Fiscal Year 2019 Annual Report

Thanks for making it all possible
From the Director

To be an environmentalist, you’ve got to wrestle with a conundrum: We need bold action on a short timeline … with broad public support.

We need to do a lot, quickly, to preserve a livable planet. But progress has to earn and sustain the support of the people in order to last–so progress doesn’t often come in one big swooping action. It usually comes one small-ish victory at a time.

At Environment Massachusetts, we acknowledge the conundrum—and we embrace it. We believe in bold action on a large scale. But we work every day at the local, state and national levels to build, step by step, the support this action demands. Each college, or city or state that deploys more renewable energy helps win more people over to the possibility of a world that runs on the sun and the wind. Each company or state that phases out a single-use plastic product shows more people a way to end harm to ocean wildlife from plastic pollution.

These victories are smaller than the challenges demand. But as their pace picks up, their summary effect grows. A year ago, California became the second state to commit to 100 percent zero-carbon electricity. Now, there are six states with such commitments, plus Puerto Rico and Washington, D.C. Back in 2016, California banned single-use plastic bags. In 2019, five more states banned plastic bags, and Maine, Maryland and Vermont banned plastic foam take-out containers. Like all social changes, environmental solutions have tipping points.

Our natural world faces serious problems, and we’ve got to solve them. Our strategy is to make sure that each victory opens a door to the next. Thanks for being with us on the journey.

Sincerely,

Ben Hellerstein
State Director, Environment Massachusetts
Clean Water & Air

Through our Clean Water & Air program, our staff and members tackled problems ranging from the Trump administration’s attempts to roll back clean water standards, to industrial discharges that violate the Clean Water and Clean Air Acts. Below, you’ll find reports on our Get the Lead Out Campaign and on our work to keep our water clean of pollution.

The grades are in: Report finds states are failing to ensure safe drinking water for our children

MARCH 21, 2019: Lead contaminates the water coming out of drinking fountains and taps at schools across the country, and at least 22 states aren’t doing enough about it.

“Get the Lead Out,” a study published March 21 by our research partners Environment America Research & Policy Center and U.S. PIRG Education Fund, examined the policies of 31 states and Washington, D.C., and assigned grades based on how well they protect children from lead in drinking water at school. Twenty-two states earned an F grade with only Illinois and D.C. grading above the C range. Massachusetts received a D.

“Waiting for more tests to confirm that our children are drinking water laced with lead is unconscionable,” said John Rumpler, senior director of our national network’s clean water campaign. “It’s time to get the lead out.”

Environment Massachusetts and our national network are working in Massachusetts and more than a dozen other states to protect drinking water for millions of children by advancing policies to proactively get the lead out.

Ben Hellerstein asks: What’s in the water at your beach?

AUG. 16, 2019: While some Massachusetts beachgoers worry about sharks on the Cape, a new report underscores a more widespread threat: fecal bacteria.

On Aug. 13, our partner Environment Massachusetts Research & Policy Center released “Safe for Swimming?: Water Quality at Our Beaches.” The report found that more than 200 Massachusetts beach locations had potentially unsafe pollution levels from fecal bacteria (which is just what you think it is). This contamination, commonly caused by stormwater runoff and sewage overflows, can make people ill.

How widespread is the problem? “It’s happening on beaches all up and down our coastline, from the North Shore to the South Shore and the Cape,” said Environment Massachusetts State Director Ben Hellerstein to the Boston Herald.

Environment Massachusetts is calling on state legislators to pass a bill that would alert the public in the event of sewage overflows into our rivers and coastal waters.
Environment Massachusetts promoted a shift to clean, renewable energy, and a reduction in energy usage by increasing energy efficiency.
Clean, Green & Renewable Energy

With support from Environment Massachusetts’s members, our national network promoted energy efficiency in our homes, educated city leaders about solar, and fostered the development of wind power. Here are updates on our Energy Efficiency & Conservation and Go Solar campaigns.

