Fiscal Year 2019 Annual Report
Thanks for making it all possible
From the Director

To be an environmentalist, you’ve got to wrestle with a conundrum: We need bold action on a short timeline ... with broad public support.

We need to do a lot, quickly, to preserve a livable planet. But progress has to earn and sustain the support of the people in order to last—so progress doesn’t often come in one big swooping action. It usually comes one small-ish victory at a time.

At Environment North Carolina, we acknowledge the conundrum—and we embrace it. We believe in bold action on a large scale. But we work every day at the local, state and national levels to build, step by step, the support this action demands. Each college, or city or state that deploys more renewable energy helps win more people over to the possibility of a world that runs on the sun and the wind. Each company or state that phases out a single-use plastic product shows more people a way to end harm to ocean wildlife from plastic pollution.

These victories are smaller than the challenges demand. But as their pace picks up, their summary effect grows. A year ago, California became the second state to commit to 100 percent zero-carbon electricity. Now, there are six states with such commitments, plus Puerto Rico and Washington, D.C. Back in 2016, California banned single-use plastic bags. In 2019, five more states banned plastic bags, and Maine, Maryland and Vermont banned plastic foam take-out containers. Like all social changes, environmental solutions have tipping points.

Our natural world faces serious problems, and we’ve got to solve them. Our strategy is to make sure that each victory opens a door to the next. Thanks for being with us on the journey.

Sincerely,

Drew Ball
State Director, Environment North Carolina
Clean Water & Air

Through our Clean Water & Air program, our staff and members tackled problems ranging from the Trump administration’s attempts to roll back clean water standards, to industrial discharges that violate the Clean Water and Clean Air Acts. Below, you’ll find reports on our Get the Lead Out campaign and on our work to protect North Carolina’s water from coal ash waste.

The grades are in: Report finds states are failing to ensure safe drinking water for our children

MARCH 21, 2019: Lead contaminates the water coming out of drinking fountains and taps at schools across the country, and at least 22 states aren’t doing enough about it.

“Get the Lead Out,” a study published March 21 by our research partners Environment America Research & Policy Center and U.S. PIRG Education Fund, examined the policies of 31 states and Washington, D.C., and assigned grades based on how well they protect children from lead in drinking water at school. Twenty-two states earned an F grade, including North Carolina, with only Illinois and D.C. grading above the C range.

“Waiting for more tests to confirm that our children are drinking water laced with lead is unconscionable,” said John Rumpler, senior director of our national network’s clean water campaign. “It’s time to get the lead out.”

Environment North Carolina and our national network are working in North Carolina and more than a dozen other states to protect drinking water for millions of children by advancing policies to proactively get the lead out.

North Carolina orders Duke Energy to clean up its coal ash mess

APRIL 12, 2019: It took a brutal storm, but Duke Energy is finally being compelled to clean up its toxic coal ash.

In the wake of Hurricane Florence, coal ash pits operated by Duke Energy spilled toxic sludge into the Neuse and Cape Fear rivers. Seven months later, on April 1, the North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) ordered the company to excavate nine coal ash storage ponds at six of its power plants, and move the hazardous material to lined landfills. The announcement is a major win for North Carolina’s environment and our health.

“We are excited and relieved that Duke Energy will finally have to clean up its coal ash mess,” said Environment North Carolina State Director Drew Ball. “Today Gov. Roy Cooper and DEQ Secretary Michael Regan have taken a historic step and are standing on the side of the environment, public health and science.”
Above: Rob Sargent toured the nation’s first offshore wind farm on Block Island, R.I. (upper left). Below: Our national network campaigned for 100% renewable energy across the country, from California (left) to Florida (right).
Clean, Green & Renewable Energy

With support from Environment North Carolina’s members, our national network promoted energy efficiency in our homes, educated city leaders about solar, and fostered the development of wind power. Here are updates on our network’s 100% Renewable Energy campaign and our research arm’s “Shining Cities” report.

An Earth Day call for 100% renewable energy

APRIL 25, 2019: On a sunny Earth Day in Raleigh, Environment North Carolina put forth a vision for a bright, clean energy future.

On April 22, we held a rally on North Carolina State University’s campus. Students, scientists and faith leaders joined Environment North Carolina staff and supporters in calling on our state leader to pass a statewide commitment to 100 percent renewable energy.

“Local communities are leading the way,” State Director Drew Ball told CBS 17, which covered the event. “Business leaders, universities across the country—they’re seeing the writing on the wall and recognizing this is what we need to do this is the future of our energy.”

We’re supporting a resolution in the North Carolina Legislature, sponsored by state Rep. Pricey Harrison, that would set a statewide goal of 100 percent renewable energy across all energy sector economies by 2050.

Solar power is growing fast. These cities are shining the brightest.

APRIL 9, 2019: Solar power is booming in dozens of major American cities.

“Shining Cities 2019,” researched by Environment America Research & Policy Center and released on April 9, found that solar energy capacity more than doubled in 45 of America’s 57 largest cities in the past six years. The report’s main event? The latest ranking of America’s top solar cities.

Los Angeles topped the list for the second year in a row, and San Diego, Phoenix, Honolulu and San Jose rounded out the top five.

