Annual Report
Recapping our work in fiscal year 2015 for our members
To our members

“With powerful interests pushing to open our state to offshore drilling and fracking, we’ve got our work cut out for us. But with support from members like you, I’m confident we can continue to protect our state for future generations.”

I think we’ll look back on 2015 as a year when we took some of the most critical steps we’ve ever taken to protect our environment in history. And none of that would have been possible if it wasn’t for you, our members, along with the millions of others across the country who are speaking out.

This year will be remembered as the year that the United States finally started to get serious about tackling global warming. In May, President Obama announced the final Clean Power Plan, addressing America’s #1 source of global warming pollution—dirty power plants. This action proved that the United States is ready to lead the global effort to avoid the worst impacts of climate change. The plan will cut carbon pollution from power plants by 32 percent by 2030, and is the single largest step the United States has ever taken to limit global warming emissions.

The Clean Power Plan wasn’t the only historic step taken to protect our environment this year. The Environmental Protection Agency finalized a rule to protect our rivers and waterways, closing loopholes in the Clean Water Act that had left more than 135,000 miles of streams in North Carolina open to unfettered pollution. And in February, when polluters’ allies in Congress threatened to roll back the rule, our national team held meetings with more than 50 congressional offices and helped bolster champions in Congress to defend the Clean Water for America Rule.

With powerful interests pushing to open our state to offshore drilling and fracking, we’ve got our work cut out for us. But with support from members like you, I’m confident we can continue to protect our state for future generations.

Thanks,

Dave Rogers
Director
Environment North Carolina set up thousands of lawn signs across the state to let Gov. Pat McCrory know what communities think of drilling off the coast.

Our coasts and wildlife are too precious to risk with an oil spill—but that’s exactly what’s at stake if we open our oceans to oil and gas drilling. In 2015, you supported Environment North Carolina’s work to call attention to these threats and build the public support necessary to stop reckless proposals to open huge swaths of the Atlantic Ocean and the Arctic Ocean to offshore drilling.

Offshore drilling has a long history of disaster, from the Platform A blowout near Santa Barbara, Calif. in 1969 to the gulf coast Deepwater Horizon spill in 2010.
Drilling off the North Carolina coast

The year began with an announcement to consider drilling off the North Carolina coast. In January, the Obama Administration announced their draft five-year plan for offshore drilling, which included the South Atlantic coast from Virginia to Georgia. With the plan set to begin in 2017, we have our work cut out for us.

Communities oppose offshore drilling

Immediately following the announcement, citizens up and down the coast began to express concerns. Working with a statewide coalition of concerned organizations, activists and community members, Environment North Carolina worked to highlight this local opposition to drilling.

Organizing for a clean coast

• In public hearings over the winter, our members made a stand, with inspiring turnouts of 400 people at the Wilmington hearing and 700 people at the Kill Devil Hills hearing. Thanks to you, these hearings were among the biggest in the country; the hearing in Kill Devil Hills was the largest in Bureau of Ocean Energy Management history.
• We worked with groups like NC Conservation Network, NC League of Conservation Voters, Sierra Club, Southern Environmental Law Center, Oceana and Surfrider Foundation to pass resolutions against drilling in more than 25 coastal communities including Wilmington, Morehead City and Dare County.
• We mobilized more than 130 coastal tourism businesses in opposition of offshore drilling. These businesses cosigned a letter to Gov. McCrory highlighting their disagreement, spoke out at media events, and met with decision makers to express their opinions.
• With your help, we distributed more than 10,000 yard signs across the state, to help educate the public and highlight the opposition to drilling.

A decision will be made on the final plan around the end of 2016, and I’m hopeful we will be able to report that as a victory next year.
Go Solar, North Carolina

Solar power is growing so fast across the country that goals once considered ambitious are now seen as readily achievable. Spurred by pro-solar policies, we’re getting more of our energy from the sun, putting us on the road to 100 percent clean energy. In 2015, Environment North Carolina Research & Policy Center presented hard-hitting research and made the case for setting bold solar goals.

**Strong policies fuel solar’s success**

With another panel or project installed every four minutes in 2013 and the rate only getting faster, solar power is on the rise across the country. Environment North Carolina Research & Policy Center’s report, “Lighting the Way,” found that the top 10 states for solar, which hold 87 percent of the nation’s total installed solar electric capacity, have implemented strong policies that are enabling increasing numbers of homeowners, businesses, communities and utilities to “go solar.”

“Shining Cities,” a report we released in March, found that cities across the country are also playing a crucial role in growing national solar capacity: Just 20 cities accounted for 6.5 percent of total installed solar. Raleigh ranked 19th in our report.

