A recap of our work for our members in 2011
This past year was marked by persistence, dedication and remarkable progress. Tough economic realities and a challenging political landscape required us to hold the line against unprecedented attacks on protections that keep our waters clean, make our air safer to breathe, and protect our special places, including the forests surrounding Crater Lake, from irresponsible development.

Despite these obstacles, your steadfast support helped us win substantial victories, including Oregon’s first municipal ban on the disposable plastic bags that litter our coast; EPA action to restore Clean Water Act protections for the Willamette; federal fuel-efficiency standards of 54.5 miles per gallon by 2025; and federal guidelines that will cut mercury pollution from coal-fired power plants by 90 percent.

As I write this letter, our citizen outreach team is out on doorsteps building the grassroots momentum that enabled us to ban plastic bags in Portland. Our advocates are doing the kind of research that helped bring about a landmark proposal for clean car standards from the White House. And members like you are providing the support we needed to collect over 17,000 petitions urging lawmakers to protect the Crater Lake Wilderness.

As the new state director for Environment Oregon, it is a privilege to join you in this important work. My advocacy has taken me around our great state, where glimpses of our most special places serve as a bold reminder of all we love about Oregon: the sweeping vistas along the Columbia River Gorge dressed in autumn colors, the pristine Wallowa Mountains blanketed with springtime’s wildflowers, the sight of Haystack Rock on a foggy morning in Cannon Beach, the rolling wildlands after a rainstorm along the Umpqua River, the sapphire blue waters of Crater Lake in midsummer, and the snowy slopes of Mt. Hood under a full moon. I carry my favorite Oregon places with me throughout the year, as I know you do.

On behalf of all of us at Environment Oregon, thank you for your support and activism. I look forward to working with you in the coming years to protect Oregon for generations to come.

Sincerely,

Sarah Higginbotham, State Director
Getting Oregon off oil

From oil spills to the steady stream of pollution from tailpipes, from the hefty price we pay at the pump to the damage caused by global warming, we have plenty of reasons to ditch our dirty, dangerous dependence on oil. In 2011, Oregon’s pioneering clean car standards helped pave the way for the single biggest step our country has ever taken to reduce our oil usage and cut global warming pollution.

Fuel efficiency standards to double to 54.5 mpg

Last summer, in the wake of an ExxonMobil spill that dumped 42,000 gallons of oil into the Yellowstone River, our staff and allies redoubled our efforts to win smart policies to help Oregon—and the country—break our addiction to oil. After our staff and allies mobilized 10,000 people to voice their support for cleaner cars that use less oil:

- The Obama administration announced new fuel economy standards that will ensure that the average new car or light truck meets a 54.5-mpg standard by 2025.

- The administration also announced the first-ever standard for trucks, which will save more than 20 billion gallons of gasoline by 2018.

Oregon led the way to cleaner cars

Oregon’s pioneering clean car standards, which we helped win back in 2006, helped pave the way for President Obama’s historic decision: The single biggest step ever taken to cut global warming pollution and reduce our dependence on foreign oil.

- By 2030, the new federal standards would cut annual oil use in Oregon by 319 million gallons, cut global warming pollution by 3.7 million tons, and save the average Oregon household $321 at the gas pump every year.

After ExxonMobil spilled 42,000 gallons of oil into the Yellowstone River in July (top), we redoubled our advocacy efforts for strong new fuel efficiency standards. When President Obama proposed to double standards to 54.5 mpg by 2025, our national global warming program director, Nathan Willcox, thanked him in person.
Keeping plastic out of the Pacific

Nothing we use for five minutes should pollute the ocean for hundreds of years. Yet too many of the disposable plastic bags we use in Oregon end up as litter in the Pacific, harming or even killing birds, turtles and other wildlife. That’s why we’re building a movement to ban disposable bags in Oregon. By year’s end, we’d helped win a bag ban in Portland and put the pieces in place for more victories statewide.
Plastic bags banned in Portland; momentum built statewide

A toxic soup of trash known as the Pacific Garbage Patch is swirling off our coast, and much of it is made up of disposable plastic bags. Oregonians use 1.7 billion of these bags annually, so banning the bags will deliver big results for the Pacific and its wildlife. But the petrochemical industry, which profits from making these bags, is spending millions on lobbying and dirty tricks to keep their product polluting our environment.

We helped put a bag ban on the agenda in Salem

In the 2011 legislative session, everyone was talking about banning the bag, thanks in large part to our efforts. We mobilized grassroots support for a bag ban, released research documenting the plastic pollution problem, and helped keep the issue in the media spotlight.

