Annual Report

A recap of our work for our members in 2012

Protecting our air, water and open space.
To our members

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With your help, we won substantial victories, including protecting the Pacific by banning plastic bags in three Oregon cities and helping to establish three new marine reserves that will protect ocean ecosystems for future generations.

We generated unprecedented support for the first-ever limits on global warming pollution and helped ensure that President Obama’s historic clean car standards were finalized. These two protections alone represent the largest single step the U.S. has ever taken to tackle global warming.

We made critical progress toward our long-term goals of protecting Crater Lake and repowering Oregon with clean energy. We hit the doors and streets to ensure that 50,000 Oregonians know about the threats to the Crater Lake ecosystem and engaged thousands of them in asking decision makers to protect it. And we launched a new campaign to set Oregon on a path to 250,000 solar rooftops by 2025, so we can generate clean energy that creates jobs, doesn’t pollute and never runs out.

No one said all of this would be easy. In fact, I hear every day from special interests who say we can’t do it. When the chemical industry outspent us in Salem and blocked our efforts to ban plastic bags statewide, we stayed the course because we knew Oregonians were with us. You and I know that nothing we use for a few minutes should end up polluting the ocean for hundreds of years. We came up with a new strategy—organize locally and ask Oregon’s biggest cities to take action.

It worked. In one year, we eliminated 350 million single-use plastic bags from the waste stream by banning the bag in Portland, Corvallis, and Eugene. That’s 350 million reasons why we are going to keep working to protect marine wildlife. Our determination, tough-minded advocacy and strategic ideas were the key. Your support made it all possible.

As we embark on the next year, we do so knowing that with you by our side, Oregon is already a cleaner, greener, healthier place.

Sincerely,

Sarah Higginbotham, State Director
Fighting Global Warming

Here in Oregon, we’ve already felt the consequences of global warming. Snowpack is down. Sea levels are rising, and severe wildfire incidents are increasing. In 2012, we were successful in pressing the Obama administration to adopt standards that cut global warming pollution from cars, trucks and power plants.

Historic action taken to reduce carbon pollution

In March, the EPA proposed historic new limits on the carbon pollution from new power plants. We helped Oregonians voice their support on the fight against global warming pollution and contributed to the Environmental Protection Agency receiving more than 3 million comments—more than on any other comment period in their history. In August, the Obama administration finalized new clean car standards that will double fuel efficiency by 2025. The new standards and their projected cuts in carbon pollution represent the single largest step the U.S. has ever taken to tackle global warming.

- To educate the public, we distributed literature about extreme weather and global warming to tens of thousands of households around the state.

- We collected the comments by canvassing door-to-door and at busy public places and reaching out to activists both by phone and online.

We worked alongside our national federation Environment America and a coalition of other groups to collect more than 3 million public comments in support of the first-ever carbon pollution standard for power plants. This is the greatest number of public comments ever delivered to the EPA on any one issue. Pictured, our federal staff and coalition delivering the first 2.1 million comments.
Keep Plastic Out of the Pacific

Nothing we use for a few minutes should pollute our oceans for hundreds of years. Too many of the disposable plastic bags we use end up as litter in the Pacific and become death traps for birds, turtles and other wildlife. In 2012, we continued to build momentum toward a statewide ban by banning bags in three Oregon cities. Local bans won this year will help keep a total of 350 million plastic bags out of our waterways.
Corvallis and Eugene banned the bag

Corvallis and Eugene became the second and third Oregon cities to implement a single-use plastic bag ban when we urged the city councils to vote to ban plastic checkout bags. This victory will have big payoffs for Oregon’s environment and ultimately, the Pacific Ocean.

“We applauded Corvallis and Eugene city councilors for standing up for our oceans and voting to curb the flow of plastic bag pollution,” said Environment Oregon State Director Sarah Higginbotham. “Now, we need other cities to take action and make a lasting difference with bag bans of their own.”

- We engaged thousands of Eugene and Corvallis citizens in voicing their support for a bag ban, alongside over 100 businesses, both large and small.

- As the second largest city in the state, Eugene’s bag ban will make a significant impact, greatly reducing the estimated 67 million plastic bags residents use annually.

Portland passed a better ban

Environment Oregon delivered over 3,000 petitions of support for a better bag ban in Portland, and helped enlist the support of dozens of businesses and restaurants. Alongside the Surfrider Foundation, Environment Oregon successfully urged City Commissioners to unanimously vote to pass a better bag ban.

- The ban will now include not just large retailers, but all stores and restaurants. As the largest city in the state, Portland’s more inclusive bag ban sets a new precedent for protection.

- We generated media coverage in The Oregonian, The Portland Tribune, and media outlets statewide. On the day of the vote, we put the “Bag Monster” on trial at a special news conference in front of City Hall.
When it comes to the environment, Oregon is a leader, not a follower. But we’re still getting the majority of our energy from dirty coal and oil. Right now, Oregon gets less than 1 percent of its energy from the sun, when we could be generating clean power on every Oregon home, office, school, warehouse and store. In 2012, we launched a campaign calling on Oregon to harness enough solar energy to power a quarter million homes by 2025.
Imagine 250,000 solar roofs in Oregon by 2025

By 2025, Oregon could cut ties with dirty and dangerous energy, such as coal and oil, and produce 30 times more solar energy—the equivalent of taking 730,000 cars off the road. Thousands are already working at Oregon solar companies, and our state houses the country’s largest solar panel manufacturer. Those panels should end up on rooftops throughout Oregon.

Solar report kicked off campaign
In July, Environment Oregon released a new report, “Solar Works for Oregon,” which outlines the sun’s vast potential to provide power, protect the environment, and create jobs for Oregonians. On a solar rooftop in downtown Portland, alongside clean energy advocates, the solar industry and consumer groups, we made the case for going solar in Oregon.

