



Your Winter Report

Thanks to you, we delivered over 1 million public comments for our forests

Old growth forests, many of them older than America itself, are not just crucial allies in our race against climate change—they are also home to many species and areas of wonder. However, roadbuilding, logging and development threaten our forests on federal land.

Thankfully, our supporters and members like you are aware of the importance of these forests, and we were able to help deliver more than 1 million public comments over four comment periods urging protection of old growth forests from logging and development.

How we made your voice heard

Mature and old growth trees and forests are critical to addressing the biodiversity and climate crisis, serving as unique ecosystems that support thousands of wildlife species and store significant amounts of carbon.

Following President Joe Biden's 2022 executive order directing the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) to develop policies protecting mature and old growth forests in the National Forest system, the agency proposed a plan to change the way it manages old growth forests. The Biden administration then invited public input on the plan.

During the comment period, canvassers with Environment North Carolina knocked on doors across the state where old growth forests like the Nantahala National Forest are on the chopping block.



Our national canvass team, ready and excited to kick off their summer outreach campaign.

Canvassers educated the public about the threats to old growth trees and forests and built support for old growth protections by collecting public comments from supporters, including from members like you. Along with those supporters, environmental organizations, indigenous-led organizations, federal and state elected officials, faith groups and faith leaders, businesses, scientists and people across the nation submitted hundreds of thousands of comments in support of strong protections for the nation's oldest trees and forests.

Continued on page 3 ►

Thanks
for making it
all possible

Major step taken to 'get the lead out'

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) recently took a major step to get the lead out of drinking water: In October, the EPA set a 10-year deadline for most water utilities to replace lead service lines nationwide. This deadline is a significant step for public health as these approximately 9 million toxic pipes are the single largest source of lead in drinking water.

Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary, creating the third-largest federally protected marine area in the United States.

This new sanctuary, spanning 116 miles along California's Central Coast, represents a monumental step in preserving the nation's marine biodiversity and protecting one of the Pacific's most ecologically significant regions.

The sanctuary safeguards crucial habitats where key ocean currents meet, providing vital feeding and migration grounds for marine life, including whales, sea otters and numerous fish species. This designation opens the door to increased federal funding for scientific research, which will deepen understanding of ocean ecosystems and inform conservation efforts under changing climate conditions.

Made possible by over 100,000 comments, including from members like you, and a letter of endorsement signed by 181 scientists, this achievement promises to safeguard irreplaceable waters for future generations.

Where does microplastic pollution come from? Often where plastic is made

Microplastic is showing up in our waterways and on our beaches. Facilities that make plastic pellets are one source of this pollution, so we set out to find where microplastics are coming from.

On July 31, Environment North Carolina and our partners at PIRG released an interactive map of these facilities based on data from the Environmental Protection Agency, so citizens can identify potential polluters near local water sources and homes.

An estimated 1 trillion plastic pellets enter the ocean each year and can take 100 to 1,000 years to break down. Because these pellets are small and lightweight, they are often spilled and end up in waterways where they can also be mistaken as food by wildlife.

"Turtles, birds and fish need waterways free from microplastic pollution, but if they live near one of these plastic-producing plants, they could be at risk," said Environment America's Executive Director Lisa Frank. You can find the tool on our website.

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

CBS



John Rumpler speaks about lead in drinking water on CBS in March 2019.

Unfortunately, this new rule does not require water utilities to halt the widespread contamination of schools' drinking water, as urged by Environment America Research & Policy Center joined by parents and educators.

Lead in schools' water is especially dangerous because children's developing brains and bodies absorb lead more easily. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, even low levels of lead exposure have been linked to a drop in IQ, attention disorders and impaired academic performance. That's why schools should install filters certified to remove lead at all taps used for drinking or cooking.

"The EPA's new deadline on lead pipes is a huge step forward for safe drinking water. Now we need state and local officials to take similarly bold action to help ensure that our kids have safe drinking water wherever they go to learn and play each day," said Environment America Research & Policy Center's Clean Water Director John Rumpler.