- Thanks in part to our efforts, the Legislature introduced a statewide bag ban bill, which won bipartisan support. We helped build a coalition of over 500 businesses—including the Northwest Grocery Association—50 organizations, and over 20,000 citizens who supported the ban.

- We lobbied directly to ensure the bill was given two public hearings in Salem, submitted supportive testimony, and provided research to back up our case. Unfortunately, out-of-state petrochemical companies swept in and defeated the bill at the last minute.

Portland bag ban led the way

Luckily, we were prepared for a such a setback, and we went to work immediately to roll out our back-up plan: Help win a series of local bag bans that will make an immediate impact to cut plastic pollution while building momentum for a statewide ban.

- Our first victory came in Portland, where the bag ban went into effect on October 15. In Eugene, we built a coalition of more than 80 businesses, 1,000 citizens and 10 community organizations to fight for a bag ban proposal.

- We pushed back against the plastic bag industry’s delaying tactics in Newport and Corvallis, where city councils are considering regulations, while supporting new grassroots efforts in cities from Ashland to McMinnville.
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, which provides habitat for Roosevelt elk, black bears, bald eagles and spawning salmon. Every year, half a million visitors come to see the lake. In 2011, we worked to protect this state treasure for future generations.
Oregonians voiced their support for expanded wilderness around Crater Lake

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.

17,000 signed on to protect Crater Lake

Across the state, Oregonians agreed that our only national park should be protected. Our outreach staff sent a clear message: Each day without protection from logging and mining, our most beautiful natural wonder is at risk.

• We spoke with more than 70,000 Oregonians about the forest clearcut proposals that threaten wildlife habitat around Crater Lake.

• More than 17,000 people signed postcards to Sens. Ron Wyden and Jeff Merkley urging them to prioritize protections for our state treasure.

• We joined forces with coalition partners Oregon Wild, Umpqua Watersheds, and the Crater Lake Institute to reach out to local businesses, organizations and legislators.

75-mile wildlife corridor proposed

The Crater Lake Wilderness proposal is a 75-mile, nearly half-million-acre wildlife corridor that would connect existing wilderness areas, enhance protection for Crater Lake, and prohibit logging, mining and other forms of destructive development. A wilderness corridor with few disturbances will also best help wildlife adapt to climate change.

• Currently clear-cutting projects could wipe out thousands of acres of critical forested habitat for wildlife, some right up to the borders of Crater Lake National Park.

• At-risk forests shelter the headwaters to the Rogue, Umpqua and Deschutes rivers—critical waters for spawning salmon.

In 2011, our outreach team spoke face-to-face with more than 70,000 Oregonians, rallying support for our plan to create a 500,000 acre, 75-mile wilderness corridor to protect Crater Lake and its surrounding forests from logging and irresponsible development.
Protecting the Willamette and all our waters

From clean water to drink, to a place to canoe or fish, we depend on Oregon’s rivers and streams, and none more than the Willamette, which is part of daily life for two-thirds of Oregonians. Last year, we took an important step toward protecting the Willamette from dumping and irresponsible development by restoring Clean Water Act protections to all of our rivers, lakes and streams.
Steps taken to strengthen protections in the Clean Water Act

Two polluter-driven Supreme Court decisions in the last decade put 53 percent of Oregon’s streams at risk—including the streams and wetlands that feed the Willamette and help keep it clean. Meanwhile, with the public’s attention focused on the economy, anti-environmental extremists in Congress last year quietly launched an all-out attack on the laws that protect Oregon’s waters, from the Willamette to the Columbia. We helped fend off the attacks and made important progress to restore Clean Water Act protections.

100,000 spoke out, EPA moved to restore protections
For the last five years, we’ve been urging Congress to declare that the Clean Water Act applies to all of Oregon’s waters. But, under pressure from developers and other special interests, they’ve failed to act. In 2011, we turned to the Environmental Protection Agency for results—and got them.

- Working in concert with our national federation, we submitted more than 100,000 public comments from around the country, urging the EPA to restore Clean Water Act protections.

- On April 27, EPA Administrator Lisa Jackson announced her proposal to do just that. Mining companies, developers and other polluters wasted no time attacking the plan. ExxonMobil lobbyists threatened the White House with “legal warfare” over the issue.

- We anticipated the assault, and had already begun to build grassroots support for the EPA’s clean water initiatives.

We helped hold the line against attacks in D.C.
In the U.S. House alone, lawmakers cast an incredible 170 roll call votes in 2011 on measures that would block the EPA or other agencies from keeping our waters clean, making our air safer to breathe, or enforcing other environmental protections.

- None of the attacks became law, with Environment Oregon’s research, advocacy and grassroots action helping to hold the line.