- The new report reveals that Oregon could feasibly develop enough electricity from rooftop solar in the next 13 years to power 250,000 typical Oregon homes—or all the homes in Portland.

- Oregon could produce 30 times as much solar energy as it does today—preventing 3.8 million tons of carbon dioxide pollution, the equivalent of taking 730,000 cars off the road.


We spread the word about solar potential
We have more than enough sunshine to be a leader. Even in the often-cloudy Willamette Valley, the sun shines more during the year than in Germany—the world’s largest solar market. Our report outlines a suite of policy options that can move Oregon forward on solar energy.

- Oregon should set a goal to generate 10 percent of its electricity from solar by installing 250,000 solar rooftops by 2025.

- The Oregon Legislature can increase access for Oregonians through expanded incentive and financing programs, a scaled-up CLEAN program (a “feed-in-tariff”) and by expanding the renewable energy standard set aside for solar.
Protect Crater Lake

For more than 150 years, Oregonians have hiked up the mountain and down the caldera to the banks of the deepest lake in America. Crater Lake is part of the pristine Cascade Mountain Range, home to iconic species like Roosevelt elk, black bears, bald eagles and spawning salmon. In 2012, we fought reckless logging proposals that threaten land just outside our only national park, and we worked to get more acreage designated as protected wilderness.
Standing up to devastating clearcuts

Critical wildlife habitat surrounding Crater Lake is under threat from bulldozers, backhoes and chainsaws. Around the park, logging companies are pushing to clearcut thousands of acres of forest—land that shelters the headwaters of the Rogue and Umpqua rivers, which are critical for maintaining healthy runs of Steelhead, Coho and Chinook salmon. In response to these threats, Environment Oregon is calling on Congress to create a new fully-protected wilderness area that spans over 500,000 acres of wilderness and creates a 75-mile wildlife corridor.

20,000 signed petition to protect Crater Lake

Old-growth forest around Oregon’s only national park was on the chopping block in 2012. The proposed Bybee Timber Sale would effectively clear-cut old-growth forest on the edge of Oregon’s only national park, and threaten critical headwaters to the Rogue River. That’s why Environment Oregon set out to educate Oregonians across the state and engage them in voicing their opposition.

• We had face-to-face conversations with over 60,000 Oregonians from Cannon Beach to Bend and Ashland to Astoria. To date, we’ve engaged over 20,000 Oregonians in signing our petition to protect this special place.

• “We can’t let logging companies trample pristine wilderness and cause irreparable harm to Crater Lake’s delicate ecosystem just for short-term profits,” said Charlie Fisher, Environment Oregon field organizer. “Oregonians agree: Our leaders should protect this treasured place from ongoing threats.”

75-mile wildlife corridor proposed

At the same time we’re working to fight reckless logging proposals, we’re working to win permanent protection for 500,000 acres of wilderness that would create a 75-mile wildlife corridor of forests, mountains and streams. Fortunately, the laws to prevent a piece-by-piece clearcut of Crater Lake National Park are already in place—we just need to make sure they’re applied to Crater Lake’s surrounding forests.

The federal Wilderness Act of 1964 protects the most critical habitats of America from incursion by loggers, miners and developers. As the authors of the Wilderness Act wrote back in 1964, these special places should be areas “where the earth and its community of life are untrammeled by man, where man himself is a visitor who does not remain.” So many of us have marveled at the beauty of Crater Lake. We’re continuing to work hard to defend the lake and the creatures who live nearby.
Protect Oregon Waterways

In the past, shortsighted legal decisions have left many of the streams that feed the Columbia and Willamette vulnerable to development and dumping, putting the drinking water of thousands of Oregonians at risk. But in 2012, we fought to make sure that crucial clean water protections apply to all Oregon waterways and that polluting special interests stay away from our precious water resources.
Making the 40-year-old Clean Water Act work for our waterways

Oct. 18 marked the 40th anniversary of the Clean Water Act, a landmark environmental law. The Clean Water Act was enacted after years of citizen outrage about massive and persistent water pollution across the country. Laws like the Clean Water Act and the Safe Drinking Water Act are in place to protect these waterways and our health. But now America’s waterways face a risk unparalleled in history. Polluter-driven court decisions have left wetlands and half the nation’s streams at risk of pollution and development.

170,000 petitioned the EPA to protect creeks, streams

For years, we have been urging Congress to protect our rivers by simply declaring that the Clean Water Act applies to all of America’s waters. In February, the Obama administration announced that it was in the last stage before officially finalizing these protections. Once they are final, this will be the biggest victory for our waterways in the last decade. But polluters’ allies in Congress won’t give up—and now they’re threatening to stop the Environmental Protection Agency from doing its job. At the same time, powerful corporate interests are preparing for battle: ExxonMobil threatened “legal warfare” if the EPA moves forward with its plan to restore Clean Water Act protections.

• In concert with our national federation, we delivered more than 170,000 petitions to the EPA to restore protections for the creeks and streams that provide drinking water for 117 million Americans.

• Our work helped fend off nearly 40 attacks on the Clean Water Act, and we moved forward the agenda for fixing the Clean Water Act.

We held the line in Salem for clean water

In 2012, programs that keep Oregon’s biggest sources of water pollution at bay were at risk. Oregon is already in the bottom quarter of all states for Clean Water Act enforcement, so we successfully helped hold the line in the State Legislature on critical water protections.

• We assembled a coalition of 26 organizations to urge legislators not to gut current safeguards for our water.

• At risk was the health of no less than 70 percent of Oregonians who rely on groundwater for their drinking supply. Cuts would also have stopped any new toxics monitoring for water in Oregon.