Annual Report
Recapping our work in 2014 for our members
To our members

“With your support, we’ll keep working to translate our simple formula into positive change in our lives, in the quality of the environment, and in the world we leave to future generations.”

At Environment Massachusetts, we live by a simple formula: Mobilize grassroots action, build strong and diverse coalitions, and conduct tough-minded advocacy that yields tangible results for our environment, and in our lives.

This past year was full of action, new challenges, and more than a few signs of real progress—and I’m proud to share with you the work you’ve helped us do.

In 2014, we celebrated huge steps forward in our efforts to protect Massachusetts’ rivers and reduce global warming pollution. We advocated for a new proposal from the Environmental Protection Agency to restore the Clean Water Act to full strength by closing loopholes in the law that have left 2 million miles of streams across the country at risk of pollution. And, after millions of Americans called for tougher limits on global warming pollution, the Obama administration answered with a new plan to limit carbon pollution from dirty power plants.

We also confronted repeated attacks to our environment from lobbyists for polluting industries and their allies in Congress who have vowed to block these commonsense proposals. But we rose to the challenge, rallying support from citizens, elected officials, and business owners, and presenting the facts to back these vital protections.

In this report, you can read more about our efforts on these top priority issues, as well as learn about our work to achieve bold solar power goals in Massachusetts, and protect the Cape Cod National Seashore and our other special places.

In the year to come, we’ll strive to keep making a difference on all of these issues. With your support, we’ll keep working to translate our simple formula into positive change in our lives in the quality of the environment, and in the world we leave to future generations.

Yours,

Johanna Neumann
Regional Program Director

Margie Alt
Federal Director
With the Land and Water Conservation Fund facing funding cuts year after year, and set to expire altogether as early as 2015, we worked this past year to show decision-makers that the public wants to protect our state’s parks and other open spaces from pollution and development. In 2014, Environment Massachusetts rallied 20,800 people to join our call to action to protect our special places.

**Campaign defended Massachusetts’ natural heritage**

Over the course of 2014, Environment Massachusetts canvassed the state to raise support for saving our country’s most successful parks and open space program, the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF), which has been steadily losing funding and could expire altogether within the year. The LWCF protects our best natural places, from Cape Cod to the Berkshires, from the Pioneer Valley to the Boston Harbor Islands.

- Over the course of the summer, Environment Massachusetts collected more than 20,800 petitions calling on our senators to fight for full and dedicated funding for our parks, contributing to the 50,000 total signatures submitted together with our national federation.
- We also mobilized small business owners, outdoor enthusiasts and conservationists to take action.
- In 2013, the LWCF received only $306 million in funding, and the House Appropriations Committee slashed that in half for 2014—to one sixth of its originally intended level.

“Our parks are a big part of what makes living in Massachusetts so great,” said Ben Hellerstein, campaign organizer for Environment Massachusetts. “For 50 years, the Land and Water Conservation Fund has protected our most treasured landscapes and provided essential support for local parks and neighborhood playgrounds across the state. Our message is clear: Bay Staters want to see their parks protected.”
Clean Water for America: Protect Massachusetts Rivers

Polluters shouldn’t be allowed to treat Massachusetts’ rivers like their own personal sewer. That’s the message Environment Massachusetts and our state affiliates took to hundreds of thousands of people in 2014, as part of a renewed call to close loopholes in the Clean Water Act. Together with our allies, we delivered more than 800,000 public comments to the EPA, and built a coalition of businesses, elected officials and farmers to restore protections to all America’s waterways.
The EPA agreed to close loopholes in the Clean Water Act

After a chemical spill in West Virginia, a toxic algae bloom in Ohio, and other pollution disasters, it’s more obvious than ever that restoring protections to America’s waterways is long overdue. On March 25, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) proposed a rule to close loopholes in the Clean Water Act that have left 2 million miles of our nation’s streams, and the drinking water for 117 million Americans, at risk for more than a decade. Powerful members of Congress, however, redoubled their efforts to block the move. In 2014, Environment Massachusetts went to work to get the EPA’s proposal over the finish line.

4,279 miles of Massachusetts streams to gain protection

The EPA’s proposal would restore protections to 4,279 miles of Massachusetts’s streams. From Massachusetts’ rivers to our smaller streams, our waterways are part of our heritage and make Massachusetts a great place to live. We’ve worked hard to protect our waters, and should do all we can to keep polluters from turning back the clock to the days when rivers, like Ohio’s Cuyahoga, were so polluted they caught on fire.

