



Fall Report

Obstacle cleared, local bag bans progress

Cities, counties move to cut plastic pollution

It was an exciting summer for all of us who want to protect wildlife, preserve our beaches, and clean up the ocean by cutting plastic pollution: A bill to phase out Styrofoam made it to the state Legislature; our Research & Policy Center reported that more than 80 governments worldwide have taken action against single-use plastic bags; a California Supreme Court verdict paved the way for even more communities to get on board; and Environment California activists and staff spoke face to face with more than 100,000 people from San Diego to Santa Cruz to Sacramento, with thousands joining our campaign to cut plastic pollution by banning single-use plastic bags.

Supreme Court victory may turn the tide

The California Supreme Court ruled this summer that Manhattan Beach can move forward with a ban on single-use plastic bags without fear of heavy-handed lawsuits or threats from bag manufacturers.

“This is a huge win for the ocean,” said Dan Jacobson, legislative director of Environment California. “The Supreme court said yes to protecting the ocean and no to frivolous legal actions that keep plastic bags polluting the environment.”

New report charts bag ban progress

Our Research & Policy Center’s Report, “Leading the Way Toward A Clean Ocean,” shows that more than 80 local and national governments worldwide, from Tanzania to Italy, from Buenos Aires to Santa Monica, have taken action



Leading the Way Toward a Clean Ocean—More than 80 local and national governments worldwide have taken action against single-use plastic bags.

▲ Environment California’s Ben Davis talks to reporters as State Assemblyman Das Williams (left) and Santa Barbara Mayor Helene Schneider (far left) look on.

against single-use plastic bags, reducing the flow of plastic into the ocean.

Nearly one in 10 fish eat plastic

Unfortunately, Californians still use approximately 16 billion plastic bags each year. Too many of them find their way into the ocean, where they pose a fatal threat to wildlife and add to the Pacific Garbage Patch, a swirling soup of trash off our coast that’s already grown to twice

the size of Texas. A study by researchers at UC-San Diego found that nearly one in 10 small fish collected in the Pacific had plastic in its stomach.

The good news is that our movement to cut plastic pollution is growing too, as citizens persuade government officials that nothing we use for five minutes should pollute our ocean for 500 years.



Staff

more online

◀ Join Environment California Field Associate Stephanie Droste-Packham for a home energy audit in San Francisco.

Visit our website to watch this video and see more energy-saving resources:
www.EnvironmentCalifornia.org



To our members

As the mercury rose in Sacramento this summer, our environmental campaigns really heated up. Thousands of outreach staff spoke face to face with Californians up and down the state, raising awareness about plastic pollution and building support for bans on single-use plastic bags. A major state Supreme Court victory and our own report on the growing movement against plastic bags added to the momentum.

Meanwhile, Environment California's Energy Director, Bernadette Del Chiaro, participated in Gov. Jerry Brown's Solar Summit, where they set a goal of generating 12 gigawatts of power from solar energy.

As the weather cools, we're certainly not slowing down. This is an exciting time to be working on environmental issues, and I'm grateful to you for helping us protect the Pacific, keep our state parks open, move toward a clean energy future—and face whatever environmental challenges lie ahead.

Dan Jacobson
Legislative Director



How do you want to be remembered?

You can be remembered as someone who cared enough to keep up the fight for a cleaner, greener, healthier future by making a bequest to Environment California.

For information, call: 1-800-841-7299, or e-mail PlannedGiving@EnvironmentCalifornia.org.

Recent action

Fracking danger hits close to home

If you thought California had escaped the man-made disaster known as “fracking”...not so fast. The Monterey Shale, which stretches from San Joaquin County to San Luis Obispo and east to Kern County, is estimated to harbor 30 billion gallons of oil. Companies plan to reach it through hydraulic fracturing, or “fracking”—in which chemical-laced fluid is pumped underground at high pressure to crack open rock formations and access the oil within. The process uses an untold number of toxic chemicals and creates millions of gallons of wastewater, which is often contaminated with heavy metals and radioactive materials.

We're working to pass a law that requires drillers to disclose which chemicals they're injecting into our soil and how much water they're using. As fracking becomes more widespread, keeping our water supply clean will be a growing challenge.

Toxic chemicals in the spotlight

The limo pulled up to Grauman's Egyptian Theater. Flash bulbs popped. Fans shrieked as Lead, Mercury and Bisphenol-A sashayed down the red carpet. It was time for the second annual Toxies Awards, co-sponsored by Environment California.

“This tongue-in-cheek awards show enables environmental health advocates like me to educate the public about the hazards associated with the chemicals in our everyday lives,” said Environment California's Pam Palitz, “and to emphasize the need for an aggressive chemical policy program in California.”

Environment California has been working to reduce Californians' exposure to toxic chemicals for the past decade, beginning with flame retardants and phthalates in children's products. The awards show was a success, educating thousands about toxic chemicals including “People's Choice” winner Halogenated Flame Retardant, still used in upholstered furniture.



Staff

▲ Environmental Health Advocate Pam Palitz at the Toxies, an event to raise awareness of “bad-actor” chemicals.



