



Summer Report

11 cities, counties ban plastic bags

Campaign to reduce plastic pollution continues

Even with 11 cities and counties agreeing in recent months to take bold action that will reduce the plastic pollution that's flowing into the Pacific and harming ocean wildlife, we're just getting started.

Since 2008, Environment California has helped local, civic and environmental groups convince municipal and county officials to ban single-use plastic checkout bags. Yet every year, billions of bags continue to be tossed into landfills or end up littering parks and beaches. And billions more wash into the Pacific Ocean, where they eventually swirl together into a toxic soup of plastic garbage known as the Pacific Garbage Patch.

Californians are still using billions more plastic bags each year, along with 165,000 tons of Styrofoam. This plastic pollution not only litters our coast and harms marine life, it also costs California \$25 million in cleanup costs each year.

A reprieve for ocean wildlife

Last December in San Jose, we organized our student and member activists to attend and comment at the City Council hearing on the bag ban proposal. The council voted to pass their bag ban.

Then, in January, members in Marin County chipped in to help us purchase an ad in the Marin Independent Journal telling the Board of Supervisors that it was about time for Marin to live bag-free—despite the legal threats of a group called “Save the Plastic Bag Coalition.” The Board of Supervisors voted unanimously to ban the bag.



idreamphoto*

Later that same day, Santa Monica passed their bag ban. The City of Calabasas passed a bag ban on Feb. 10, boosting the count of California counties and cities with bag bans to 11, while 28 other municipalities have introduced ordinances.

Moving forward from these recent victories, we're working to pass more local bag and Styrofoam bans across the state, including introducing a ban in Sacramento, and pressuring the City of Los Angeles to

keep their promise of introducing a bag ban by July 1, 2011.

Reducing billions of plastic bags

The good news is that Californians appear to be getting the message. The EPA estimates that plastic bag use in the state has dropped by as much as 40 percent in the last three years. Already, 1 in 10 Californians live in a city or county that has banned plastic bags.



Staff

more online

◀ *Legislative Director Dan Jacobson, Musician Jackson Browne and Gov. Jerry Brown speak about reducing plastic waste.*

Visit our website to get the latest news on our campaign.

www.EnvironmentCalifornia.org



To our members

Our politics are too divisive, some say. Our politicians are held captive by too many powerful interests, some say. Progress, they say, is impossible.

Yet progress is breaking out all over, especially at the local level.

With our help, dozens of communities are taking action to ban single-use plastic bags and takeout Styrofoam containers. Over the past few years we've spoken to hundreds of thousands of people about the risks posed by plastic pollution in the ocean. Plastic bag use is down by 6.3 billion bags per year in our state.

That's not all. San Francisco is taking action against toxic chemicals in nail polish. And recently, more than 10,000 Californians took a stand against mining around Yosemite.

Californians are finding the will and the way to make progress. Thanks for making it all possible.

Dan Jacobson
Legislative Director

Recent action

A breakthrough for clean energy

Our vision is to power California entirely on clean, renewable energy. This year, we took another big step toward that goal, as Gov. Jerry Brown signed into law the strongest clean energy mandate in the country. As a result of the new law, by 2020, California will generate one-third of its electricity from sources such as wind and solar power. As Environment California Clean Energy Advocate Bernadette Del Chiaro told the Los Angeles Times, "California can power itself entirely on clean energy resources. Mandating that the state generate one-third of its electricity from renewable energy is a big down payment toward that ultimate goal."

At the same time, we're continuing to push for more rooftop solar power, an area of California's economy that is growing by leaps and bounds. In December, Clean Energy Advocate Sean Garren led our charge in Congress to extend incentives for solar power, while staff in California worked to lower barriers for homeowners who want to go solar.

"Toxics" awards highlight dangerous chemicals

Memories of last winter's Grammys and Oscars are fading, but those who love award nights have a fabulous event to look forward to . . . the second annual Toxies! On June 16 in Hollywood, these tongue-in-cheek awards will be presented to 10 notorious toxic chemicals that we're working to take out of our environment.

Among the chemicals that will be "honored" by Californians for a Healthy and Green Economy (CHANGE), a coalition that was founded by Environment California and others, are: Mercury (mining and industrial byproduct), methyl iodide (a pesticide for strawberries and other crops), bisphenol-A or BPA (hard plastics found in products such as baby bottles), formaldehyde (in nail polish and particle board), hexavalent chromium (the Erin Brockovich chemical), Perchlorate (rocket fuel), halogenated flame retardants (in upholstery), triclosan (in antibacterials), and dioxin (an industrial byproduct).

