



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 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 America's state offices knocked on doors across the country including in Oregon, Wisconsin and North Carolina where old growth forests 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.

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Thanks
for making it
all possible

Virginia leads on wildlife crossings and corridors

Wildlife corridors protect our Virginia wildlife as they use a variety of strategies to reconnect nature including fencing, overpasses and strategic conservation that connects wildlife habitats.

Nature in the U.S. has been cut into many pieces by roads, fences and other development that blocks the migration and daily movement of animals. Wildlife needs to

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.

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 Virginia 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://environmentvirginia.org>.

Andrew Johnson



Environment Virginia State Director Elly Boehmer Wilson (back row, far left) join coalition partners and supporters in calling for more wildlife crossings in the state.

roam—for hunting, grazing, mating and more—and when animals are penned in, whole ecosystems can be knocked out of balance.

We're proud that Virginia has been a national leader in wildlife corridors and crossings. In 2023, U.S. Rep. Morgan Griffith announced the Virginia Department of Transportation was awarded \$600,000 for wildlife crossings. And on Oct. 31, 2024, U.S. Rep Don Beyer introduced the bipartisan Wildlife Movement Through Partnerships Act in the House.

Virginia was one of the first eastern states to adopt a Wildlife Corridor Action Plan, aimed at connecting wildlife habitats by addressing collision hotspots and movement barriers—now it's time to put it into action.

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.

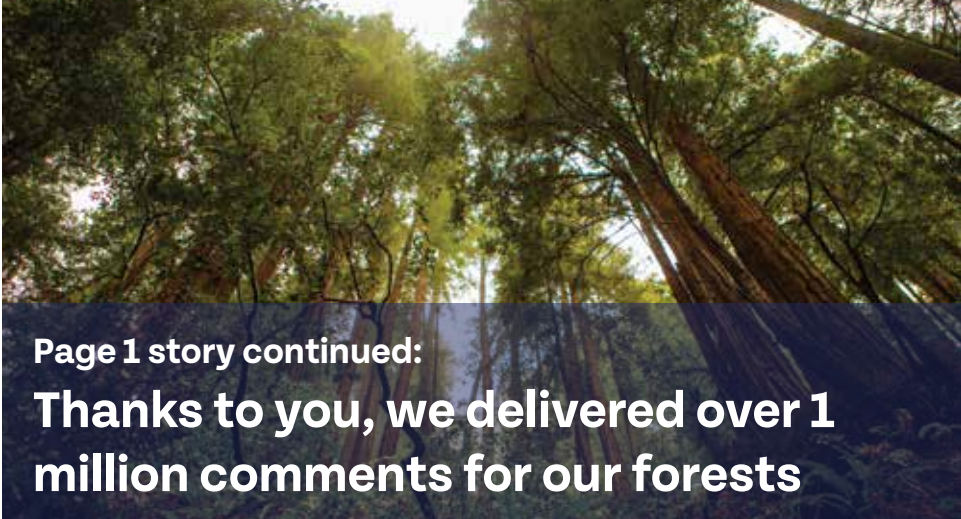
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Why our forests are still at risk

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

“The response from the public to our on-the-ground efforts to build support for a strong old growth policy has shown that people want to see older trees protected,” said Environment America Public Lands Campaign Director Ellen Montgomery. “These trees and forests are home to wildlife that we love from birds to bears.”

We will keep working to make sure that decision-makers recognize the truth that the public knows: old growth trees are worth more standing.



Above right: Many trees in old growth forests are older than Philadelphia’s Independence Hall (1753). Below: 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.



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Our mission

Environment Virginia 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



Yasir Alhamaidan, Yas Photography

Elly Boehmer Wilson
State Director

A former canvass director and organizer with Impact, Elly now directs Environment Virginia’s efforts to promote clean air, clean water and open spaces in Virginia. Elly lives in Richmond, Virginia, where she enjoys gardening, photography, hiking and rollerblading with her dog.

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Environment Virginia



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 renewable energy in Virginia

Renewable energy continues to rise in Virginia. According to Renewables on the Rise 2024 dashboard released on Oct. 22 by Environment Virginia Research & Policy Center, Virginia has made substantial progress on clean energy. Now, Virginia has generated 6,119 GWh from solar and wind. This means that we can power an additional 565,000 households each year with clean energy.

Here are three interesting facts about clean energy's growth in Virginia:

1. Virginia generated more solar energy in 2023 alone than all solar generation before 2021 combined, bringing us to ninth place in the national solar rankings.
2. There are more than 78,694 all-electric vehicles registered in Virginia, ranking us 10th in the country in terms of EV growth in the past 10 years.
3. Virginia added 922 EV charging ports in 2023, ranking us 10th in the country in EV charging ports installed.

“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 Elly Boehmer-Wilson, state director of Environment Virginia.

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



Tim O'Connor