



Fall Report

California leading on climate action

Building momentum for international agreement

This December, world leaders will convene in Paris to negotiate an international agreement to tackle global warming, and many are looking to the United States to raise the bar on climate action. With a goal of cutting more global warming pollution than any other state, California is playing a major role in the United States' progress to address climate change.

State policies set example for U.S.

But in order to make the biggest impact on a global level, we'll need to make sure strong policies get over the finish line at the state and federal level. At the state level, we're working to pass and help implement bold policies to reduce California's contribution to global warming—and set an example for the rest of the nation.

With grassroots support behind him, earlier this year Gov. Jerry Brown set a series of aggressive, but achievable clean energy and climate goals for California. And in June, the state Legislature announced five bills to make these goals a reality, including increasing the amount of electricity generated from renewable sources to 50 percent, reducing the amount of petroleum consumed by our vehicles by 50 percent, and increasing the energy efficiency of existing buildings by 50 percent, all by 2030.

"On climate action, the best way to lead is by example," said Michelle Kinman, Environment California clean energy advocate. "California is playing a major role in America's progress to cut global warming pollution and create a better, healthier future for our climate and our children."



Credit: Scott Hoag of Rkwlcrtv.com

▲ Californians learned about clean car rebates at a first-of-its-kind electric vehicle test drive event organized in Stockton by Environment California Research & Policy Center.

Clean Power Plan needs defending

Thanks in part to policies like California's, the United States can reduce carbon pollution 27 percent below 2005 levels. But the federal Clean Power Plan will be central to achieving this goal.

The Plan will limit carbon pollution from dirty power plants, America's #1 source

of global warming pollution—but fossil fuel interests and their allies in Congress are trying to block the measure before it's implemented.

"America can't lead with climate deniers blocking the way," said Kinman. "We're grateful to our state leaders who continue to defend the Power Plan against attack."



Credit: Suzannah Hoover Photography

take action

Learn more about our work on global warming and take action to support the Clean Power Plan online at:

www.EnvironmentCalifornia.org

◀ A canvasser on our national citizen outreach team this summer



Credit: Guillermo Briseno

To our members

It's never easy taking the lead. But that is what is needed if we are going to stave off the worst impacts of climate change.

California and the world are already experiencing the impacts of global warming and in California we are on the front lines, with fires, droughts, sea rise and a loss of snow pack—we are getting hit on every side. And to top it off, special interest groups are spending millions of dollars trying to convince legislators to NOT act on legislation to reduce the impacts of global warming. But thanks to your support, we have won, we are winning and we will win. Every day we have folks going door to door, phone to phone and email to email, organizing people like you who will speak up for what is right. You help us make sure that we all have a voice, when it comes to protecting the environment.

Stopping the worst impacts of climate change does take leadership and I'm psyched to have you, and thousands of leaders in California standing with me!

Thanks,

Dan Jacobson
Legislative Director

Recent action

Protecting the Grand Canyon from reckless mining

The Grand Canyon took millions of years to form—but uranium mining could quickly ruin this natural wonder for future generations. Environment California Research & Policy Center and our allies are working to stop this reckless proposal.

Despite a ban on new mining close to Grand Canyon National Park that we helped fight for, this summer, a federal judge approved a uranium mine only six miles from the Grand Canyon's southern rim after the mining company argued that they got their permit before the ban was enacted.

We're mobilizing people to call for an urgent stop to this mine. We're also building public support to urge President Obama to permanently protect the Grand Canyon and its surrounding area from these threats by declaring a new Grand Canyon Watershed National Monument, which would conserve 1.7 million acres of land that provide critical protections to the Colorado River and its watershed.

Let's ban fracking for good

As California experiences its worst drought in recorded history, the last thing we should do is let water-intensive fracking spread across the state. Thanks to your support, Environment California is working to build the momentum necessary to convince Gov. Jerry Brown to protect our water and pass a statewide ban on this dirty drilling practice.

This summer, our citizen outreach team canvassed the state, educating Californians about the issues, and collecting thousands of petitions calling for a ban on fracking. But we're not stopping there. This fall, we'll be ramping up our grassroots campaign to bring attention to the issue and demonstrate to Gov. Brown that Californians overwhelmingly oppose fracking.

Last winter, grassroots opposition forced New York's Gov. Andrew Cuomo to reconsider his support for fracking in his state. Now, with you behind us, we will work to build the same kind of opposition here in California.



Photo: Photo: Shutterstock

Toward a greener future

Environment California and Environment California Research & Policy Center gratefully accept bequests, beneficiary designations of IRAs and life insurance, and gifts of securities to support our work to build a cleaner, greener, healthier future.

For more information, call 1-800-841-7299 x312 or send an email to: PlannedGiving@EnvironmentCalifornia.org.