Yet, on the heels of the EPA’s announcement, opposition from polluting industries intensified. Large agribusinesses, which generate millions of pounds of animal manure, much of which ends up as runoff in local waters, were among the industries lobbying the U.S. House of Representatives to block the EPA. Their allies in Congress even threatened to shut down the government if the EPA didn’t back off.

As 2014 drew to a close, Environment Massachusetts worked to refute industries’ false claims from their well-funded lobbyist efforts and smear campaigns.

800,000 comments called for action on clean water

In June, Environment Massachusetts Research & Policy Center released “Wasting Our Waterways,” a report that revealed 5,555 pounds of toxic chemicals were dumped into Massachusetts waterways in 2012 alone, highlighting the risk the loopholes in the Clean Water Act pose to waterways across the country.

In November, Environment Massachusetts, together with our allies, delivered 800,000 supportive comments to protect these vital places. Outdoor outfitters, river guides, brewers and restaurant owners were among the hundreds of businesses that added their voices to the call for cleaner water.
Global Warming Solutions

Together, we took bold steps to reduce global warming pollution. Working with a broad coalition, we helped educate the public and collect 8 million comments from Americans to urge President Obama to limit power plant carbon emissions—America’s number one source of global warming pollution. In 2014, the president proposed just such a plan—one that would cut power plant pollution by 30 percent within the next decade.

Elizabeth Ouzts released the “America’s Dirtiest Power Plants” report.

The Global Warming Solutions campaign team delivered the 8 millionth comment of support for limiting power plant pollution.
A historic plan to tackle global warming

From severe storms to wildfires and drought, the consequences of global warming are becoming increasingly clear. Scientists say climate change could tip toward catastrophe if we don’t do more and act faster. The good news is that in 2014, the president took decisive action to address this threat, in part, by moving forward with what the New York Times called, “the strongest action ever taken” by an American president to tackle global warming: The Clean Power Plan.

Limits placed on America’s #1 carbon polluters

In 2014, Environment Massachusetts worked to build support for the president’s Clean Power Plan, which would limit, for the first time, carbon emissions from America’s number one source of global warming pollution: dirty power plants.

- According to “America’s Dirtiest Power Plants,” a report released by Environment Massachusetts Research & Policy Center in September, our country’s coal-fired power plants produced more carbon pollution than the entire economies of Russia, India, Japan, or any other nation besides China.

- The Clean Power Plan would reduce power plant pollution by 30 percent below 2005 levels by 2030, making it instrumental in fulfilling the country’s commitment with China to reduce global warming emissions by at least 26 percent in the next decade.

- The Clean Power Plan is a huge deal—but it’s not a done deal. The proposal has been the subject of fierce attacks by the coal industry, some utilities and their allies in Congress, who have vowed to do everything in their power to block the plan.

8 million strong for the Clean Power Plan

In 2014, Environment Massachusetts, together with our national federation, launched our Global Warming Solutions campaign, which sought to connect the dots between the consequences of global warming that are already being felt across America and the meaningful impact of the Clean Power Plan.

- In June, the Environmental Protection Agency held hearings on the Clean Power Plan in Pittsburgh, Atlanta and Washington, D.C. Our staff helped turn out citizen climate defenders to show our support for the plan.

- Throughout the year, together with our national federation and a broad coalition, we collected 8 million comments of support for limiting carbon pollution from dirty power plants, which we delivered to the EPA on Dec. 2, as the public comment period for the plan ended.
Go Solar, Massachusetts

2014 was a breakout year for solar power in America. Another home or business in the United States went solar every four minutes, and the rate keeps getting faster. In 2014, we urged our leaders to go big on solar and leave dirty energy behind. By crafting and promoting state and local policies, Environment Massachusetts and our national federation have played a major role in the clean energy boom and continue to work to defend and expand pro-solar initiatives.
Ambitious goals for solar power now seen as readily achievable

According to research released in 2014, solar power is growing so fast across the country that goals once considered ambitious are now seen as readily achievable, and Massachusetts is leading the way. By tapping the power of the sun, we can break our dependence on fossil fuels and move to clean energy that’s virtually limitless, local and independent. In 2014, Environment Massachusetts called on our decision-makers to continue embracing solar power and growing policies and programs to help repower our state.

