Annual Report
Recapping our work in 2014 for our members
To our members

“With the support of our members at our backs, we stick with it, charge forward on our winding course, and fight until we see real results for Oregon’s environment and public health.”

This past year, I made my first trip to Crater Lake, the crown jewel of our beautiful state. And in writing this letter, I couldn’t help but reflect on how my long and winding journey to the lake’s 2,000-foot rim walls mirrors the work Environment Oregon does every day.

If you’ve been there, you know—the trip to the top is a long one. At every turn of the road I expected to see the deep blue water staring back at me, only to be met with yet another turn in the road. This went on for what felt like ages. When I finally stood on the edge, looking down at the deep blue water, mysterious Wizard Island, and near-vertical cliffs, I was struck with an overwhelming feeling of pride for this incredible state.

Just like that trip, year after year, campaign after campaign, Environment Oregon goes toe-to-toe with powerful polluters who do whatever they need to block environmental progress at every turn. But with the support of our members at our backs, we stick with it, charge forward on our winding course, and fight until we see real results for Oregon’s environment and public health.

In this report, you’ll see examples of the work we did in 2014: fighting to close decade-old loopholes in the Clean Water Act that leave 61,000 miles of Oregon streams open to pollution, campaigning to get more electric vehicles on our roads, and working to repower our state with clean, renewable solar power that doesn’t harm the environment.

In the year to come, we’ll strive to continue making a difference on all these issues and more. With your support, we’ll keep our resolve and stand up to polluters and special interests in order to better the quality of our environment and the world we leave to future generations. Thank you for being a part of it all.

Sincerely,

Rikki Seguin
State Director
Our dependence on gasoline as a transportation fuel worsens global warming and harms public health. But today, more than 220,000 electric and plug-in hybrid vehicles are on America’s roads, delivering real benefits for our health and environment. Increasing our use of electric vehicles can protect the climate and help Oregon reduce our dependence on oil. In 2014, Environment Oregon advocated for ambitious policies to increase the number of clean cars on the road.

**Clean Cars**

Preventing 213,000 tons of pollution with electric vehicles

In just the last two years, annual sales of electric vehicles have increased by 500 percent, according to Environment Oregon Research & Policy Center's report, “Driving Cleaner: More Electric Vehicles Mean Less Pollution.” In 2014, Environment Oregon stood with Oregon Chief Electric Vehicle Officer, Ashley Horvat, to hold a press conference on the findings of the report.

- By 2025, Oregon is on track to avoid 213,000 metric tons of climate-altering carbon pollution, equivalent to the emissions from 45,000 cars and 24 million gallons of gasoline.

- Oregon is one of 10 states that have adopted the Zero Emission Vehicle program, a component of the federal Clean Cars Program, which will put more than 3.5 million zero emissions vehicles on the road in these states by 2025.

- If every state adopted the federal Zero Emission Vehicle program, the United States could prevent pollution equivalent to removing 3 million of today’s vehicles from the road, saving 1.6 billion gallons of gasoline.

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Go Solar, Oregon

When it comes to the environment, Oregon is leader, not a follower—yet we still get nearly half of our energy from dirty sources like coal and gas, and less than 1 percent from the sun. In 2014, Environment Oregon helped the state take a step in the right direction by proposing a series of bills to repower our homes and offices with clean, renewable solar energy and bring 10 times more solar power to Oregon in the next 10 years.
Shifting Oregon to 10 percent solar energy in 10 years

By 2025, Oregon could cut ties with dirty and dangerous energy like coal and gas and repower our homes and businesses with clean, renewable solar power that doesn’t run out and doesn’t contribute to global warming. In 2014, Environment Oregon brought together business owners, local elected officials, grassroots organizations and Oregonians from all walks of life to call for more solar power.

Policies crafted to repower Oregon with solar energy

According to Environment Oregon’s analysis, solar is growing rapidly across the country—so much so that goals that were once ambitious are now readily achievable. We have the technology to get 10 percent of our energy from the sun in the next decade—and enough solar potential to power our state 141 times over—yet we currently only get 0.02 percent of our energy from solar.

