



Oregonians unite behind bag ban

Beaverton, Tillamook call to cut Pacific-bound waste

Over the last year, Environment Oregon helped build support for a common-sense step: switching from single-use plastic bags to reusable bags. We took the campaign to the local level, building momentum behind our call.

The 1.7 billion plastic bags Oregon uses each year—about 500 per person—take a big toll on the environment. Plastic bags are our number-one contributor to plastic pollution in our ocean, which ocean currents carry to the Pacific Garbage Patch. And since plastic bags resemble jellyfish—a favorite food for turtles—this threat is often a deadly one.

Groundswell of support

We've talked to more than 150,000 Oregonians and have built a coalition of more than 300 businesses and 50 environmental organizations to help push our state to be the first in the nation to ban plastic bags.

Recently, the city councils of Beaverton and Tillamook passed resolutions in support of a ban on plastic checkout bags, joining Cannon Beach, Metro counties, Portland, Lake Oswego and Newport.

Pro-plastic lobby resists

A statewide ban has bipartisan support, but lobbying groups such as the American Chemistry Council and industry giants like Hilex Poly are pouring money into misinformation campaigns to turn people against the bag ban. These same people were successful in blocking similar legislation in California and Washington, and



▲ Communities that have passed resolutions in support of a plastic bag ban.

we can't let them stop us from protecting our coast.

On Feb. 8, a Senate committee held a public hearing on the bill. Environment Oregon's Dave Mathews submitted testimony in favor of the bill—but so did representatives from out-of-state plastic bag producers trying to protect their interests in Oregon. We will need your support to

build an even louder local voice for city resolutions, add new business endorsements, and make calls and send letters to our state legislators.

As this newsletter went to print, the vote in the Legislature was too close to call.



more online

◀ Oregon Legislature: To read the latest about our work in Salem, including our campaign to ban plastic bags, visit our website:

www.EnvironmentOregon.org



Staff

To our members

Summer in Oregon means visiting one of our majestic beaches or kayaking through the Willamette National Forest or maybe fishing on the Hood River.

All of these waters are cleaner than they once were, thanks in part to the action of local citizens and the standards set and enforced by state and federal environmental officials. As times have changed, officials have updated these standards so we keep moving toward a goal of waters that are safe and clean enough to swim in, fish in or drink from.

As some in Congress consider whether to block the EPA from doing its job, I hope you'll join us this summer is showing your support for clean water.

Sincerely,

Anna Aurilio
For Environment Oregon

Recent action

2010 was breakthrough year for solar

In an otherwise lackluster economy the solar industry shined brighter than ever before in 2010, with a 67 percent increase in the amount of solar energy projects installed across America compared to 2009.

That means hundreds of thousands more homes and businesses powered by pollution-free solar energy, an increase made possible by strong solar policies implemented at the urging of Environment America, Environment Oregon's national federation. In December, Clean Energy Advocate Sean Garren led our charge in Congress to extend critical incentives for solar power, while Environment Oregon worked here in Oregon to advance state-level solar initiatives.

Environment America staff continue to strategize with entrepreneurs within the solar industry to hit a far more ambitious benchmark: getting 10 percent of our nation's energy from solar by 2030.

Conservation funding measure advances

Margie Alt, the director of our national federation, joined President Obama at the White House in February for an announcement that he'd seek the renewal of the federal Land and Water Conservation Fund.

What's the Land and Water Conservation Fund? For the past 45 years, the federal government has put a fraction of the revenue from offshore drilling into a trust fund to expand national parks, protect hunting and fishing areas, and aid local conservation and recreation projects like city parks and playing fields.

In 2010, the Land and Water Conservation Fund spent money protecting important natural places in Oregon including Nestucca Bay National Wildlife Refuge, Imnaha River Canyon and the Cascade-Siskiyou National Monument. In February, the bill passed the House, and our staff continue to work to help the bill reach the president.



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USFWS

▲ Nestucca Bay National Wildlife Refuge.

Defending 40 years of progress on clean air

There's no doubt that the Clean Air Act, which turned 40 in 2010, has improved the health and well-being of millions of Americans. Its protections are credited with saving the lives of 160,000 Americans in 2010 alone.

