



Winter Report

Eugene, Newport consider plastic bag ban

Ashland, Milwaukie, Corvallis could be next

Last year, Environment Oregon pushed the idea of banning wasteful plastic disposable bags to the top of the legislative agenda in Salem with bipartisan support. And while plastic industry lobbyists swooped in to defeat the bill at the last minute, we built a strong coalition that leaves us better positioned for victory when the Legislature reconvenes for a full session in 2013.

Among our allies: 500 businesses, 50 environmental organizations, and 20,000 Environment Oregon members and supporters.

Following upon the heels of Portland's newly effective ban, we are working on efforts in cities around the state to help reduce the 1.7 billion plastic bags Oregonians use every year—bags that flow into the Pacific, where they spiral along with tons of other plastic trash and strangle or even kill ocean wildlife.

Aim to keep plastic out of the Pacific

Momentum for banning plastic bags is sweeping the state. In Eugene, a diverse coalition of more than 40 businesses, 1,000 citizens, and community organizations have moved city councilors to consider a bag ban proposal. Similar efforts are being made in Newport, Ashland, Milwaukie and Corvallis to ban single-use plastic checkout bags, and city councilors are paying attention.

Study: 80+ governments have bans
Environment Oregon Research & Policy



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▲ To a sea turtle, a plastic bag looks like a jellyfish—a potentially fatal mistake.

Center reported in a new study, entitled "Oregon Takes Action: Efforts Across the Globe to Fight Ocean Pollution," that Oregon isn't alone in being fed up with plastic pollution: More than 80 governments worldwide, from Bangladesh to Portland, have taken action against single-use plastic bags.

With less than five percent of plastic bags actually being recycled in Oregon, according to the report, they are an expensive nuisance for comingled recyclers, who estimate that 30 percent of all operating expenses are wasted dealing with the problems they create.



Staff

Citizen action

◀ Thousands of Oregonians are calling for a statewide ban on disposable plastic bags. You can join them by visiting: www.EnvironmentOregon.org



To our members

As winter rain refreshes the landscape in 2012, Environment Oregon hopes the new year finds you enjoying your favorite places and discovering new ones. Your financial support and activism play an invaluable role in their preservation.

I am excited to join you in continuing to protect Oregon's natural treasures as your new state director. In this newsletter, you'll learn about the latest developments to protect Crater Lake from logging, keep plastic bags out of the ocean, reduce air pollution, and much more.

This winter, go enjoy the snowy slopes of Mt. Hood, the trails along the Columbia River Gorge, or a special place closer to home, knowing that Environment Oregon is working hard to ensure they are just as beautiful for future generations.

Sincerely,

Sarah Higginbotham
State Director

Recent action

54.5 mpg standard nears finish line

In November, the Obama administration officially proposed new clean car standards that represent the biggest step the U.S. has ever taken to get off oil and tackle global warming.

The standards would require cars and light trucks in model years 2017-2025 to meet fleet-wide average fuel efficiency and global warming pollution standards equivalent to 54.5 miles per gallon by 2025.

The environmental benefits of such a standard are enormous. By 2030, we could save more oil than we imported from Saudi Arabia last year, and slash global warming pollution by an amount equivalent to shutting down 70 coal-fired power plants.

The standard is based on a similar policy adopted in Oregon, with our support in 2006, and in 13 other states from 2004 to 2008.

Strong support for local farms

Fresh, organic produce from local Oregon farms tastes even better knowing that when we buy local, we're supporting farms that are gentle on our environment.

That's why when the U.S. House voted to cut the Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food program, a key initiative to help small, sustainable farms, we made sure to let our senators know that local farmers need their support.

Oregon's small farms face an uphill battle against powerful agribusiness. Programs like Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food make it easier for local farmers to sell fresh produce at schools, at farmers markets, and to low-income families. Thousands of people joined our call, and we're part of a national effort to involve farmers and local food advocates in defending the program.

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▲ We're letting our senators know that we want them to support local, sustainable farms, like Thompson farms near Damascus.



