

Your Summer Report

How old forests help slow climate change

By Ellen Montgomery, director of our public lands campaign

One of our greatest natural tools for tackling the climate crisis has been right in front of us all along: our forests. Every year, forests in the United States absorb enough carbon to offset 13% of the country's carbon emissions—and if we protect them from logging, they could do so much more.

Trees remove carbon from the atmosphere and store it on a scale that can't be matched by any man-made technology. The larger the tree, the more carbon is safely stored inside. Plus, older forests have accumulated centuries of carbon in living and dead plant materials and soils.

There is no upper limit on how much carbon a tree can store over time. Each year, trees add more mass than they did the previous year, meaning they take more and more carbon out of the atmosphere as they age.

Our nation's largest trees may be superheroes when it comes to fighting the climate crisis, but even superheroes need help sometimes. Many of our nation's oldest trees are under threat from logging and development, putting our climate, as well as clean water and wildlife, at further risk.

Restoring protections for our oldest trees

That's why we celebrated in January when the Biden administration restored Roadless Rule protections for the Tongass National Forest in Alaska, an iconic temperate rainforest home to trees older than the United States itself, along with abundant salmon and wildlife.



Ellen Montgomery, director of our national public lands campaign, meets President Biden as he unveils the Camp Hale-Continental Divide National Monument. In January, the Biden administration restored Roadless Rule protections for the Tongass National Forest in Alaska.

Together with activists around the country, our advocacy for the Tongass goes back decades. In 2001, our national network helped win the original Roadless Rule. We gathered and delivered nearly 700,000 public comments—more than half of all comments submitted—from our members and supporters.

We've worked to defend the Tongass ever since, taking the Trump administration to court when it tried to resume logging in roadless areas, and rallying public support for this incredible forest. And now, the Biden administration is safeguarding this special place from development.

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Thanks
for making it
all possible

11 states have committed to 100% clean electricity. Who's next?

On Feb. 7, Minnesota became the 11th state in the nation to commit to 100% clean electricity, as Gov. Tim Walz signed legislation requiring the state's utilities to get 100% of their electricity from carbon-free sources by 2040. Together, the 11 states account for more than a quarter of our country's total electricity consumption.

restaurants and retail stores; and require all city-run events and facilities, such as the Los Angeles Zoo, to implement policies to reduce waste to zero.

"Nothing we use for a few minutes should pollute our environment for hundreds of years," said Laura Deehan, state director of Environment California.

"That's why we need to stop using plastic items we can easily replace with sustainable alternatives—and that's exactly what the city of Los Angeles is doing."

Victory: Bristol Bay protected from the Pebble Mine

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has issued a final determination to restrict the use of certain Bristol Bay headwaters in Alaska as a disposal site for mining dredge and fill materials, effectively preventing the proposed Pebble Mine.

The region is home to iconic wildlife including salmon, brown bears, seals, walrus, birds and more. All of that abundance would have been put at risk if the Pebble Mine had opened. The proposed project included an open pit the size of Manhattan, as well as the construction of new roads and a new pipeline.

"We are so excited that the Biden administration has fulfilled its campaign promise to provide protections for Bristol Bay," said Ellen Montgomery, director of our national public lands campaign.

"Around the world, we are losing the equivalent of a football field worth of nature every minute. With this decision, thankfully, the headwaters of Bristol Bay won't be added to that tally."

Over the last two decades, Americans have submitted more than 4 million public comments opposing the Pebble Mine. This EPA decision is a long-awaited win for the environment.

Staff



Minnesota now joins 10 other states with commitments to 100% clean or renewable electricity—an idea gaining momentum thanks in part to our advocacy and the support of people like you.

"When we set a goal of 10 states committed to 100% back in 2018, we intended that our early victory in California would ripple out to other states ... and it did, as our later campaigns led to victories in Maine, New Mexico and beyond," said Johanna Neumann, senior director of our national 100% Renewable Energy campaign.