**Bills promise greater energy efficiency for Mass. residents**

**JULY 2, 2019:** Massachusetts has not one chance, but four, to vastly improve our energy efficiency.

Over the last week of June, the Legislature’s Joint Committee on Telecommunications, Utilities, and Energy approved four bills that would reduce wasted energy, investigate how to increase the availability of energy efficiency programs to low-income households, and accelerate the adoption of clean heating technologies.

“The first step toward powering our society entirely with renewable energy is to reduce the amount of energy we’re using, so it’s fitting that these bills are among the first energy legislation to advance this session,” said Environment Massachusetts State Director Ben Hellerstein. “If enacted, these policies will significantly reduce harmful pollution from the burning of fossil fuels, while reducing energy costs for people from all walks of life.”

We’re urging the Senate Ways & Means Committee to approve the bills so the full Senate can vote on them.

**What if solar panels came with all new homes in Massachusetts?**

**SEPT. 23, 2019:** If you buy a new home, you expect it to come with heating, plumbing and wiring. What if it also came with solar power?

As reported by Roofing Contractor on Sept. 18, Environment Massachusetts-backed legislation would make the state the second in the country to require rooftop solar power systems to be installed on all new buildings. The article references Environment Massachusetts Research & Policy Center’s “Solar Homes” report, which found the proposed legislation would add more than 2,300 megawatts of solar capacity. That’s double the state’s current solar capacity.

“At the end of the day, if we’re building a new building in Massachusetts today, there is no reason why that building should not have solar panels on its roof as long as there is enough solar exposure,” said Environment Massachusetts State Director Ben Hellerstein to MetroWest Daily News in a Sept. 16 article.
Above: Environment Massachusetts State Director Ben Hellerstein testified in support of moving Massachusetts to 100% renewable energy. Below: Our national network campaigned for 100% renewable energy across the country.
Millennials lobby for 100% renewable energy in Massachusetts
APRIL 16, 2019: Millennials catch a lot of flack. But they might just be the generation to make the change we need.

On April 8, activists gathered at the State House for the first Millennials for 100% Renewable Energy Lobby Day and called on legislators to put Massachusetts on a path to 100 percent renewable by 2045. The leaders also announced the launch of the Millennials for 100% Renewable Energy Network that will connect members of the generation in government, universities, nonprofits and the private sector to collaborate on clean energy solutions.

“As millennials, the way our society produces and consumes energy will affect our lives for decades to come,” said Ben Hellerstein, Environment Massachusetts state director. “The good news is that we have the power to do something about it.”

The lobby day was sponsored by Environment Massachusetts, MASSPIRG Students, Resonant Energy, Vineyard Power and 350 Mass for a Better Future.

At packed hearing, Ben Hellerstein testifies for 100% renewable energy
JULY 24, 2019: If you want Massachusetts to go all-in on renewable energy, you’ve got company.

On July 23, hundreds of legislators, environmental advocates and community leaders showed up in support of the 100% Renewable Energy Act at a hearing before the Legislature’s energy committee. The measure would transition the state to 100 percent renewable electricity by 2035 and phase out the use of fossil fuels for heat and transportation by 2045. The bill has the endorsement of 113 legislators and dozens of environmental, civic and business organizations.

“We can power our lives without polluting our air or changing our climate,” testified Environment Massachusetts State Director Ben Hellerstein at the hearing. “Massachusetts has long led the nation in reducing harmful pollution and expanding renewable energy. Our commonwealth’s leadership is needed now more than ever.”

Our national network has helped win statewide commitments to renewable electricity in California, New Mexico, Washington state and Maine. We got next.
Leaders of our national network’s canvass team met in Baltimore before spreading across the country to build public support for putting wildlife over waste by banning single-use plastics (top).

Photo credits: (clockwise from top) Lake Stein, Cup Of Spring via Shutterstock, Pixabay, Scott F Smith via Shutterstock, Chris Holman via Shutterstock
Conservation

Our network’s staff and members sought to revive the country’s best conservation and recreation program, and to spare Arctic wildlife from oil and gas exploration and drilling. Below, find more on our national network’s efforts to protect wildlife from plastic pollution and save the bees from toxic pesticides.

