Fiscal Year 2019 Annual Report

Thanks for making it all possible

Machias Seal Island
From the Director

To be an environmentalist, you’ve got to wrestle with a conundrum: We need bold action on a short timeline ... with broad public support.

We need to do a lot, quickly, to preserve a livable planet. But progress has to earn and sustain the support of the people in order to last—so progress doesn’t often come in one big swooping action. It usually comes one small-ish victory at a time.

At Environment Maine, we acknowledge the conundrum—and we embrace it. We believe in bold action on a large scale. But we work every day at the local, state and national levels to build, step by step, the support this action demands. Each college, or city or state that deploys more renewable energy helps win more people over to the possibility of a world that runs on the sun and the wind. Each company or state that phases out a single-use plastic product shows more people a way to end harm to ocean wildlife from plastic pollution.

These victories are smaller than the challenges demand. But as their pace picks up, their summary effect grows. A year ago, California became the second state to commit to 100 percent zero-carbon electricity. Now, there are six states with such commitments, plus Puerto Rico and Washington, D.C. Back in 2016, California banned single-use plastic bags. In 2019, five more states banned plastic bags, and Maine, Maryland and Vermont banned plastic foam take-out containers. Like all social changes, environmental solutions have tipping points.

Our natural world faces serious problems, and we’ve got to solve them. Our strategy is to make sure that each victory opens a door to the next. Thanks for being with us on the journey.

Sincerely,

Anya Fetcher
State Director, Environment Maine
Clean Water & Air

Through our Clean Water & Air program, our staff and members tackled problems ranging from the Trump administration’s attempts to roll back clean water standards, to industrial discharges that violate the Clean Water and Clean Air Acts. Below, you’ll find reports on our Get the Lead Out campaign and our efforts to bolster investment in our nation’s water infrastructure.

**The grades are in: Report finds states are failing to ensure safe drinking water for our children**

**MARCH 21, 2019:** Lead contaminates the water coming out of drinking fountains and taps at schools across the country, and at least 22 states aren’t doing enough about it.

“Get the Lead Out,” a study published March 21 by our research partners Environment America Research & Policy Center and U.S. PIRG Education Fund, examined the policies of 31 states and Washington, D.C., and assigned grades based on how well they protect children from lead in drinking water at school. Twenty-two states earned an F grade, including Maine, with only Illinois and D.C. grading above the C range.

“Waiting for more tests to confirm that our children are drinking water laced with lead is unconscionable,” said John Rumpler, senior director of our national network’s clean water campaign. “It’s time to get the lead out.”

Environment Maine and our national network are working in Maine and more than a dozen other states to protect drinking water for millions of children by advancing policies to proactively get the lead out.

**Congress passes long overdue measures to protect our drinking water from lead, sewage**

**OCT. 23, 2018:** Victories for clean water are rare in Washington, D.C., these days, so this is one to savor.

In October, Congress passed—and the president signed—America’s Water Infrastructure Act (S. 3021), which would double federal investment in safe drinking water, establish a small grant program for schools to address lead contamination, and expand monitoring of contaminants such as per- or polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS). Our national network’s advocates—and environmental champions such as Sen. Ben Cardin (Md.) and Rep. Paul Tonko (N.Y.)—shaped the legislation and ensured it contained the solutions we need.

“In 21st-century America, we should be able to keep lead and other toxins out of our drinking water, and sewage out of our rivers, lakes and bays,” said John. “These provisions are long overdue.”

Photo credits: (cover) Warren Price Photography via Shutterstock; (headshot left) staff; (spread) Mark Baldwin via Shutterstock; (above) CBS
Above: Rob Sargent toured the nation’s first offshore wind farm at Block Island, R.I. (upper left). Below: Our national network campaigned for 100% renewable energy across the country, from California (left) to Florida (right).
Clean, Green & Renewable Energy

With support from Environment Maine’s members, our national network promoted energy efficiency in our homes, educated city leaders about solar, and fostered the development of wind power. Here are updates on our network’s 100% Renewable Energy campaign and our research arm’s “Shining Cities” report.

Maine takes strong action on climate change, renewable energy
JUNE 20, 2019: Maine is going all-in on a renewable energy future.

The state Legislature approved on June 18, a bill that would increase the state’s renewable electricity standard to 80 percent by 2030 and 100 percent by 2050, and another crafted by Gov. Janet Mills that would create the Maine Climate Council and update the state’s climate action plan.

“Whether it’s increasingly severe nor’easters, hurricanes and floods, or dramatic changes to our fisheries and agriculture, the impacts of climate change are not just future threats—they’re already here. Transitioning our state from fossil fuels to renewable energy will help ensure that Maine contributes to ensuring a cleaner, safer environment for generations to come,” said then-Environment Maine State Director Carissa Maurin. “We know that Mainers overwhelmingly support powering our state with clean energy, and now we have leadership that will act on that.”

Both bills were signed on June 26.

Solar power is growing fast. These cities are shining the brightest.
APRIL 9, 2019: Solar power is booming in dozens of major American cities.

“Shining Cities 2019,” researched by Environment America Research & Policy Center and released on April 9, found that solar energy capacity more than doubled in 45 of America’s 57 largest cities in the past six years. The report’s main event? The latest ranking of America’s top solar cities. Los Angeles topped the list for the second year in a row, and San Diego, Phoenix, Honolulu and San Jose rounded out the top five.

