

## Your Fall Report

# What's being done to save the bees?

By Steve Blackledge, senior director of our national conservation program

One in 7 Americans now lives in a state that restricts the use of bee-killing pesticides. How did that happen?

Here's a quick look at the progress to date:

### States banning bee-killing pesticides

Neonicotinoids (or neonics for short) are a class of pesticides that have been linked to bee die-offs. They're 1,000 times more toxic to bees than DDT, and even sublethal doses cause a lot of damage. These neurotoxic pesticides attack bees' brains, making it harder for them to sleep, forage, fly and even find their way home.

Fortunately, states are recognizing the threat these dangerous pesticides pose to bees, and they're taking action to limit their use and sale. These are the nine states that have already passed laws to that effect: Connecticut and Maryland in 2016; Vermont in 2019; Maine and Massachusetts in 2021; New Jersey, New York and Rhode Island in 2022; and Colorado in 2023.

Thanks to this progress, 1 in 7 Americans now lives in a state with some restriction on bee-killing pesticides.

Next up: Environment California is working to build support for a bill currently under consideration in California that would address non-agricultural uses of neonics, such as on lawns, gardens and golf courses. If successful, it would boost that number to 1 in 4 Americans living in a state with a similar such law. And our national network is looking for more opportunities to advance legislation in more states.



Steve Blackledge, senior director of our national conservation program, with our canvassing team on our Save the Bees campaign.

### Taking neonics off store shelves

When it comes to maintaining our lawns and gardens, there are plenty of safe products on the market. Too many garden centers, however, still sell pesticides that are harmful to bees.

Conservationists have already helped convince The Home Depot and Lowe's to commit to phasing out the sale of bee-killing neonics for consumer use. Now, we're calling on Amazon, the world's largest online retailer, to do the same.

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Thanks  
for making it  
all possible

## Is your favorite beach safe for swimming?

Even though our water is cleaner than it used to be, runoff pollution and sewage overflows still can make swimmers sick. Scientists estimate 57 million instances of people getting sick each year from swimming in polluted waters in the U.S. Those illnesses can include nausea, diarrhea, ear infections and rashes.

Our research partners at Environment America Research & Policy Center released

State Sens. Ben Allen and Lena Gonzalez, and keynote speaker Terry Tamminen, former secretary of the California Environmental Protection Agency, kicked off Ocean Day with motivational remarks about California's progress, responsibility and path forward when it comes to ocean conservation.

Following the opening remarks, the room full of ocean advocates broke out into lobby teams and prepared for a day of action. In just one day, Ocean Day lobby teams met with more than 80 legislative offices, providing them with information on key issue areas including plastic pollution, kelp forest recovery, coastal resiliency funding and offshore wind.

## California Senate approves solar along highways in unanimous vote

The California Senate took an important step this summer to facilitate the state's transition from dirty fossil fuels to 100% clean, renewable energy sources. SB 49, which would put solar panels and other clean energy infrastructure along the state's highways, passed with a unanimous 40-0 vote in the Senate.

SB 49, sponsored by Environment California, would repurpose already-developed spaces along freeways as sites for solar panels. It would create a strategic plan to lease land in rights-of-way for developing renewable energy generation, energy storage and transmission lines. This plan would analyze how much space along highways is suitable for solar power infrastructure and set targets for the amount of solar developed by 2030 and 2045.

"California has long been a leader in harnessing the clean energy potential of solar power, and solar panels are an increasingly common feature on rooftops throughout the state," said Environment California State Director Laura Deehan. "However, we must take advantage of additional areas to accommodate solar infrastructure quickly with little controversy. Using the space beside highways for solar is a proven way to generate clean, renewable energy that can also generate significant revenue for the state."

Environment California is working to see SB 49 pass the California Assembly to fulfill the state's potential to go solar along highways.

Get more updates on our work online at <https://environmentcalifornia.org>.

NBC News Center Maine



John Rumpler, our national clean water director and senior attorney, spoke with local media about the threat sewage pollution poses to people enjoying popular summer destinations like Gooch's Beach in Kennebunk, Maine.

a new report, "Safe for Swimming?," which revealed that more than half of coastal and Great Lakes beaches surveyed had bacterial levels indicating potentially unsafe levels of fecal contamination on at least one day last year. As part of the report, we created a state-by-state map that allows the public to see which beaches were potentially unsafe for swimming on the greatest number of days last year.

"All of us want to enjoy a safe and healthy day at the beach," said John Rumpler, our national clean water director and senior attorney. "By calling attention to the dangers of water pollution, we can make a strong case for our elected representatives to invest in water infrastructure and stop sewage overflows."

To see if your favorite beach is safe for swimming, visit [environmentcaliforniacenter.org](http://environmentcaliforniacenter.org).

## A day of action for California's ocean and coast

On April 11, more than 200 Californians gathered at the state Capitol to advocate for ocean protections and celebrate the 18th Annual California Ocean Day.



### Toward a greener future

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

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



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## What's being done to save the bees?

Members and supporters like you have helped deliver tens of thousands of messages to Amazon, urging it to take bee-killing pesticides off its virtual shelves.

### Winning federal progress for the bees

Major progress is also being made at the national level:

- In 2021, we celebrated when we won protection for bees on 11 million acres of Department of Defense-owned land.
- The Inflation Reduction Act, passed in early 2023 and advocated for by our national network, included nearly \$20 billion in additional funding for the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) conservation programs. We're urging the USDA to use this funding to help pollinators, such as through its program to reimburse farmers for replanting prairie that provides native bees with much-needed habitat.

Now, our network is laying the groundwork for even bigger wins, as we urge the Biden administration to reinstate a ban on the use of bee-killing pesticides in wildlife refuges (the places bees should be safest) and call on the Environmental Protection Agency to restrict three of the most common types of neonics as they undergo a periodic review.

Of course, there's still a long way to go to save the bees. They face a triple threat of pesticide use, habitat loss and climate change. And the policies that have been passed so far have mainly addressed the consumer use of bee-killing pesticides, while still allowing for agricultural use.

Still, no one thought it was possible to ban DDT or any other pesticide until Rachel Carson wrote "Silent Spring" and sparked an environmental movement. Together, we can keep that movement burning bright as we work to win a ban on bee-killing neonics.

Farmers market-goers show their support for saving the bees.



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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# Environment California

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## Your 2023 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 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.

## 500,000 people call for mature and old-growth forest protections

More than 500,000 people have called on the U.S. Forest Service to protect mature and old-growth trees and forests from logging on federal land as a cornerstone of U.S. climate policy.

In April, the Forest Service issued a rulemaking proposal to improve the climate resilience of federally managed forests. The public comment period on the proposal closed in July.

In addition to the hundreds of thousands of people who weighed in, dozens of environmental and grassroots organizations submitted comments, including Environment California Research & Policy Center.

Activists and environmental advocates gathered at the Washington, D.C., offices of the Forest Service to celebrate the outpouring of public support.

"I'm not surprised that so many people took the time to get involved in this comment period. We love our trees and forests, so of course people spoke up," said Ellen Montgomery, public lands campaign director for Environment America Research & Policy Center. "Our forests clean our water, are home for wildlife, and are an incredible ally in our work to stop climate change. Our mature and old-growth forests and trees are worth more standing than as lumber."

*Public Lands Campaign Director Ellen Montgomery and activists delivered public comments from 500,000 people to the Forest Service headquarters in D.C.*



Staff