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▲ **Solar businesses keep growing:** In 2010 solar installation projects grew 67 percent over 2009.



Jose Gil*

Let's get California off of oil

It's not news that California's dependence on oil has some thorny side-effects—or that our driving culture shoulders much of the blame.

Every day, Californians spend about \$129 million on gasoline and diesel. Eight of the top ten smoggiest cities in the nation are in the Golden State. And because of our poor air quality, every year, over 9,000 Californians die prematurely from consistent and inescapable exposure to ozone and particulate matter, or soot, in our air.

We should be doing everything we can to cut oil use, curb pollution, clean up our air, and protect our public health, which is why we're getting behind a plan to put 1 million zero-emission vehicles—the kind of cars that don't use any oil—on California roads.

14,000 call for fuel-free cars

Our report, "Clean Cars in California," shows that policies we've already introduced for cleaner cars are working. After decades of leadership for cleaner cars, our state has seen an 85 percent decrease in smog-forming pollution since 1970. But with our cars still putting 2 million pounds of smog-forming pollution into the air we breathe every day, we need to do better.

Environment California has been working across the state, going door to door talking to neighbors, going onto college campuses to talk with students, and talking with people outside grocery stores about how we can move past the cost and pollution from oil.

We're calling for 1 million electric vehicles—which are 60 percent more efficient than traditional engines—to be on our roads by 2025. In three months, we collected over 14,000 public comments for the California Air Resources Board.

House takes aim at Calif. standards

The largest threat to better standards—aside from the car companies—was the

U.S. House of Representative's funding bill, H.R. 1, which would have stripped California's right to even set statewide emissions standards. To counter this move, Environment California set up a news conference in Los Angeles, a city whose smog exceeds health standards during one-third of the year.

We were joined by L.A. City Council Members Janice Hahn and Ed Reyes, as well as environmental and public health leaders with the Sierra Club, the Natural Resources Defense Council, American Lung Association in California and Energy Independence Now.

We stood together to call on the Senate to protect our environment, protect our ability to curb our state's pollution, and to vote "No" on the House funding bill. You can view highlights from the event on our website.



Alicia Photo Design

Time to act

The House moved to block both the EPA and California from improving car pollution standards just as gas prices shot up earlier this year.

"It's not time to dither," said Environment California's Bernadette Del Chiaro. "As we watch gas prices shoot up on news from Libya, it's clear the time to get off of oil is now."

▲ State Field Associate **Stephanie Droste-Packham**



RCPPHOTO*

Will Congress stop the EPA from doing its job?

Action by Congress also threatens hard-won progress on restoring protections to our drinking water.

Since last winter, we've worked to convince the EPA to begin repairing a gaping hole in drinking water protections.

Over the last decade, polluters have used litigation to strip Clean Water Act protections from thousands of streams and millions of acres of wetlands across the country. These waterways not only feed and protect larger waterways like San Francisco Bay—they also provide drinking water for 14.2 million Californians.

When polluters stymied our efforts to fix this loophole in Congress, we urged the EPA to use its own authority to do so.

In response, the agency began drafting formal instructions for its attorneys to apply clean water protections to the fullest extent allowed by law.

Unfortunately, one of the provisions in the first version of the House's funding bill would have specifically blocked the EPA from setting new rules to address this gap in Clean Water Act protections.

The Senate has thus far refused to go along with the House on blocking the EPA from enforcing the Clean Water Act, but we're fighting to win the public debate while emboldening our champs to keep pushing back against the threats.

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

3435 Wilshire Blvd. #385
Los Angeles, CA 90010
Phone: (213) 251-3688

Environment California

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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.

10,000 call for Yosemite mining ban

Personally delivering our call to halt all mining within 50 miles of Yosemite National Park, Environment California's Dan Jacobson met with staff at the U.S. Department of the Interior in Washington, D.C., this March. His meeting came after more than 10,000 of our supporters wrote to the department in opposition to mining near the park.

In the last five years, mining companies have staked 285 claims within 10 miles of Yosemite National Park, some right on the park's borders. History shows us that mining waste often escapes into local waterways. In order to protect the land around Yosemite, and our water, Environment California has launched a new effort to unite thousands of Californians and raise awareness about this modern-day gold rush.



▲ Hikers crossing a footbridge over Tuolumne River in Yosemite National Park.

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Editor: Nathan Proctor. Primary contributors: Dan Jacobson, Bernadette Del Chiaro, Pamela Palitz.

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