Celebrating a new ocean sanctuary

Good news for our oceans: On Oct. 11, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) granted permanent protection from oil and gas drilling to the

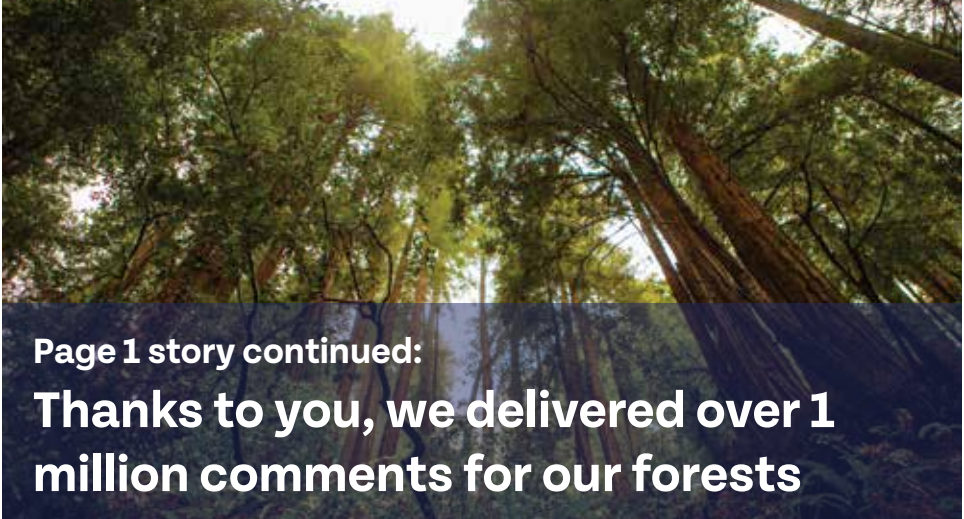
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Page 1 story continued:
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Why our forests are still at risk

Despite overwhelming public support, our forests remain at risk. The “Fix Our Forests Act,” passed by the U.S. House of Representatives in September 2024, poses urgent threats to our forests by prioritizing logging over true forest restoration. The Act could fast-track logging approvals in federal forests by bypassing critical environmental reviews.

The impact would be devastating: older trees chopped down, eroded soils and habitat destruction. We urged the Senate to reject this legislation.

Strong support for our forests

As the public comment period closed for the USFS’s National Old Growth Amendment in September, locally elected officials from across North Carolina submitted a sign-on letter in an effort to achieve stronger old growth protections. The letter was submitted to the USFS as a public comment.

In the letter, the officials explain the importance of old growth trees to North Carolina due to their ability to store more carbon than younger trees, which helps to mitigate climate change, and through providing important habitat for native endangered wildlife.

“North Carolinians recognize the vital importance of our old growth forests and are making their voices heard,” said Emily Mason, advocate with Environment North Carolina Research and Policy Center, who organized the sign-on letter. “North Carolina’s old growth trees are worth more standing and need to be protected for generations to come.”

Public Lands Campaign Director Ellen Montgomery and staff help deliver more than 500,000 public comments to the U.S. Forest Service to protect old growth forests.



Glen Fortner

Our mission

Environment North Carolina is a policy and action group with one mission: to restore and protect the natural world.

Learn more about us by scanning the QR code below:



Featured staff



Kimball Nelson

Emily Mason
Advocate

Emily advocates for cleaner air, water, clean energy and protecting wildlife and wild places in North Carolina. Emily lives in Cary, North Carolina, where she enjoys trying new recipes and kayaking.

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Your 2025 Winter Report

Renewables on the Rise

The Renewables on the Rise dashboard allows you to track the growth of clean energy in your state and around the country. Explore your state's clean energy progress by scanning the QR code below:



Surprising facts about US renewable energy growth

Renewable energy continues to rise across the country. On Oct. 22, Environment America Research & Policy Center and Frontier Group released the latest Renewables on the Rise dashboard that found that the U.S. produced more than three times more renewable energy in 2023 than in 2014, showing growth in every state.

Here are three ways America's clean and renewable energy technologies grew in the last 10 years:

1. America produced enough wind energy to power nearly 39 million typical homes in 2023—more than twice as much wind energy as in 2014.
2. America produced enough solar energy to power 22 million homes in 2023—more than eight times as much solar energy as in 2014.
3. There were nearly 3.3 million electric vehicles on American roads at the end of 2023—a 25-fold increase from 2014.

“When we replace fossil fuels with wind turbines and solar panels, and curb wasteful uses of energy, we build a world where the planet and people can thrive,” said Johanna Neumann, senior director of Environment America Research & Policy Center’s Campaign for 100% Renewable Energy.

In just 10 years, solar energy generation across the country grew eight-fold, enough to power 22 million homes in 2023.



Tim O'Connor