Annual Report

A recap of our work for our members in 2013
To our members

“We will never win by sitting back and hoping for victories, but we can work for the change we want by coming together.”

Our environmental heroes in the past—from John Muir to Rachel Carson—were able to win major victories because they took chances and acted boldly. I am proud to say that in 2013, Environment California’s victories followed in those footsteps.

Fracking is a new threat to California. It uses millions of gallons of water (water we just can’t spare), pollutes our water and air, destroys beautiful places, and keeps us addicted to fossil fuels at the exact time we need to move to clean energy. With the help of our members and allies, more than 100,000 Californians told Gov. Jerry Brown that we need to protect our state and ban fracking before it’s too late.

Global warming remains the greatest environmental challenge of our time. And in California, transportation is the single largest source of the pollution causing the problem. If we want to do our part to solve global warming, we have to shift our transportation system off fossil fuels, and bolster public transit. In 2013, we started a program to create a tipping point. We want to put 1 million electric vehicles on the road in the next decade, and jump-start our clean vehicle revolution.

We also had a major victory in protecting the beautiful places in our state. We added our eighth national park, Pinnacles National Park near Soledad. And we continued our work to protect an important wildlife corridor just outside Yosemite National Park.

And 2013 also saw some of the same special interest groups displaying too much power in the Legislature. Campaign contributions, lobbyists, front groups, bogus research and PR all had a negative impact on our ability to protect our environment. We will never win by sitting back and hoping for victories, but we can work for the change we want by coming together. Let’s keep taking bold steps and big chances. For the sake of our children, it’s our obligation.

Thanks for all your support,

Dan Jacobson
Legislative Director, Environment California
Million Solar Roofs

Seven years after we passed the Million Solar Roofs Initiative, California is the nation’s unabashed solar energy leader. In 2013, Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti joined our call to get 20 percent of our largest city’s energy from solar power by 2020. We won three bills in the Legislature that will make it easier for Californians to go solar. And our efforts helped California’s rooftop solar market grow by 25 percent in 2013, reducing air pollution, fighting global warming, and working to ensure California’s solar future is bright.

Angelenos embraced 20 percent solar power

In 2013, Environment California shined a spotlight on the solar potential of our state’s largest city. We launched a campaign calling for the city of Los Angeles to achieve 20 percent local solar power by 2020 and earned support from L.A. Mayor Eric Garcetti, state legislators, local religious leaders, and business voices.

We collected thousands of petitions, hosted community events, and held solar rallies with passionate first-graders at Los Angeles City Hall and at the State Capitol, educating and inspiring our leaders to make strong solar commitments for the children of today and generations to come.

We helped move the ball forward on solar statewide

• We helped win three energy bills that will make it possible for more Californians to go solar, including a bill that creates a shared renewable energy program. This is great news for renters and those with shaded roofs. Now they have the option to invest in off-site solar projects and receive credits on their electricity bills.

• Our recent report “Will Solar Have a Home in California?” offered a first-of-its-kind analysis of the importance of the state's successful net metering program to growing the residential solar market.

Top: Students celebrated solar power with Assemblymember Jimmy Gomez in the State Capitol. Bottom: Clean Energy Associate Emily Kirkland and volunteers created visibility for the Go Solar LA campaign.
No Fracking in California

We have seen disastrous fracking operations rolling across the country, and now Big Oil wants to frack throughout California, putting our air, water and land at risk. Environment California members and allies helped bring together the coalition of Californians Against Fracking, and in 2013 more than 100,000 Californians called on the governor to protect our state and ban fracking. Thousands more called on the Coastal Commission to stop fracking off our coast.
We took a firm stand against a vast expansion of fracking in California

Fracking has been wreaking havoc across the U.S., and in recent years, fracking projects have sprouted up across California—totally unmonitored by any state agencies. This dirty, dangerous method of drilling for oil and natural gas laces millions of gallons of water with poisonous chemicals and known carcinogens, then shoots this toxic tide into the earth to get at oil and natural gas locked beneath the earth’s surface.

280 billion gallons of toxic wastewater created in 2012

The oil companies are trying to convince us that fracking is safe, and that there is no danger of contaminated water, no worry of earthquakes, and that more methane in the air will not stunt our work to solve global warming. We raised awareness of the real impacts of fracking through tried and true tactics, like grassroots organizing, media outreach and research.

• First, we calculated some of the key impacts of dirty drilling in our “Fracking by the Numbers” report. For example, using available data from industry and state sources, we estimated that fracking created more than 280 billion gallons of toxic wastewater nationwide in 2012 alone.