Smart policies led solar to triple in three years

Nationwide, the amount of solar power tripled from 2011 through 2013, thanks in part to policies that Environment Massachusetts and our national federation helped win. Massachusetts is an example for the country, ranking number four in solar electricity capacity.

- In August, Environment Massachusetts Research & Policy Center released a report, “Lighting the Way,” which found that just 10 states are responsible for 89 percent of the solar currently installed in the United States. This research recommended that the key to success is strong policies that are enabling increasing numbers of homeowners, businesses, communities and utilities to go solar.

- In order to facilitate strong solar policies, Environment Massachusetts Research & Policy Center’s report “Shining Cities,” released in April, recommended that states set ambitious goals for solar and commit to them, let the government lead by example by installing solar panels on public buildings, encourage communities to invest in solar, and more.

Let’s get to 20 percent solar power by 2025

Solar is growing so rapidly that the nation is on pace to achieve a goal of 10 percent solar by 2030, with huge benefits for the environment. According to “Star Power,” a report released in November by Environment Massachusetts Research & Policy Center, achieving this goal would cut 280 million metric tons of carbon by 2030, the equivalent of taking 59 million cars off the road.

In 2014, Environment Massachusetts urged Governor-elect Charlie Baker to commit to generating 20 percent of Massachusetts’s energy from the sun by 2025.

Together with our national federation, Environment Massachusetts worked to build support for solar-friendly policies to realize this goal. Nearly 400 civic leaders have signed letters, and more than 20,000 citizens have signed petitions calling on governors across the country to go big on solar, while more than 500 solar industry leaders have urged the Obama administration to make renewable energy a top priority.
Polluters shouldn’t be allowed to treat Lake Michigan like their own personal sewer. That’s the message Environment Illinois and our state affiliates took to more than 400,000 people in 2014, as part of a renewed call to close loopholes in the Clean Water Act. Together, we collected more than 200,000 public comments and built a coalition of businesses, elected officials and farmers to restore protections to all America’s waterways.

Don’t Frack Massachusetts

Across the country, fracking has left a trail of environmental destruction in its wake. And now fracking could come to the Pioneer Valley—home to family farms, the Connecticut River, picturesque small towns, and clean drinking water. In 2014, Environment Massachusetts collaborated with the victims of fracking to share their stories, and joined with health professionals to urge our decision-makers to keep fracking out of Massachusetts.
Let’s shut the door on fracking in Massachusetts before it begins

Across the country, fracking has been a rolling environmental disaster. From wells drilled a few hundred feet from people’s homes, to drinking water so contaminated that the company must provide bottled water to residents, fracking has disrupted communities, damaged landscapes and upended lives. Shale gas may be present in an area overlapping six watersheds in Western Massachusetts. The last thing we need are oil and gas companies to bulldoze their way into our state, inject chemical-laden water into the ground, and create millions of gallons of toxic wastewater.

100 health professionals called for end to fracking

As the state Legislature debated placing a ten-year moratorium on fracking in Massachusetts, Environment Massachusetts urged our decision makers to keep fracking out of the state.

- In February, we delivered letters signed by more than 100 Massachusetts doctors, nurses and other health professionals, calling on federal officials to protect the public from fracking.

- Our press conference was covered by newspapers across the state, adding to the groundswell of support for keeping fracking out of Massachusetts.

- And in June, we delivered a letter signed by more than 30 environmental groups statewide urging legislators to pass a bill to keep Massachusetts safe from fracking.

- These letters followed another 11,700 petitions we delivered from Bay Staters earlier in the legislative session.

Victims of fracking gave voice to its risks

In March, Environment Massachusetts Research & Policy Center collaborated with residents in Pennsylvania to release “Shalefield Stories,” a booklet of accounts of people living on the frontlines of drilling.

- From flammable tap water, to cancer-causing substances in the air, to severe illness, real people shared their stories and gave life to the alarming numbers that outline fracking’s environmental impacts.

- There is a growing number of documented cases of individuals suffering acute and chronic health effects while living near fracking operations, and a physician reviewing medical records in Pennsylvania said these illnesses could be the “tip of the iceberg.”

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