



Winter Report

Massive campaign to keep our parks open

Seventy state parks set to close by July

When the Department of Parks and Recreation announced that 70 state parks will close by July 1, 2012, Environment California swung into action—mobilizing a huge public outcry, garnering local businesses’ support, holding high-level strategy meetings with key officials, and testifying before the State Assembly.

Campgrounds closed at Sugarloaf Ridge, Palomar Mountain and more

While citizens are being told to leave campgrounds at Sugarloaf Ridge, Palomar Mountain and other parks, we’re shining a spotlight on the many reasons why closing state parks is a terrible idea:

- Each year, 85 million people visit our parks to hike, swim, picnic and learn more about our state.
- California’s outdoor recreation industry generates more than \$40 billion a year in revenue.
- Our parks protect a huge array of wildlife, including bald eagles, northern spotted owls, Steller sea lions, Redwood trees and the California poppy—many of which are threatened or endangered.

We spoke, the State Assembly listened

Decision-makers need to see and hear from Californians who want our parks protected. That’s why we’ve collected more than 20,000 signatures and taken out a full-page ad in Capitol Weekly—a must-read for Sacramento insiders—filled with photos of parks supporters. We’ve



▲ Hundreds of our supporters submitted photos for our ad in Capitol Weekly, ensuring that Gov. Brown saw the faces of those who are hurt by the decision to close state parks.

also organized more than 250 local businesses to urge the governor not to close the parks.

Equally important, we’re making our case at the local level, convincing dozens of elected officials to sign appeals to the governor urging him to save the state parks in their area.

In October, Preservation Associate Mac

Farrell testified before the State Assembly, calling on the Governor to fully restore California’s state park funding. In the closing statements of that hearing, Assemblymember Jared Huffman said, “California’s government is beginning to react to the sentiment of support for state parks that our members and allies have generated over this issue and we look forward to protecting our state park system for another 100 years.”



NBC News

more inside

◀ Ocean Associate Julia Ritchie makes the case for bag bans on the NBC Bay Area News (with reporter Garvin Thomas, left, and Berkeley City Councilman Kriss Worthington).



To our members

I'm continually blown away by the sheer beauty of our state—the grandeur of Half Dome, the wildlife at Tomales Bay, the deep tranquility of Redwood National Park.

As you and I know, it's not easy to fight for the places we love and the environmental values we share. But as we also know, it's absolutely necessary.

In the last several months, we've made important progress: from enacting local bag bans, to keeping sharks from being killed for their fins, to installing one gigawatt of clean, renewable solar energy on California's rooftops.

Despite a challenging economy and political climate in Washington, I know that we can win major victories for our environment—with your help, we're doing it every day.

Sincerely,

Dan Jacobson
Legislative Director

Recent action

No more BPA in baby bottles

Six years after Environment California released its ground-breaking "Toxic Baby Bottles" report, California finally outlawed baby bottles and sippy cups containing Bisphenol-A (or BPA). In October, Gov. Jerry Brown signed AB 1319, authored by Assemblymember Betsy Butler (El Segundo), into law.

"We have been warning Californians about the dangers of BPA for the better part of a decade," said Dan Jacobson. "It's about time that our leaders got the message. Our babies' bodies are not meant to be toxic dumps."

Several top manufacturers already produce bottles without BPA, and some large retailers refuse to carry bottles made with the chemical. This law will ensure that any baby bottle or sippy cup sold in California will be BPA-free.

Sharks protected in huge win for our ocean

In October, Gov. Jerry Brown signed a law banning the purchase, sale and possession of shark fins, capping Environment California's months-long campaign to educate the public about the environmental damage caused by shark-finning.

More than 70 million sharks are killed each year for their fins, with devastating consequences for the ocean's ecosystem. Scientists have found that declines in shark populations can contribute to a shift from healthy, coral-dominated reefs to barren, bleached-out reefs.

According to the National Marine Fisheries Service, approximately 85 percent of dried shark fin imports come through California. Hence, the best way to protect the ocean and save the sharks is by reducing the demand for their fins—and we are thrilled that California chose to do exactly that.

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▲ After Environment California launched a public education campaign highlighting the destructive practice of killing sharks for their fins, Gov. Brown signed a bill banning the purchase, sale or possession of shark fins in the state.

flickr user: sharkbait

Local bag bans build toward statewide action

Santa Cruz and Pasadena bring total to 14

In November, Pasadena became the 14th community to ban disposable plastic bags—those annoying pieces of trash that pollute our ocean and harm wildlife.

Santa Cruz passed its bag ban in September and, at press time, San Francisco was getting ready to expand its pioneering 2007 ban to cover all retailers and add a 10 cent surcharge to paper bags. The Los Angeles County Board of Public Works recently banned both paper and plastic bags with a unanimous vote.