“Cities are rapidly adopting solar energy and driving the renewable energy transition across the country, bringing pollution-free power to our homes, schools and workplaces,” said Emma Searson, director of our national network’s Go Solar campaign.

The report also found that solar is not just a Sun Belt phenomenon. Other leading cities include New York City; Indianapolis; Washington, D.C.; Trenton, New Jersey; and Ypsilanti, Michigan.
Leaders of our national network’s canvass team met in Baltimore before spreading across the country to build public support for putting wildlife over waste by banning single-use plastics (top). Environment North Carolina State Director Drew Ball and state Reps. Pricey Harrison and John Ager at the press conference before they delivered petition signatures in support of banning neonicotinoids in North Carolina (right).

Photo credits: (clockwise from top) Lake Stein, Staff, Cup Of Spring via Shutterstock, Chris Holman via Shutterstock
Our network’s staff and members sought to revive the country’s best conservation and recreation program, and to spare Arctic wildlife from oil and gas exploration and drilling. Below, find more on our national network’s efforts to protect wildlife from plastic pollution and save the bees from toxic pesticides.

**Six states in six months choose Wildlife Over Waste**

**JULY 2, 2019:** In the first half of 2019 alone, six states took strong action to rein in plastic pollution.

New York, Maine, Vermont, Connecticut and Oregon all banned single-use plastic bags, joining California, which banned them in 2016. Maine also became the first state to ban single-use polystyrene foam containers, and Maryland became the second a month later. Bags and polystyrene are seldom recycled. Instead, they often end up in our rivers and oceans, where they never fully degrade and pose a threat to wildlife for years to come.

“Our Wildlife Over Waste campaign is based on the principle that nothing we use for a few minutes should pollute our environment for centuries,” said Steve Blackledge, senior director of our national network’s Conservation program. “When we started this year, it was only California. Now it’s a movement.”

Our network’s staff were instrumental in winning the California ban, and campaigned for the laws in Maine, Connecticut, Oregon and Maryland.

**More than 13,000 North Carolinians call to save the bees**

**JULY 12, 2019:** The Tar Heel State is buzzing in support of saving our pollinators.

On July 9, Environment North Carolina was joined by state Reps. Pricey Harrison and John Ager to deliver more than 13,000 petition signatures to Gov. Roy Cooper in support of banning the consumer sale and use of bee-killing pesticides statewide. A recent study found that nearly half of all native bees are in decline and, in a separate survey, beekeepers reported losing 38 percent of their hives over the 2018-2019 winter, the highest in the survey’s history.

Multiple factors contribute to bees’ decline. However, bee-killing pesticides, known as neonicotinoids, play a critical role in harming bees and represent an immediate policy option that can help bees now.

“We have a lot at stake right now. Bees are dying at record rates,” said Environment North Carolina State Director Drew Ball. “The death of bees leads to many problems, the most immediate is this: no bees means no food.”
Above: Staff from our national research partner Environment America Research & Policy Center, along with their allies, delivered 350,000 public comments in support of federal Clean Car standards to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. Below: Andrea McGimsey and Environment America Research & Policy Center staff hosted a tour of an electric bus facility (upper middle and bottom right).
Global Warming Solutions

Environment North Carolina worked with other state groups in our network to reduce carbon emissions from power plants, transportation and other sources. Here’s more on what our network did to promote state-level action across the country and defend strong pollution standards for cars and trucks.

Wrong way for the climate: 350,000 oppose rollback of Clean Cars Standards

Oct. 26, 2018: Given the alarming ways our climate is changing, doesn’t it make sense for automakers to focus on making cars that pollute far less, if at all?

On Oct. 26, our network’s national research partner showed the Trump administration that 350,000 Americans think so. Together with coalition partners, Environment America Research & Policy Center delivered that many public comments to the Environmental Protection Agency and the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration opposing plans to roll back federal Clean Car Standards. By freezing the standards at 2020 levels, the plan would lock in more dirty air and global warming pollution.

“With the latest research telling us we’ll have a climate catastrophe on our hands if we don’t significantly slash global warming emissions, we need to move forward, not pull a U-turn,” said Andrea.

Our network is also calling on state leaders to promote zero-emission electric vehicles.

Twelve ways a governor can start tackling climate change right now

Jan. 10, 2019: As 20 new governors took office in January, a new report outlined actions all governors could take to lead the way on climate solutions.

On Jan. 10, our national research partner Environment America Research & Policy Center released a report titled “Climate Solutions from Day One,” which detailed 12 executive actions that governors can take immediately to help solve the climate crisis. These range from updating building codes to improve energy efficiency—as Gov. Kate Brown has already done in Oregon—to collaborating in regional climate initiatives like the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative in the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic.

“With the stroke of a pen, governors can start cutting global warming pollution today by increasing renewable energy use, reducing transportation emissions and curbing energy waste,” said Andrea McGimsey, senior director of our national network’s Global Warming Solutions program.

Our network urged governors across the country to adopt these recommendations.

We need to move forward, not pull a U-turn.

Andrea McGimsey
Senior Director, Global Warming Solutions campaign, on the federal roll back of Clean Car standards