In order to make Oregon a solar leader, we began work in 2014 to pass legislation that will make solar power more accessible and affordable for individuals and communities across the state.

Environment Oregon crafted policies that would:

- Allow for community-owned solar projects;
- Save critical tax credits from expiration;
- Remove the expiration of Oregon’s Feed-In-Tariff program;
- Drive down the cost of solar by incentivizing large-scale solar arrays.

New research provided path forward

In 2014, two Environment Oregon Research & Policy Center reports highlighted Oregon’s growing solar leadership nationally and indicated areas for improvement.

- In April, the report, “Shining Cities,” found Portland to be the 15th top solar city in the nation.
- In August, the “Lighting the Way” report found that the amount of solar power tripled nationwide between 2011 and 2013, thanks to strong policies that enable increasing numbers of homeowners, businesses, communities and utilities to “go solar.”
- Oregon is ranked 13th in the nation for per capita solar panel installations—but states with less solar potential, like Massachusetts, are leading the way for cumulative solar capacity due to strong policies that incentivize solar.
- These reports recommended that cities and states set ambitious goals for solar, and that citizens and businesses work with local government to achieve them.

Strong solar policies make strong solar leaders. Oregon has more solar potential—enough to meet all our energy needs and more—but Massachusetts generates 900 percent more solar power due to strong policies.

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Source: NREL
Protect Oregon’s Rivers

Polluters shouldn’t be allowed to treat Oregon’s rivers like their own personal sewer—that’s the message Environment Oregon built support for in 2014 as part of a renewed call to close loopholes in the Clean Water Act. Together with our partners, we delivered more than 800,000 public comments to the EPA—30,000 of which we collected in Oregon. We also built a coalition of elected officials, farmers and more than 100 small businesses working to restore protections to our waterways.

▲ Our volunteers organized multiple clean-ups on the rivers and streams we love.

▲ Representing Environment Oregon and our national federation, Anna Aurilio joined our allies in delivering more than 800,000 public comments to EPA Deputy Assistant Administrator Ken Kopocis in support of closing loopholes in the Clean Water Act.
The EPA agreed to close loopholes in the Clean Water Act

From the Columbia to the Rogue, we are lucky to live in a state with some of the nation’s most incredible rivers. Unfortunately, loopholes in the Clean Water Act leave 61,000 miles of Oregon’s streams, which feed and filter our rivers, vulnerable to pollution—putting the drinking water for nearly 1.7 million Oregonians at risk. On March 25, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) proposed a rule to restore the Clean Water Act to full strength—the strongest action the federal government has taken for clean water in more than a decade.

800,000 people joined our call to action

In 2014, Environment Oregon worked to end the ongoing mistreatment of some of our most important waterways. In November, Environment Oregon and our allies delivered 800,000 supportive comments to the EPA from people across the country calling for the protection of these vital places. Of those, a staggering 30,000 were collected by Environment Oregon alone. Outdoor outfitters, river guides, brewers, restaurant owners and hundreds of other businesses added their voices to our call for restored protection of our waterways.

Yet, on the heels of the EPA’s announcement, opposition from polluting industries intensified. Large agribusinesses, which are responsible for the millions of pounds of animal manure that can end up as runoff in local waters, were among the industries lobbying the U.S. House of Representatives to block the EPA. The industries’ allies in Congress even threatened to shut down the government if the EPA didn’t back off.

As 2014 drew to a close, Environment Oregon worked to refute these industries’ false claims from their well-funded lobbying and smear campaigns.

Research debunked polluters’ claims, highlighted pollution

In June, the Environment Oregon Research & Policy Center released “Wasting Our Waterways,” a report that revealed that more than 1 million pounds of toxic chemicals were dumped into Oregon’s waterways in 2012 alone.

