more information call 1-800-841-7299 or send an email to: [PlannedGiving@WisconsinEnvironment.org](mailto:PlannedGiving@WisconsinEnvironment.org)



Roman Khomyak via Shutterstock

Page 1 story continued:

## Let our oldest trees grow older

So we celebrated this past Earth Day, when President Joe Biden issued an executive order directing his administration to inventory old forests and enact strong policies to protect them. The announcement is a great first step in the Wisconsin Environment campaign with one of our simplest messages: Let old trees grow.

The following month, in May, Home Depot shareholders took up the cause by passing a resolution directing the company to produce a report disclosing its current impact on primary forests. Leading up to the shareholder meeting, our national research partner Environment America Research & Policy Center delivered more than 20,000 petition signatures calling on the company to ensure that the wood it sells is harvested in a manner that protects boreal forests and other woodlands around the globe. As the world's largest home improvement retailer, The Home Depot can play a huge role in signaling to timber suppliers that it's time to make substantive

changes to reduce the industry's impact on these invaluable ecosystems.

We're also on the cusp of winning permanent protections for the iconic Tongass National Forest in Alaska, whose ancient trees both provide habitat for hundreds of species of wildlife and act as a sink for huge amounts of carbon.

Wisconsin Environment and our national network have been raising the call to keep the Tongass "roadless" ever since the Trump administration removed Roadless Rule protections for the forest shortly before leaving office. And thanks to the support of members like you, the new administration heard us loud and clear, signing an executive order on its first day in office directing the Forest Service to start the process of restoring protections for the Tongass. Now, we're mobilizing to ensure the administration follows through and makes its protections for the Tongass as strong as possible.

*Every minute, 1.5 football fields' worth of forests are cut down to produce softwood lumber, wood pulp and other products. We're calling on The Home Depot to help curb deforestation by leading the industry toward more sustainable wood sourcing.*



Staff

## Featured staff



CALSSA

Wendy Wendlant  
On behalf of Wisconsin Environment

As president of Environment America, Wendy is a leading voice for the environment in the United States. She has been quoted in major national, state and local news outlets for nearly 40 years on issues ranging from air pollution to green investing. She is also a senior vice president with The Public Interest Network. She is a founding board member of Green Corps, the field school for environmental organizers, and Green Century Funds, the nation's first family of fossil fuel free mutual funds. Wendy started with WashPIRG, where she led campaigns to create Washington state's model toxic waste cleanup program and to stop the nation's first high-level nuclear waste dump site. She is a 1983 graduate of Whitman College. She lives in Los Angeles with her husband and dog and hikes wherever and whenever she can.



Wisconsin Environment and The Public Interest Network are celebrating 50 years of action for a change.

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# Wisconsin Environment

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## Your 2022 Fall Report

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

## Single-use plastics get the boot from national parks. Will Wisconsin be next?

Plastic waste will be less likely to spoil the view for visitors to our national parks and less likely to harm the wild creatures that live in them, under a Biden administration policy change.

On June 8, U.S. Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland issued an order to phase out single-use plastic products from national

parks and other public lands by 2032. Over the past year, 20,000 supporters like you joined Wisconsin Environment and our national network in urging the administration to take this commonsense step against plastic pollution.

“We thank Secretary Haaland for setting an inspiring goal of eliminating plastic waste, but 2032 is too long to wait for plastic-free parks,” said Kelsey Lamp, director of our national network’s Protect Our Oceans campaign. “We urge the Biden administration to move even faster on this excellent initiative.”

We’re campaigning here in Wisconsin for a statewide ban on single-use polystyrene foam products.

*Lisa Frank, director of our national network’s federal office in Washington, D.C., (third from right) joined our environmental allies and Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland (center) in May 2022.*



Staff