"This victory in Minnesota is a testament to a good idea whose time has come. Now we're setting our sights on getting five more states committed to 100% clean and renewable energy this year."

Los Angeles to cut out polystyrene foam, other common plastic pollution culprits

The City of Angels is taking major steps toward becoming the City of Zero Waste.

On Dec. 6, the Los Angeles City Council approved several ordinances that will help curb plastic waste across the city (and lead the way for more communities to do the same).

The new policies will prohibit the sale and distribution of polystyrene foam products, commonly called Styrofoam; expand the city's ban on single-use plastic bags to



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A continued threat

Still, far too many other mature and old-growth forests are at risk of being chopped down. From North Carolina to Oregon, more than 20 projects to log mature and old-growth trees on federal lands are moving forward. If allowed, these logging projects would cut down nearly 370,000 acres of our most important allies in the climate crisis. Additionally, a recent study identified more than 50 million acres of federal mature and old-growth forests without protections from logging.

More than 95% of our nation's wood supply comes from non-federal lands, and much of this wood is from small-diameter logs. Yet the U.S. Forest Service is still driven to meet timber production benchmarks and is sacrificing some of our most valuable natural resources to do so.

Logging mature trees would only result in more carbon released to the atmosphere at

a time when reducing our greenhouse gas emissions is critical. In Green Mountain National Forest, Vermont, many trees slated for logging are just reaching maturity at 80 years old. In the decades to come, this forest could store two to four times as much carbon as it does now.

In April 2022, President Biden issued an executive order directing federal agencies to protect mature and old-growth forests. A few months later, environmental groups, including Environment California and our national network, delivered 122,000 public comments urging the Department of the Interior and the Department of Agriculture to move quickly to establish durable protections for mature and old-growth forests on federal lands.

Together, we can preserve our country's wild places, protect the wildlife that depend on them, and help stave off the worst consequences of global warming—all by simply letting mature trees grow.

Our staff and supporters delivered public comments on the Roadless Rule campaign in 2000. In 2001, our national network helped win the original Roadless Rule. We gathered and delivered nearly 700,000 public comments—more than half of all comments submitted—from our members and supporters.



Staff

Featured staff



Kimball Nelson

Laura Deehan
State Director

Laura directs Environment California's work to tackle global warming, protect the ocean, and stand up for clean air, clean water and open spaces. Laura served on the Environment California board for two years before stepping into the state director role. Most recently, she directed the public health program for CALPIRG, another organization in The Public Interest Network, where she led campaigns to get lead out of school drinking water and toxic chemicals out of cosmetics. Prior to that, Laura ran Environment California citizen outreach offices across the state and, as the Environment California field director, she led campaigns to get California to go solar, ban single use plastic grocery bags, and go 100% renewable. Laura lives with her family in Richmond, California, where she enjoys hiking, yoga and baking.



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

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Your 2023 Summer 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 Environment California. We focus exclusively on protecting California'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.

How to make your lawn and garden better for bees

Pesticides and habitat loss are damaging bee populations, but you can help protect them from the comfort of your home and garden with four easy actions:

- 1. Plant a variety of native species.** Bees specialize in the pollen their respective native plants provide, ensuring they and their young have enough to survive.
- 2. Plant flowers that bloom at different times of the year** so bees always have

flowers to visit. Some of the best annuals and perennials to use include marigold and sunflower, and aster and coneflower, respectively.

- 3. Create "bee hotels."** Like a birdhouse, you can construct bee houses from wood and materials easily found at craft, hobby and home improvement stores or at home.
- 4. Avoid using pesticides when gardening.** The easiest way to help bees is by avoiding toxic chemicals that harm them.

Each action will greatly improve your yard or garden's ability to attract bountiful bees and give them a healthy habitat in which to thrive. And in order to make our environment even safer for bees, Environment California is working to ensure that Gov. Gavin Newsom takes action this year to end the worst uses of neonicotinoid bee-killing pesticides in the state.

Planting a bee-friendly garden in your yard will help protect our precious pollinators.



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