• Then we met with Gov. Jerry Brown’s staff and brought along those who live on fracking’s front lines in Pennsylvania and Colorado to testify in person. They shined a light on the truth about fracking: It hurts our environment and our health.

More than 100,000 urged the governor to take a stand

Gov. Brown, a longtime ally of the environment, and a transformative thinker when it comes to clean energy, has not made up his mind on fracking.

The oil companies are trying to convince him that fracking can be done safely, and that it would be beneficial for California.

• This summer, hundreds of activists and volunteers hit the streets and had conversations with hundreds of thousands of Californians. Thanks in part to this outreach, each day, more Californians are coming forward to call on the governor to ban fracking.

• Together, with a broad coalition called Californians Against Fracking, more than 100,000 Californians have joined our call to ban fracking before it’s too late.
In 2013, Environment California worked to protect a 1,600-acre wildlife corridor that connects Yosemite National Park to the Sierra National Forest. More than 10,000 Californians signed petitions, and the State Legislature unanimously passed a resolution urging Congress to expand Yosemite. In March, Environment California went to Sen. Dianne Feinstein’s office in D.C. to deliver the petitions, and she sponsored a Yosemite expansion bill one month later.
California worked to expand Yosemite to include an important wildlife corridor

From black bears and owls, to hawks and mule deer, wildlife are a big part of what makes Yosemite special. These animals are often the subject of our favorite memories and treasured photographs of Yosemite.

A critical migration route for Yosemite’s wildlife remains unprotected. It’s an island of private land surrounded by Yosemite and the Sierra National Forest. An adjacent parcel has already been developed. The good news is that the landowners want to add this land to Yosemite. The local government supports it. The California State Legislature supports it. But now, Congress needs to sign off to make the expansion happen.

Sen. Feinstein heeds our petition, leads Yosemite expansion

In March 2013, we met with Sen. Dianne Feinstein to make the case for expanding Yosemite. Her staff graciously received more than 10,000 petitions and 100 family photos from our members. Sen. Feinstein sponsored our Yosemite bill one month later.

In Sacramento, unanimous, bipartisan support

In 2013, we worked with California’s state legislators to show support for expanding Yosemite. It was an amazing success. Every single senator and every single assemblymember voted to approve our resolution. Our local leaders are helping to lead their federal peers along.

As Californians, our love for Yosemite is universal and unifying. In 2014, we’ll keep working to bring that same spirit to Washington.

Stornetta, Los Padres on shortlist for more protections

California is beautiful. Whether it’s our towering redwoods, sunny deserts, scenic coast, or waving fields of native wildflowers, every acre of California offers something unique. This year, we made strides to protect beautiful places around the state. We called on President Obama to permanently protect the breathtaking Stornetta Public Lands on the North Coast. We’re working to protect beautiful and important landscapes on the Central Coast, including key recovery areas for the California condor and grassland refuges for the San Joaquin kit fox. We met with Secretary of the Interior Sally Jewell to make the case for preservation, and delivered thousands of petition signatures to decision-makers. We’ll continue making sure California’s beauty lasts for our grandchildren to enjoy.

Wildflowers in the Temblor Range, east of Carrizo Plain National Monument

The endangered San Joaquin kit fox can be can be found on the Central Coast.

Stornetta Public Lands in Mendocino County
Transportation is the single largest source of global warming pollution in California, creating pollutants that harm our environment and our health. In 2013, Environment California launched a campaign to put our state in the driver’s seat to lead the transition from gasoline-powered vehicles to clean electric vehicles. The Charge Ahead California campaign has a strong coalition of allies to put a million electric cars, trucks and buses on our roads.
Fighting global warming and cleaning our air

Exhaust from cars and trucks pollutes our air and contributes to climate change. And this pollution also makes tens of thousands of Californians sick, and costs us billions in avoidable health costs. Now’s the time to tackle global warming and protect California’s kids and future generations from the worst impacts of global warming. Transitioning to cleaner and more efficient cars, trucks and buses can benefit every Californian.

Health, justice, green groups joined forces

In 2013, Environment California created a diverse coalition of partner organizations united around the goal of placing 1 million light, medium and heavy-duty electric vehicles on California’s roads over the next 10 years and ensuring all Californians, especially lower income households in communities most impacted by air pollution, benefit from zero tailpipe emissions.

Together with our partners—the Coalition for Clean Air, Communities for a Better Environment, The Greenlining Institute and the Natural Resources Defense Council—we celebrated the launch of the Charge Ahead California campaign at a news event in East Los Angeles in November. We were joined by state Sen. Kevin de León and representatives from a number of electric vehicle companies who brought out electric cars, an electric bus, and an electric flatbed to display a sampling of the vehicles already in use.