**KNOW YOUR FARMER
KNOW YOUR FOOD**

Holding the line in Washington, D.C.

Over the past year, with the public's attention focused on the economy, anti-environmental extremists in Congress have quietly launched an all-out attack on the laws that protect Oregon's waters, from the Willamette to the Columbia—as well as the air we breathe and the places we love.

"It's the most radical, reckless attack on our environment in our lifetimes—and it's happening under the radar, through provisions slipped into massive budget bills," said Environment Oregon State Director Sarah Higginbotham.

170 anti-environment votes

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.

In February, the House rammed through a budget bill that took aim at our rivers and streams, our air, and funding for national parks. In July, the House approved a bill that would gut the Clean Water Act, stripping the EPA of much of its oversight authority. In August, the U.S. House passed a bill containing 39 separate environmental attacks.

The voting record of Oregon's representatives has been relatively strong on these bills. In fact, Sens. Ron Wyden and Jeff Merkley, as well as Rep. Earl Blumenauer, have voted to protect the environment on each of the bills scored by Environment Oregon. Yet given the powerful industries and influential politicians we're up against in Washington, we don't have a vote to spare on these issues. We need every member of Oregon's delegation to help us stop the polluters, their Washington allies and their anti-environment agenda.

So far, we've blocked the attacks

So far, none of these attacks have become

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 have called, emailed or petitioned their lawmakers to reject any bills that threaten our state's air and water.

With the Senate rejecting four of the worst proposals this fall, the tide might be starting to turn. We'll keep you informed, so you can let your lawmakers know where you stand.



How are they voting?

We have scored each member of our state's congressional delegation based on how they have voted on environmental legislation. Sens. Ron Wyden (1) and Jeff Merkley (2), as well as Rep. Earl Blumenauer (3), have voted for the environment on every bill, but Rep. Greg Walden (4) has voted against the environment 83 percent of the time.

To find how your representative is voting, visit www.EnvironmentAmerica.org/scorecard and select Oregon.

Flickr user: C.M. Keiner



EPA Administrator Lisa Jackson

The EPA has recently worked on several clean air standards including the Mercury and Air Toxics Standard and the Cross-State Air Pollution Rule. Can you explain what these standards mean for the average American family?

These new Clean Air Act standards mean cleaner, healthier air for American families.

The Mercury and Air Toxics Standards and the Cross-State Air Pollution Rule are part of a series of common-sense steps under the Clean Air Act to reduce emissions of mercury, acid gas, particulate matter, arsenic and other harmful chemicals from some of the biggest polluters in the nation.

These reasonable steps will provide dramatic protections to our children and loved ones – they will save tens of thousands of lives and prevent hundreds of thousands of asthma and heart attacks.

What's the best way for our members and supporters to express their opinions on these issues?

Unfortunately, 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.

▲ For the full interview with Lisa Jackson, visit www.EnvironmentOregon.org/page/ore/newsletters.

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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.

17,000 back Crater Lake

More than 17,000 Oregonians have signed Environment Oregon postcards urging Sens. Ron Wyden and Jeff Merkley to support the Crater Lake Wilderness Proposal, a plan to create a 75-mile, nearly half-million acre wildlife corridor.

The corridor would connect existing wilderness areas in the Cascades and better protect Crater Lake from plans to log in the surrounding woods—including one proposal to log right next to the park. The forest provides critical habitat for bald eagles, northern spotted owls, black bears and Roosevelt elk. This land also shelters the headwaters of the Rogue and Umpqua rivers, critical for maintaining healthy runs of Steelhead, Coho and Chinook salmon.

Under the Wilderness Act of 1964, Congress has the authority to fully protect areas deemed wilderness from any kind of activity that diminishes the natural environment.



▲ Roosevelt elk, bald eagles, black bears and Chinook salmon are among the wildlife that would be better protected if we succeed in creating a new Crater Lake Wilderness.

KalebTimberlake*, flickr users: Lance and Erin, Mark2, PNNL