- In 2011 we personally made our case to members of our congressional delegation and their aides in both Oregon and Washington, D.C. Thousands of our members called on lawmakers to reject any bills that threaten our state’s air and water.

“... we are at a point where we have to remind some leaders in Washington to put the health of their constituents above the wish lists of special interests. Speaking directly to those who want to undermine commonsense environmental protections is one of the best ways to stand up for your right to clean air and clean water.”

EPA Administrator Lisa Jackson
Making our air cleaner, families healthier

We should all be able to breathe without worrying about mercury in our bodies or soot in our lungs. Yet coal-fired power plants and other industrial polluters spew hundreds of thousands of tons of lead, mercury, soot and other dangerous pollutants into our atmosphere every year. We took important steps last year to protect our health and our children’s health by winning measures that require polluters to clean up their act.
New EPA standards cut mercury pollution from coal-fired power plants

Coal-fired power plants spew hundreds of thousands of pounds of toxic mercury into our air every year, which falls to earth in rain, contaminating waterways. More than half of all Americans live in places with unsafe levels of air pollution, causing heart attacks, asthma attacks, emergency room visits, hospital admissions and even deaths. We urged the Environmental Protection Agency to set commonsense standards to protect public health—and then fought to make sure Congress didn’t stand in the way.

Mercury cut 90 percent; 25,000 lives to be saved

In 2011, the Environmental Protection Agency moved to significantly cut mercury, soot and smog pollution from power plants. We expect these standards to save more than 25,000 lives each year. We helped Environment America build support across the country to ensure these rules were adopted.

- Together with our national federation and allies, we delivered more than 800,000 comments to the EPA in support of a strong mercury standard.

- On Dec. 21, the Obama administration announced the first-ever nationwide standards for mercury pollution from power plants, which will result in 90 percent less mercury emitted from plants like the Boardman plant. By limiting emissions of mercury and air toxics from power plants, the new standard is expected to prevent 130,000 cases of childhood asthma symptoms nationwide.

Congressional attacks voted down

For decades, the coal industry and their allies in Congress have successfully delayed cutting mercury and other toxic air pollutants from power plants, even though technology to control toxic air pollution is widely available, and already being used by some power plants. Last year, polluters launched yet another coordinated attack to block these critical safeguards.

- By working closely with our allies in the conservation and public health communities, lobbying key senators and rallying thousands of our online activists to speak out, we held the line against some of the worst attacks.

- In March, the U.S. Senate rejected a bill that would have blocked standards for soot, mercury and carbon pollution. In April, the Senate defeated four more bills that would have prevented the EPA from reducing the pollution that causes global warming.

Research

America’s Biggest Mercury Polluters
How Cleaning up the Dirtiest Power Plants will Protect Public Health

In the months leading up to the EPA’s decision to limit mercury pollution from power plants, we joined our sister organization, Environment America Research & Policy Center, in releasing a report on the threat mercury emissions pose to public health. Among the findings:

- Distributed over a wide area, just a fraction of an ounce of mercury can contaminate local and regional water bodies, making resident fish unsafe to eat. All 50 states currently have advisories warning women and children not to eat local fish due to mercury contamination.

- One in 10 women of childbearing age in the United States has enough mercury in her blood to put her child at risk of developmental damage should she become pregnant.
Citizen support is the cornerstone of Environment Oregon. Thousands of Oregon citizens supported Environment Oregon and the Environment Oregon Research & Policy Center by making membership contributions in 2011. The members listed below were particularly generous in backing the organizations’ research and advocacy. Names that appear in italics denote Monthly Supporters. These members provide stability to the organizations’ resources through our monthly giving program.
Sponsors (continued)
Supporters (continued)
Supporters (continued)

Foundation support
Environment Oregon Research & Policy Center is a 501(c)(3) organization. We are dedicated to protecting our air, water and open spaces. We investigate problems, craft solutions, educate the public and decision-makers, and help the public make their voices heard in local, state and national debates over the quality of our environment and our lives.

Contributions to the Environment Oregon Research & Policy Center are tax-deductible. To find out more, contact Sarah Higginbotham at (503) 231-1986. The Environment Oregon Research & Policy Center would like to thank the Energy Foundation and The Rockefeller Foundation for supporting our work in 2011.

Planning for a cleaner, greener, healthier future
Environment Oregon and Environment Oregon Research & Policy Center gratefully accept bequests, beneficiary designations of IRAs and life insurance, and gifts of securities to support our work. Your gift will assure that we can continue to protect Oregon’s air, water and open spaces for future generations. For more information, call 1-800-841-7299 or send an email to: plannedgiving@EnvironmentOregon.org.