Annual Report

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

“Behind each accomplishment were engaged and committed people like you who joined us in fighting for a cleaner, greener and healthier future. I’m grateful for the energy you bring to these fights, and the staying power you give our efforts.”

From record-breaking, devastating wildfires to severe storms, it has become abundantly clear that global warming is happening now and requires bold action.

Unfortunately, opposition from the fossil fuel industry and their allies at the State House in Trenton and in Washington, D.C., stand in the way of meaningful action from ensuring clean water to realizing the full potential of solar power.

The challenges we face in protecting our environment are formidable, and daunting. But this past year also gave me a lot of hope for the future. At Environment New Jersey, 2015 was all about people power. And, together, we have a lot to be proud of.

We took the biggest step for clean water in a decade: Since 2006, a pair of polluter-driven Supreme Court decisions left 2 million miles of streams without guaranteed protection under the Clean Water Act. After nine years of advocacy, and 800,000 comments from people like you, we saw these protections restored.

We also took on ExxonMobil, one of New Jersey’s worst polluters, to hold them accountable for decades of spills and leaks in New Jersey.

And, finally, we acted on climate: After Americans submitted 8 million comments of support for limiting carbon pollution from power plants, President Obama finalized the Clean Power Plan, which will do just that for the first time ever. New Jerseyans’ voices helped advance the policy and build the political will to win this victory.

As you’ll read in the following pages, behind each accomplishment were engaged and committed people like you who joined us in fighting for a cleaner, greener and healthier future. I’m grateful for the energy you bring to these fights, and the staying power you give our efforts. And working together, I am optimistic about our prospects for the future.

Thanks,

Doug O’Malley
Environment New Jersey Director
Stop the Exxon Sell-out

New Jersey's land and water deserves to be protected from polluters. In 2015, you helped us take on ExxonMobil, one of New Jersey's worst polluters, by calling out the Christie administration's historic environmental sell-out. In June 2015, Environment New Jersey, representing thousands of our members, along with a coalition, filed suit to intervene in a settlement between ExxonMobil Corporation and the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP).

You helped demonstrate public opposition to the settlement

Our suit came after years of litigation, which found that more than 1,800 acres of wetlands, marshes and waters in New Jersey were polluted by decades of spills and leaks at two ExxonMobil facilities.

We helped build public opposition to the settlement throughout the summer, educating thousands of people and generating media attention on the issue. More than 5,000 of you sent in comments opposing the settlement.

Continuing the fight to hold Exxon accountable

In August 2015, a state judge ruled to accept the settlement with Exxon and the NJDEP, which would severely undercompensate the people of New Jersey for the more than $9 billion in damages done.

We filed an appeal opposing the decision, and we’re still working to challenge this decision in the courts. We’re also continuing the fight to hold Exxon accountable for the pollution and public health risks they caused.
You’ve helped Environment New Jersey Research & Policy Center make great strides in protecting our open spaces here in New Jersey, but now fossil fuel companies are posing new threats to our land, our water and our wildlife by proposing pipelines that would cut through hundreds of miles of New Jersey. In 2015, your support helped us build public opposition to these pipelines and stand up for our environment.
Pipeline threatens rivers, wetlands and endangered species

New Jersey is home to amazing rivers, wetlands and dozens of threatened and endangered species, from bog turtles, to bobcats and ospreys. But the oil and gas industry is disregarding our most special places in their haste to build pipelines through the state.

110 miles of permanent destruction

In 2014, the PennEast Pipeline Company proposed building a natural gas pipeline across New Jersey. This pipeline would cut through 110 miles of Pennsylvania and New Jersey, including 14 towns in Mercer and Hunterdon Counties, in a 125-foot wide path of permanent destruction across preserved open space, farmland and private property.

The pipeline would also threaten dozens of waterways and wetlands, as well as risking the habitats of threatened and endangered species. In 2015, PennEast, representing six utility companies from around the region, pulled out all the stops to push the project forward, despite overwhelming opposition from the public.

Environment New Jersey Research & Policy Center rallied against the PennEast pipeline, calling on the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission and the Delaware River Basin Commission to put an end to the project and ensure protection for our natural environment.

Protecting our last true wilderness preserves

Another proposed pipeline reared its head for a second time this past year. In 2014, a proposed pipeline by South Jersey Gas was rejected by the Pinelands Commission. The pipeline would cut through 15 miles of the Pinelands National Reserve, part of one of our state’s last true wilderness preserves. One of the largest freshwater aquifers in the country, which provides the drinking water for millions of people, sits right beneath the Pinelands.