It's now the law: 33 percent renewables by 2020

Co-sponsored wind bill advances in Legislature

California took a big step closer to a clean-energy future when Gov. Jerry Brown signed SB2x (Simitian) into law. The bill requires the state to get 33 percent of its energy from renewable sources like wind and solar by 2020.

“California can power itself entirely on clean energy resources like wind, geothermal and solar power,” said Bernadette Del Chiaro, Environment California’s clean energy program director. “Mandating that the state generate a third of its electricity from renewable energy is a big down payment toward that ultimate goal.”

Before the bill was signed, California was beginning to fall behind other states in developing renewable energy. In the last several years, both Texas and Iowa built more renewable projects than we did. But establishing a 33 percent renewable mandate cements California’s position as the biggest renewable energy market in the country. One industry group estimated that the bill could create 100,000 jobs. U.S. Energy Secretary Steven Chu praised the legislation as a model for other states.

Bill hailed as a “win-win-win”

In a rare unanimous vote for clean energy, the California State Assembly passed a bill that aims to give large, industrial energy customers financial incentives to invest in on-site clean energy sources like wind turbines.

“This bill was backed by a broad and unusual coalition that results in a win for everyone,” said Assemblymember Jared Huffman (San Rafael). “Californians get cleaner air, California manufacturers get cheaper electric bills, and we spur creation of construction and operation jobs at a time when we most need it.”

Environment California was proud to co-sponsor the bill. Said Del Chiaro:

“California’s clean energy future must include ways for large industrial facilities to be green, just as we create green opportunities for homeowners.”

Web-based guide saves energy, money

Environment California released a web-based guide—“Plug In to Clean Energy”—to help Californians save power and save money on their utility bills.

America’s buildings consume more than 40 percent of our total energy, and much of that is “literally flying out the door,” says Environment California Field Associate Stephanie Droste-Packham.

Inadequate insulation, inefficient heating and cooling systems, and poor construction techniques all waste energy. But off-the-shelf technologies can reduce that waste dramatically, lowering energy bills by as much as two-thirds.



efficiency tips

Save energy and money

Setting your water heater to “low” or wrapping the tank in an insulating blanket can save up to \$90 a year.

Connecting “vampire appliances” like TVs and DVD players to power strips and turning them off when not in use can reduce your electricity bill by up to 8 percent.

Lowering the thermostat by one degree in winter can save 6 percent on your gas bill; raising it by two degrees in summer saves even more.

See more tips in the full guide at: www.environmentcalifornia.org/center/plug-into-clean-energy



Issuing the call to save the sharks

Environment California is helping to educate the public about the vital role sharks play in our ocean’s ecosystem—and about the grave threat posed by the practice of killing sharks for their fins.

Scientists have found that declines in shark populations can contribute to a shift from healthy, coral-dominated reefs to barren, bleached-out reefs. And more than 70 million sharks are killed each year—their fins chopped off and the sharks often thrown back into the ocean where they sink to the bottom and drown, unable to swim. It doesn’t matter how small, young, or scarce the sharks are; their fins bring big money at market.

Washington State and Hawaii have already taken action to save the sharks by banning the purchase, sale and possession of their fins—a big step in the right direction. But according to the National Marine Fisheries Service, approximately 85 percent of dried shark fin imports come through California.

Scientists estimate that if sharks continue to be killed at current rates, up to one-third of species could become extinct within a decade.

We’re working to save the sharks by making sure that their fins can’t be bought or sold in California. That’s why we’re working to educate the public about the dangers of shark-finning and the need to protect our ocean by saving the sharks.

Keep up with our progress on this and other campaigns on our website: www.EnvironmentCalifornia.org

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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.

Urgent action to keep our parks open

We're working to make sure that California's priceless state parks stay pristine and open to the public, no matter what budget craziness goes on in Sacramento.

If state parks fall victim to budget negotiations, we'll lose the places Californians rely on to exercise, play, connect with nature and explore our state's heritage, including more than 250 miles of trails for camping, hiking, horseback riding and birdwatching at Henry W. Coe State Park in Morgan Hill; the striking bluffs of Gray Whale Cove State Beach in Montara; and a rare adobe structure at Pio Pico State Park in Whittier—home of California's last governor under Mexican rule. As journalist Timothy Egan wrote of Jack London State Park, also targeted for closure: "It belongs to you and me... an inheritance that is now being dismantled. California created the state park idea with Yosemite in 1864, before it was a federal reserve; it is destroying it in 2011 with a plan to permanently close one-fourth of its parks."

We can't let that happen. That's why, with member support, we're working to make sure our elected officials know that closing state parks is not an acceptable option.

flickr user: Abraxas3d



▲ Palomar Mountain State Park near Los Angeles.

It doesn't add up

- 77,600,000**
 People who visited California state parks in 2010.
- \$4,320,000,000**
 Amount spent in local communities by state park visitors.
- \$11,000,000**
 Amount Gov. Brown hopes to save by closing 70 state parks.