And, as the Clean Water Act celebrated its 42nd anniversary in October, the Environment Oregon Research & Policy Center released “Waterways Restored,” a report documenting powerful examples of how the landmark law, when fully implemented, has restored and conserved waterways across the country. To meet the Clean Water Act’s promise of making all of America’s water safe for fishing and swimming, the EPA needs to finalize their proposed rule.
Global Warming Solutions

In 2014, we took bold steps to reduce global warming pollution. Working with a broad coalition, we helped educate the public and collect 8 million comments from Americans urging President Obama to limit carbon emissions from power plants, the country’s number one source of global warming pollution. In 2014, the president proposed such a plan—one that would cut power plant pollution by 30 percent within the next decade.
Defending a historic plan to tackle global warming

From severe forest fires burning for months to a winter snow season that left many of Oregon’s mountains far below their usual snowpack, the consequences of global warming are becoming increasingly clear. The good news is that in 2014, President Obama took decisive action to address this threat by moving forward with the Clean Power Plan, which would limit, for the first time ever, carbon emissions from America’s number one source of global warming pollution: dirty power plants.

A plan to cut power plant pollution

In 2014, Environment Oregon worked to build support for the president’s Clean Power Plan by educating the public about this historic opportunity and enlisting thousands of Oregonians to urge him to finalize his plan.

- In January, Environment Oregon held press events with Reps. Peter DeFazio and Earl Blumenauer to draw attention to our global warming day of action, where we enlisted hundreds of college students to submit comments to the EPA in support of the Clean Power Plan.

- Throughout the year, our citizen outreach team distributed more than 100,000 pieces of literature to homes across the state, helping people connect the dots between global warming and extreme weather.

8 million comments back Clean Power Plan

Environment Oregon worked with our national federation to demonstrate overwhelming public support for action on global warming and highlight the consequences that are already being felt across America.

- In June, the EPA held hearings on the Clean Power Plan in Pittsburgh, Atlanta, Denver and Washington, D.C. Our staff helped turn out citizen climate defenders to testify in support of the plan.

- Together with our national federation and a broad coalition, we collected 8 million comments of support for limiting carbon pollution from dirty power plants, which we delivered to the EPA on Dec. 2 as the public comment period for the president’s Clean Power Plan ended.

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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, where they threaten wildlife and create an ecological disaster. In 2014, we continued to build momentum toward a statewide ban on plastic bags by banning bags in a fourth Oregon city: Ashland.
Growing support for plastic bag bans statewide

A toxic soup known as the Pacific Garbage Patch is swirling off our coast, and it’s creating an environmental disaster for ocean wildlife. Luckily, the solution is simple: Ban the bag. In 2014, we focused on expanding the chain of bag bans to cities across the state—the kind of momentum that recently helped California become the first state to ban plastic bags—and won our fourth city bag ban.

Ashland became fourth Oregon city to ban the bag

Starting in early 2013, Environment Oregon worked with our members in Ashland to build support for a local ban on plastic bags. In May of 2014, after uniting the interests of businesses, local organizations and Ashland residents, we reached the critical mass required to bring the city ordinance to a vote. The ban on plastic bags passed, eliminating another 7.4 million bags from the waste stream annually.

We engaged hundreds of Ashland citizens in voicing their support for a bag ban. More than 500 Ashland residents signed petitions calling for a ban on plastic bags, alongside nearly 100 businesses, large and small.

Ashland is the first city in Southern Oregon to ban the bag, adding important geographic and political diversity to the growing bag ban movement.

One in five Oregonians living plastic bag-free

Since 2012, Environment Oregon has banned bags in Portland, Eugene, Corvallis and Ashland—and now one in five Oregonians is living plastic bag-free. Combined, these cities are saving more than 304 million plastic bags from entering the waste stream every year, meaning huge payoffs for the Pacific Ocean and the wildlife that calls it home.

But the work isn’t over. California passed a statewide ban on plastic bags this year—it’s time for Oregon to step up to the plate.

As we move toward a statewide ban on plastic bags, it’s more important than ever to ban bags in a diverse set of cities across the state. As we work with our members in Medford, Bend, Forest Grove and Astoria, we’re closer than ever to overcoming the influence of the plastics industry, standing up for the Pacific, and banning the bag for good.

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