Over the next year, we will work with our allies to direct current polluter fees on oil companies to fund existing, highly-successful purchase incentive programs, and to increase access to zero-emission transportation in disadvantaged communities.

President Obama’s Climate Action Plan

In the effort to protect our kids and their kids from the worst consequences of global warming, President Obama announced a plan in June 2013 to set limits on carbon pollution from power plants, advance energy efficiency, and bolster the nation’s commitment to renewable energy. With the worst drought in 100 years, and more intense wildfires every summer, the president’s plan was lauded by Environment California and many others. The plan followed the work of Environment California and other groups to mobilize millions of people to speak out for strong action on climate change for the country.

President Obama and Environment America Executive Director Margie Alt stood together before the president announced his Climate Action Plan, which will limit carbon pollution from dirty power plants.
Keep Plastic Out of the Pacific

In 2013, more cities and counties stood up to protect Pacific wildlife and passed bans on single-use plastic grocery bags. Now, more than 90 communities in California, from Marin to Los Angeles, are living bag free. Thanks to citizen support, California now has a network of 124 underwater state parks that protect our coast and wildlife. And thousands of our members and allies joined our call to protect our state from coastal fracking.
Another banner year for plastic bag bans

It wasn’t long ago that San Francisco became the first city in the country to ban plastic bags. Now, 90 communities in California, from Marin to Los Angeles, are living bag free.

Thanks to the activism of our members, nearly 12 million Californians, almost a third of the state, have said “no” to single-use plastic grocery bags. And with bag bans moving forward in Sacramento, San Diego, Sonoma and other cities across the state, we are on track to have another great year to keep plastic out of the Pacific.

Uniting more cities against plastic pollution

In 2013, Environment California’s Nathan Weaver worked with local elected officials, Environment California members, and volunteers to advance plastic bag bans in San Diego and Sacramento. These are two of the largest cities that don’t yet have a plastic bag ban in place. Winning in these cities is key to protecting the Pacific Ocean from plastic trash.

With the help of our members and volunteers, we made a huge impact. We delivered more than 10,000 petitions to the San Diego City Council and another 5,000 to Sacramento. More than 150 local businesses endorsed our local campaigns to ban plastic bags. Grocers, environmentalists, business leaders and elected officials also stood with us to declare their support.

City staff in Sacramento and San Diego are working on environmental impact reports and preparing plastic bag bans for a final vote before the full city councils. Both cities voted unanimously to move forward; reflecting the broad and diverse support we’ve seen for protecting the ocean from plastic bags. In 2014, we’ll keep working to ensure Sacramento, San Diego, and the rest of California ban single-use plastic bags once and for all.

124 underwater parks protected the coast

California completed a new network of marine protected areas on the eve of 2013. Like “underwater parks,” these special places will preserve 850 square ocean miles critical to the survival of iconic marine animals. They’re nurseries for fish and refuges for abalone and other species at risk of extinction. They’re beautiful places to discover, explore and cherish. With the network complete, there’s work to be done monitoring and conserving these havens. We’ll continue working to make sure our underwater parks have the resources and safeguards they need to thrive.
You made the difference

In 2013, Environment California held activist workshops and events on how to tackle the most pressing environmental problem of our time: global warming. Events in Santa Cruz, Oakland, San Francisco, Marin and Sacramento brought together Environment California members, staff and community leaders to demonstrate how to take local action and build grassroots pressure on California’s leaders to act on climate. Our staff and allies also met with elected officials at all levels of government to discuss how they can help tackle global warming.

Hundreds of thousands of Californians took action with us in 2013

In 2013, Environment California held a number of community events designed to bring together our citizen members for discussions, trainings and planning sessions to tackle global warming. The Global Warming Activist Workshops were forums to help our members gain the skills, resources and leadership they need to participate in grassroots actions that will raise the visibility of global warming issues and encourage action to tackle this problem.

In some cases, local elected officials attended these events right alongside their constituents, gathering valuable insight into the desire for action on global warming present in their districts. Environment California will continue to hold events like these in 2014.

Hundreds of thousands took action with our organizers and signed up with Environment California in 2013.

Environment California Telephone Outreach Project callers (from left) Amber Gonzalez, Robert Ford and Geoan Nguyen helped raise money to ban fracking.

Environment California’s Emily Kirkland helped Californians take action online to expand solar in Los Angeles.