“Cities are rapidly adopting solar energy and driving the renewable energy transition across the country, bringing pollution-free power to our homes, schools and workplaces,” said Emma Searson, director of our national network’s Go Solar campaign.

The report also found that solar is not just a Sun Belt phenomenon. Other leading cities include New York City; Indianapolis; Washington, D.C.; Trenton, New Jersey; and Ypsilanti, Michigan.
Above: Then-Environment Maine State Director Carissa Maurin looked on as Gov. Mills signed the first statewide ban on polystyrene into law. Below: Environment Maine staff delivered more than 9,000 petition signatures calling for a ban on bee-killing pesticides to the Capitol building.

Photo credits: (clockwise from top) Maine Legislature House Democratic Office, Chris Holman via Shutterstock, Pixabay, Scott F. Smith via Shutterstock, Staff
Conservation

Our network’s staff and members sought to revive the country’s best conservation and recreation program, and to spare Arctic wildlife from oil and gas exploration and drilling. Below, find more on our national network’s efforts to protect wildlife from plastic pollution and save the bees from toxic pesticides.

Victory against plastic pollution: Maine passes first statewide polystyrene ban

MAY 1, 2019: Maine has made history.

On April 30, Gov. Janet Mills signed the first statewide ban on one of the worst forms of plastic pollution into law. The ban prohibits the sale of disposable food service containers made in part or in whole by polystyrene. Polystyrene, commonly referred to as Styrofoam, never fully degrades. Instead, the foam breaks into smaller pieces and ends up in our rivers, streams and our oceans, where it can harm wildlife. Scientists have found plastic fragments in hundreds of species including all sea turtle species and 43 percent of all marine mammal species.

“Today, Maine has made history by becoming the first state in the country to ban single-use plastic foam,” said then-Environment Maine State Director Carissa Maurin. “Nothing we use for a few minutes should pollute our rivers and oceans, from the Kennebec River to the Gulf of Maine, for centuries—especially when there are alternatives.”

Maine continued to make history by banning single-use plastic bags in May.

Nine thousand Mainers act to save the bees

AUG. 6, 2019: Help may be on the way for the pollinators that bring life to Maine gardens and food to our tables.

Environment Maine staff on Aug. 5 met with Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry Commissioner Amanda Beal to deliver nearly 9,000 petition signatures calling for a moratorium on bee-killing pesticides. Across the country, millions of bees are dying off. Neonicotinoid insecticides, known as neons, are a primary culprit. We know Gov. Janet Mills is sympathetic: She had two bee hives installed at the governor’s residence in May.

“We must not stand any longer for the use of these pesticides, so carelessly used despite their direct impact on our bees,” Environment Maine canvasser Elijah Munro-Ludders wrote in a letter to the editor of the Press Herald.

Our canvassers spent the summer educating Mainers on the vital role that bees play in our ecosystem, the dangers they face, and how we can save them.
Above: Staff from our national research partner Environment America Research & Policy Center, along with their allies, delivered 350,000 public comments in support of federal Clean Car standards to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. Below: Andrea McGimsey and Environment America Research & Policy Center staff hosted a tour of an electric bus facility (upper middle and bottom right).
Global Warming Solutions

Environment Maine worked with other state groups in our network to reduce carbon emissions from power plants, transportation and other sources. Here’s more on what our network did to promote state-level action across the country and defend strong pollution standards for cars and trucks.

Wrong way for the climate: 350,000 oppose rollback of Clean Cars Standards

OCT. 26, 2018: Given the alarming ways our climate is changing, doesn’t it make sense for automakers to focus on making cars that pollute far less, if at all?

On Oct. 26, our network’s national research partner showed the Trump administration that 350,000 Americans think so. Together with coalition partners, Environment America Research & Policy Center delivered that many public comments to the Environmental Protection Agency and the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration opposing plans to roll back federal Clean Car Standards. By freezing the standards at 2020 levels, the plan would lock in more dirty air and global warming pollution.

“We with the latest research telling us we’ll have a climate catastrophe on our hands if we don’t significantly slash global warming emissions, we need to move forward, not pull a U-turn,” said Andrea.

Our network is also calling on state leaders to promote zero-emission electric vehicles.

With Maine’s commitment, more than half of Americans are represented in U.S. Climate Alliance

MAR. 6, 2019: In the face of federal inaction on climate, Maine’s governor is stepping up.

On Feb. 28, Gov. Janet Mills announced that Maine is now the 22nd state to join the U.S. Climate Alliance, a bipartisan coalition. The move means more than half the country’s population is represented by states that are committed to cutting carbon pollution and meeting U.S. climate targets in the Paris Agreement.

“Under our new governor’s leadership, Maine is ready to take serious action on climate solutions to avert the worst impacts of global warming,” said Carissa Maurin, then-state director of Environment Maine. “We look forward to working with the governor and our fellow Americans on getting clean energy on the grid, electrifying our cars and buses, and so much more.”

Prior to the governor’s action, our national network released “Climate Solutions from Day One,” a report outlining 12 ways America’s new governors can reduce climate-related pollution.

We need to move forward, not pull a U-turn.

Andrea McGimsey
Senior Director, Global Warming Solutions campaign,
on the federal roll back of Clean Car standards
Our staff (partial list)

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