Six states in six months choose Wildlife Over Waste
JULY 2, 2019: In the first half of 2019 alone, six states took strong action to rein in plastic pollution.

New York, Maine, Vermont, Connecticut and Oregon all banned single-use plastic bags, joining California, which banned them in 2016. Maine also became the first state to ban single-use polystyrene foam containers, and Maryland became the second a month later. Bags and polystyrene are seldom recycled. Instead, they often end up in our rivers and oceans, where they never fully degrade and pose a threat to wildlife for years to come.

“Our Wildlife Over Waste campaign is based on the principle that nothing we use for a few minutes should pollute our environment for centuries,” said Steve Blackledge, senior director of our national network’s Conservation program. “When we started this year, it was only California. Now it’s a movement.”

Our network’s staff were instrumental in winning the California ban, and campaigned for the laws in Maine, Connecticut, Oregon and Maryland.

Across Massachusetts, 20,000 join call to save the bees
JULY 23, 2019: We knocked, you answered and state leaders are now hearing your call to save the bees.

On July 17, Environment Massachusetts delivered a petition signed by 20,000 residents calling on state leaders to restrict the use of bee-killing pesticides. This summer, our canvassers knocked on doors across the state, holding one-on-one conversations to educate the public about the threats facing bee populations and to build grassroots support for action.

“A world without bees would mean a world without many of our favorite summer foods,” said Ben Hellerstein, Environment Massachusetts state director. “Across Massachusetts, people are speaking out to save our pollinators.”

The petition asks state leaders to restrict the use of neonics. Rep. Carolyn Dykema (Middlesex) and Sen. Jamie Eldridge (Middlesex and Worcester) have filed bills to reduce the use of these pesticides. Across the country, millions of bees are dying off and colonies are suffering from colony collapse disorder. Neonicotinoid insecticides, or neonics, are a primary culprit.
Above: Staff from our national research partner Environment America Research & Policy Center, along with their allies, delivered 350,000 public comments in support of federal Clean Car standards to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. Below: Andrea McGimsey and Environment America Research & Policy Center staff hosted a tour of an electric bus facility (upper middle and bottom right).
Global Warming Solutions

Environment Massachusetts worked with other state groups in our network to reduce carbon emissions from power plants, transportation and other sources. Here’s more on what our network did to promote state-level action across the country and defend strong pollution standards for cars and trucks.

Wrong way for the climate: 350,000 oppose rollback of Clean Cars Standards

OCT. 26, 2018: Given the alarming ways our climate is changing, doesn’t it make sense for automakers to focus on making cars that pollute far less, if at all?

On Oct. 26, our network’s national research partner showed the Trump administration that 350,000 Americans think so. Together with coalition partners, Environment America Research & Policy Center delivered that many public comments to the Environmental Protection Agency and the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration opposing plans to roll back federal Clean Car Standards. By freezing the standards at 2020 levels, the plan would lock in more dirty air and global warming pollution.

“WeWith the latest research telling us we’ll have a climate catastrophe on our hands if we don’t significantly slash global warming emissions, we need to move forward, not pull a U-turn,” said Andrea.

Our network is also calling on state leaders to promote zero-emission electric vehicles.

Twelve ways a governor can start tackling climate change right now

JAN. 10, 2019: As 20 new governors took office in January, a new report outlined actions all governors could take to lead the way on climate solutions.

On Jan. 10, our national research partner Environment America Research & Policy Center released a report titled “Climate Solutions from Day One,” which detailed 12 executive actions that governors can take immediately to help solve the climate crisis. These range from updating building codes to improve energy efficiency—as Gov. Kate Brown has already done in Oregon—to collaborating in regional climate initiatives like the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative in the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic.

“WeWith the stroke of a pen, governors can start cutting global warming pollution today by increasing renewable energy use, reducing transportation emissions and curbing energy waste,” said Andrea McGimsey, senior director of our national network’s Global Warming Solutions program.

Our network urged governors across the country to adopt these recommendations.
Our staff (partial list)

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State Director

Rob Sargent
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