Of course, air pollution remains a pressing health threat in this country, a stark reminder of the work still left to do. An estimated 13,200 Americans lost their lives as a result of heart attacks, strokes, asthma attacks and other fatal conditions brought on or exacerbated by air pollution from power plants. It's estimated that one in six women of childbearing age has enough mercury in her bloodstream (a by-product of coal power production) to put her child at risk should she become pregnant.

Thankfully, the Obama administration has announced it will seek to strengthen and update portions of the Clean Air Act in the coming months.

Clean air, healthy families

With some vocal opponents of the Clean Air Act throwing their weight around in Congress, Environment Oregon, the American Lung Association and other public health organizations are building support to make sure the administration's proposals go through.

In January, we released a hard-hitting examination of one of the most dangerous air pollutants: mercury. That report, "Dirty Energy's Assault on our Health," documented waterways across the country that carry advisories warning against fish consumption due to mercury pollution. According to the report, power plants in Oregon emitted 207 pounds of mercury pollution in 2009 alone.

Showdown in Congress

The Obama administration's updates to the Clean Air Act face great uncertainty, with polluting industries and their allies in Congress having launched an all-out assault on the Clean Air Act.

In February, the House of Representatives attached a provision to a federal funding bill that would have blocked the EPA from cutting mercury pollution from cement plants, cleaning up soot pollution, and reducing carbon dioxide from coal-fired power plants.

After this setback, Environment America, our national federation, worked to convince dozens of newspapers across the country to editorialize in support of the Clean Air Act. Environment America held rallies outside of the offices of those representatives who voted for the bill.

Less than a month later, the Senate rejected the House measure, with many senators citing the environmental and public health attacks within the bill as one of the reasons for their opposition.

For more on how you can get involved, visit us online.



Lucas Jans

research

Our report, "Dirty Energy's Assault on our Health," found that mercury impairs 3,781 bodies of water across the country, and 6,363,707 acres of lakes, reservoirs and ponds in the United States are contaminated by mercury pollution.



kitby

Progress for Willamette threatened

Action by Congress also threatens hard-won progress on restoring protections to the Willamette and other Oregon rivers.

Since last winter, we've worked to convince the EPA to begin repairing a gaping hole in clean water protections. Over the last decade, polluters have used litigation to strip Clean Water Act protections from thousands of streams and millions of acres of wetlands across the country.

These waterways not only feed and protect larger waterways like the Willamette, but also help provide drinking water for 1.5 million Oregonians.

When these polluters stymied our efforts to fix this loophole in Congress, we urged the EPA to use its own authority to do so. In response, the agency began drafting formal instructions for its attorneys to apply clean water protections to the fullest extent allowed by law.

Unfortunately, one of the provisions in the first version of the House's funding bill would have specifically blocked the EPA from setting new rules to address this gap in Clean Water Act protections.

The Senate has thus far refused to go along with the House on blocking the EPA from enforcing the Clean Water Act, but we're keeping an eye on the situation.

▲ Take action and tell Congress: Let the EPA do its job protecting our water: www.EnvironmentOregon.org

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Environment Oregon

Our mission

We all want clean air, clean water and open spaces. But it takes independent research and tough-minded advocacy to win concrete results for our environment, especially when powerful interests stand in the way of environmental progress.

That's the idea behind Environment Oregon. We focus exclusively on protecting Oregon's air, water and open spaces. We speak out and take action at the local, state and national levels to improve the quality of our environment and our lives.

Stepping up for Crater Lake

This summer, we have an opportunity to expand protections around Crater Lake. To help make that happen, we're expanding our campaign, working to unite tens of thousands of Oregonians in our call for Congress to add a 75-mile wilderness corridor to connect existing wilderness areas.

Highlighting the need for expanded protections, there are currently three proposals to clearcut thousands of acres of forests around the park. Whether it's these proposals or future proposals, Crater Lake's trees, rivers and lakes should be protected from saws and bulldozers—permanently. That's why Environment Oregon is calling on Sens. Ron Wyden and Jeff Merkley to create 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.



Wendy Seltzer

The best of Oregon

◀ *Crater Lake attracts a half-million visitors each year. By expanding protections, we can make sure the Crater Lake ecosystem stays healthy and preserved for future generations of visitors.*