In an unprecedented coup by the staff of the Pinelands Commission, the pipeline was approved over the objections of many Pinelands Commission members. Thanks to your support, we are continuing to challenge the decision legally and through the court of public opinion.
Clean Water for America
Protect the Jersey Shore

In 2015, Environment New Jersey and Environment New Jersey Research & Policy Center celebrated the biggest victory for clean water in a decade! In May, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) issued a rule to restore Clean Water Act protections to thousands of waters across the country. Our public education and outreach efforts, bolstered by action taken by our members, allies, and a diverse coalition of businesses, elected officials and farmers, built the momentum necessary to get the Clean Water Rule past polluter opposition and signed into law.

[Image: EPA Administrator Gina McCarthy (sitting, right) and U.S. Assistant Secretary of the Army Jo Ellen Darcy (sitting, left) signed the Clean Water for America rule on May 27, 2015, with Margie Alt, Environment America executive director (second from left).]

[Image: Margo Pellegrino (right) paddled from Newark to Chicago to raise awareness about water pollution. Environment New Jersey canvassers welcomed her home with an event and celebratory paddle on the Rancocas Creek in the Pinelands.]
Winning the biggest step forward for clean water in a decade

For nearly a decade, Environment New Jersey has gone toe-to-toe with powerful polluters and their allies in Congress to restore the Clean Water Act and protect our waters—permanently. And in 2015, our efforts finally paid off when President Obama restored federal protections to more than half the nation’s streams, which feed drinking water sources for one in three Americans.

More than 4,000 miles of streams in New Jersey regained protection

The Clean Water Rule closed loopholes in the Clean Water Act, returning protection to more than 4,000 miles of streams in New Jersey. You gave Environment New Jersey the resources to advocate in Congress, mobilize a diverse and powerful coalition, and rally the grassroots to demand action.

- We helped our national team gather more than 800,000 comments and held more than half a million face-to-face conversations about the need to close loopholes in the Clean Water Act.
- With the rule under threat, our national team held meetings with more than 50 congressional offices, urging them to champion the voice of the public and stand up for clean water.
- Disappointingly, at press time, a federal appeals court blocked the new protections we just won for our waters. 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.

Research highlighted legacy of Clean Water Act

Our waterways provide drinking water, essential habitat for wildlife, and treasured destinations for fishing, swimming and boating. Last year, together with our affiliated state groups across the country, Environment New Jersey Research & Policy Center’s research on the threats facing the Jersey Shore and the impact of the Clean Water Act earned nearly 1,000 media hits nationally.

- The report “Wasting Our Waterways” documented toxic pollution entering our waterways and threatening our health and drinking water supplies. It found that 206 million pounds of toxic chemicals were dumped in America’s waterways in 2012 alone.
- “Waterways Restored” presented 15 case studies that show how the Clean Water Act restores and protects waterways—like the Cuyahoga River, which was once so polluted it caught fire, but today, is clean enough for canoeing.
New Jersey, once a climate leader, is now falling behind other states in reducing carbon pollution. This year, you helped Environment New Jersey Research & Policy Center hold the Christie administration accountable and chart a path forward to get New Jersey back on track to combat global warming pollution—by using more clean energy options, like solar and offshore wind power, and stronger energy efficiency standards.

**Cutting carbon emissions by 25 percent**

Solar, energy efficiency and offshore wind power will play a crucial role in meeting carbon pollution reduction targets under the Environmental Protection Agency’s final Clean Power Plan, which will require New Jersey to reduce its carbon emissions from power plants by nearly 25 percent by 2030, in addition to attaining the state’s Renewable Portfolio Standard mandate with in-state renewable energy.

**Solar and wind power key to clean energy**

In June, Environment New Jersey Research & Policy Center released “Shining Rewards,” our report showing that solar panel owners deliver more benefits to the electrical grid than they receive in return from utilities. Utilities often claim that solar homeowners don’t pay their fair share, but our research showed that we should be encouraging more solar, not penalizing its expansion.

Together with a coalition of more than 40 organizations, legislators, businesses, unions and local officials, we also called on Gov. Chris Christie to make offshore wind power, which has vast potential off Atlantic City, a key part of the state’s energy supply.