**Let’s set bold goals for solar, locally and nationally**

To continue solar’s growth, the whole nation must follow the lead of cities and states that have prioritized solar in their energy policies and set bold goals for solar.

- If a goal of 10 percent solar by 2030 was achieved nationally, the United States would generate enough clean energy to replace half our coal-fired power plants.
- In North Carolina, we’re setting our sights even higher with a goal of 20 percent solar by 2030.
Depending on who you ask, our state parks either turned 100 this year, or will turn 100 next year. While most North Carolinians agree that our state parks represent some of the best that our state has to offer, many don’t realize how tenuous the funding that ensures our parks stay open, well-maintained and accessible to the public really is.
Preserving the parks we all love, standing up for future generations

This summer, Environment North Carolina launched a door-to-door effort to educate North Carolinians about the threats to our parks, and how they can help ensure our parks are protected for future generations. A major source of funding, the Parks and Recreation Trust Fund, has been massively cut since 2007, and in 2013 the dedicated revenue stream for the Trust was eliminated entirely.

Over the summer our citizen outreach staff talked to more than 42,000 people from Asheville to the Outer Banks. More than 11,000 of those people took the time to send an email to Gov. McCrory, asking him to fully fund our state parks. It is this kind of support from people like you that makes our work possible.

More work needed to support our parks

While the 2015 budget represents a step in the right direction when it comes to protecting our parks, there is still more work to do. Thanks to you, in 2016 we will be working to restore the dedicated funding stream for the Parks and Recreation Trust Fund. The hope is that the next generation of tar heels can follow the same paths we’ve all had the privilege to walk.

Citizens call for increased funds on “Trails Day”

Environment North Carolina members and citizen outreach staff celebrated Trails Day this summer by visiting some of the great state parks across our state. Hikes were hosted at Mt. Mitchell, Eno River and Umstead State Parks, and the Jordan Lake State Recreation Area.

Our state parks contain some of the most beautiful parts of North Carolina, but unfortunately, massive funding cuts have led to some parks falling into disrepair. The General Assembly even considered closing our parks for part of the year. Thanks to your support and encouragement, we can fight to preserve these precious areas for years to come.
This past year, Environment North Carolina celebrated the biggest victory for clean water in a decade. In May, President Obama issued a rule to restore Clean Water Act protections to waterways across the country. Our advocacy and grassroots organizing, bolstered by action taken by our members and coalition partners, built the momentum necessary to get the Clean Water Rule past polluter opposition and over the finish line.
Victory! The biggest step forward for clean water in a decade

More than half the nation’s streams, which feed drinking water sources for one in three Americans, regained federal protections when President Obama closed loopholes carved into the Clean Water Act. For nearly a decade, Environment North Carolina has gone toe-to-toe with powerful polluters and their allies in Washington, D.C., to restore the Clean Water Act and permanently protect our waters.

135,000 miles of North Carolina streams at risk

Our waterways provide drinking water, a home for wildlife, and treasured destinations for fishing, swimming and boating. But as soon as the Environmental Protection Agency announced their proposed rule, big polluters ramped up their efforts to block it by lobbying in Congress and threatening “legal warfare.”

To win this fight for the Dan and Eno rivers, for Jordan Lake and the Cape Fear, we had to pull out all the stops. We framed the narrative on our terms, kept a media spotlight on the iconic waterways at stake, recruited and mobilized a diverse and powerful coalition, and rallied the grassroots to demand action.

Grassroots advocacy built momentum to win

• In the past year, Environment North Carolina helped gather more than 800,000 comments and had more than half a million face-to-face conversations with people like you about the need to close loopholes in the Clean Water Act.
• In February, when polluters’ allies in Congress threatened to roll back the rule, our national team held meetings with more than 50 congressional offices and helped bolster champions in Congress to stand up and defend the Clean Water Rule.
• Disappointingly, at press time, a federal appeals court blocked the new water protections we just won. We’ve put together a legal strategy to defend the Clean Water Rule, and given its strong legal and scientific basis, the courts should ultimately reject all efforts to weaken it.

Polluting industries carved loopholes in the Clean Water Act, leaving 2 million miles of streams across the country open to pollution.

With a resounding call from supporters like you and our allies nationwide, we worked to protect America’s waterways.

800,000 comments to the EPA
1,000 letters to the editor
1,000 business owners, farmers and elected officials

1 million took action online

VICTORY!
On May 27, 2015, the Clean Water Act was restored.
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