Credit: Staff

▲ Assemblymember Anthony Rendon briefed Environment California canvassers in the L.A. office on why it's important that we are working to ban fracking.

Report finds utilities selling us short on solar

More and more of us are going solar, meeting our energy needs in a way that's clean, local and independent. Yet, according to new research by Environment California Research & Policy Center, homes and businesses with solar panels may be delivering more benefits to the electrical grid than they receive in exchange from their utility companies—countering increasing complaints from utilities that solar homeowners don't pay their fair share.

We released our new report, “Shining Rewards: The Value of Rooftop Solar Power for Consumers and Society,” at the end of June as California and at least a dozen states across the country were hotly debating this very issue with citizens and utility providers.

Rewards of solar greater than costs

One of the most-debated programs that promotes rooftop solar is net-metering, which credits solar panel owners at a fixed rate—often the retail price of electricity—for providing an excess of power to the grid. Programs like this have been instrumental to helping solar energy skyrocket across the country by making solar more economically attractive, but utilities have increasingly begun to attack them as unjustified “subsidies.”

“Shining Rewards,” however, tells a different story. The report found that utilities were actually underpaying solar panel owners—not subsidizing them. Of the 11 net-metering studies reviewed, eight found that the value of solar energy was higher than the local retail electricity rate. And, the median value of solar power across all 11 studies was nearly 17 cents per unit, compared to the national average retail rate of 12 cents.

“While some utilities claim they're subsidizing solar panel owners, our report shows the opposite is probably true,” said Environment California Research & Policy Center's Michelle Kinman. “If anything, utilities should be paying more to people who go solar, not less.”

Of course, solar power's benefits extend beyond the economic—they also include valuable benefits for the environment and society at large. Solar avoids greenhouse gas emissions, reduces air pollution that harms public health, creates jobs, and spurs local economies.

More pro-solar policies needed

The report sheds light on the debate raging in more than a dozen states across the country over how much solar panel owners should be compensated for the power they produce.

Solar power is widely popular with the public, and policies such as net-metering have encouraged a wide and varied distribution of rooftop solar. Yet, such debates often stall pro-solar policies, keeping residents from taking advantage of solar power and states from growing their reliance on renewable energy. This debate is in full swing in California as regulators at the California Public Utilities Commission are working to decide by the end of 2015 what the net-metering rules will be for customers who go solar after the current program expires.

“Solar power's rewards are far greater than its costs,” Kinman concluded. “That's why we should be encouraging more solar, no penalizing it.”



Staff in action

▲ Environment California Research & Policy Center's Michelle Kinman participates in a low-income solar installation organized by GRID Alternatives in South Los Angeles.

Increasing solar access for all

Low and moderate-income Americans, and those renting their homes and businesses, will have more access to solar and play a bigger role in moving America toward a future that is powered entirely with pollution-free energy, thanks to a new plan federal officials announced in July to increase access to solar energy for all Americans. Environment California Research & Policy Center has been urging President Obama to set bold goals that raise the bar for pollution-free renewable energy.

The program triples the Obama Administration's previous goal to install 300 megawatts of solar on federally subsidized housing, provides more tools for affordable housing projects to install and finance solar installations, promotes community solar programs through local partnerships, and increases local job training programs in the solar industry in low income communities.

“This announcement is another big step toward a future where all Americans can access renewable and affordable solar electricity,” said Environment California Research & Policy Center's Michelle Kinman. “The progress we're making on solar and renewable energy should give us the confidence that we can do much more, including eventually achieving a goal of 100 percent clean energy.”

The plan will not only continue to push the United States toward a future powered by clean energy, but will also improve the lives of millions of people by cutting the costs of their utility bills. We still have a long way to go, but with this plan in place, we're one step closer to a future where we can all access renewable and affordable electricity.

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Environment California

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 California. We focus exclusively on protecting California'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.

Canvassing the state to save the bag ban

Thanks to members like you and overwhelming citizen support, California was poised to be the first state to implement a statewide ban on plastic bags on July 1, but plastic bag manufacturers spent millions to force a referendum on the ballot in 2016. Our advocacy efforts helped pass the bag ban last fall, and this summer, we canvassed the state to save it, and educate people about what's at stake.

This summer, Environment California's citizen outreach team knocked on 150,000 doors across the state, and collected nearly 32,000 pledges of support for the bag ban.

More than 130 local communities have banned plastic bags, and nearly 60 percent of Californians support the ban, which would help keep plastic pollution out of the Pacific. And in July, Hawaii became the first state to ban plastic bags, paving the way for California to follow with a resounding vote.



Credit: Staff

Support our efforts

Read more about the campaign to win the bag ban and more. Donate today:

www.EnvironmentCalifornia.org/SavetheBagBan

▶ Californians showed their support for the bag ban this summer.