And we're just getting started. As this newsletter goes to print, there are 30 more local bans in progress, from Solana Beach to Sacramento, Glendale to Alameda County.

Momentum builds to take bag ban statewide

Meanwhile, we're gearing up for another battle at the Capitol. In the last legislative session, we fell just a few votes short of a statewide bag ban, after the chemical industry that profits from plastic bags swooped in with millions to spend on a misinformation campaign and last-minute contributions to swing voters in the Senate.

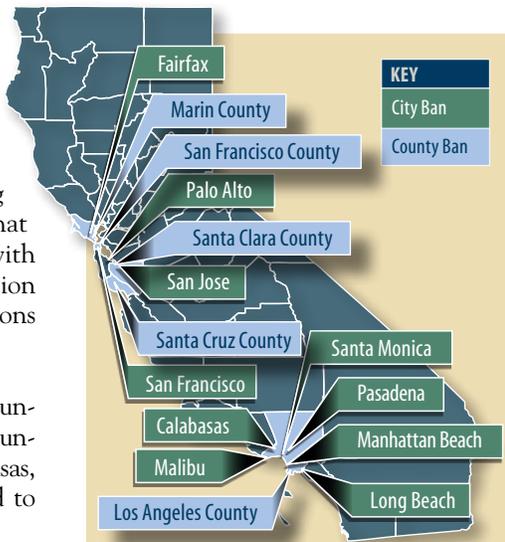
By building a network of cities and counties that have banned the bags, from Huntington Beach to San Jose to Calabasas, we've built the momentum we need to take the bag ban statewide this time.

More victories for our ocean

In our last newsletter, we were pleased to report that the California State Supreme Court ruled that Manhattan Beach could move forward with its bag ban, despite a lawsuit filed by the "Save the Plastic Bag Coalition." This fall, the Marin County Superior Court delivered another win for communities' ability to protect the environment, ruling that the County's bag ban is legal and will be upheld.

"While a clever lawyer can argue that it is a benefit that plastic bags take 500 years to decompose," said the Honorable Lynn Duryee, "it was reasonable for the County to conclude that it is more beneficial for the environment to avoid the litter and pollution from the plastic bags in the first instance, so that this indestructible trash is not added to the landfill at all."

We're also excited to see that the wave of support for bag bans has spread to other states. This fall, Portland, Ore.'s bag ban went into effect while Bellingham and Seattle, Wash. passed their own bag bans. Discussions are underway in Eugene and Corvallis, Ore., and many other cities in the Pacific Northwest. Three towns in Colorado—including Aspen—passed laws to ban plastic bags, and Chicago Alderman Joe Moreno introduced a bag ban ordinance for that city, too.



local bag bans

Movement gaining momentum

At press time, dozens of bag bans were in progress across the state. For a current list of communities that have banned the bag, check out EnvironmentCalifornia.org/programs/keep-plastic-out-pacific or follow us on Facebook.



NBC News

Bag bans on TV!

Environment California's Ocean Associate Julia Ritchie appeared on the NBC Bay Area News for a seven-minute segment with Berkeley City Councilman Kriss Worthington on the threat that plastic bags pose to our ocean.

"Nothing we use for a few minutes should last for hundreds of years polluting our oceans," Ritchie said. Millions of birds and marine animals such as sea turtles are harmed or killed every year due to marine debris. Ritchie brought a sample of the toxic plastic soup from the North Pacific Gyre to show during the interview.

NBC reporter Garvin Thomas, who conducted the interview, asked how people can bring the bag ban movement to their own hometown. We're glad he asked! If you're wondering the same thing, visit our website and look for the "Bag Ban Activist Tool Kit" to get started.

more online

Visit www.EnvironmentCalifornia.org to see Ocean Associate Julia Ritchie on the NBC Bay Area News, making the case for banning plastic bags.

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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.

A million solar roofs—and beyond

In November, we celebrated a major clean energy milestone: The installation of more than one gigawatt of rooftop solar across California—enough to power 750,000 homes.

At a special event with policymakers, solar industry leaders and environmental advocates, we released a report, “Building a Brighter Future,” which shows that the Million Solar Roofs Initiative—set in motion in 2006 by Environment California-sponsored legislation—is on pace to meet its goals while reducing the cost of solar energy and creating jobs across the state. “The Million Solar Roofs Initiative has helped California install more solar capacity than all but five nations in the world,” said Michelle Kinman, our clean energy advocate. “But we’re only scratching the surface. California can meet all of its energy needs with clean, renewable power.”

Sandgar Photo & Video



recent action

◀ Michelle Kinman, Environment California's clean energy advocate, releases our report showing California's progress toward a million solar roofs.