A summer spent fighting for clean water

Closing polluter loopholes with grassroots action
Late this spring, the Environmental Protection Agency proposed a rule to close loopholes in the Clean Water Act that have left more than half the streams that feed New Hampshire's lakes and the drinking water for half a million Granite Staters at risk for more than a decade.

On the heels of the EPA’s announcement, we launched a grassroots campaign to build the public support necessary to get the rule across the finish line.

Over the course of several months, our staff talked to thousands of people across the state, collecting hundreds of public comments to the EPA, and built a coalition of small business owners, local elected officials and farmers.

800 pounds of chemicals
Shortly after the EPA’s announcement, big polluters ramped up their efforts to block the rule, lobbying in Congress, spreading misinformation, and threatening “legal warfare.”

But we debunked their claims when we released “Wasting Our Waterways,” which found that 800 pounds of toxic chemicals were dumped in New Hampshire’s waterways—and 206 million pounds were dumped in waterways across the country—in 2012 alone.

“America’s waterways shouldn’t be a polluter’s dumping ground,” said Ally Fields, our federal clean water advocate. “If we want our waterways to be clean for future generations to enjoy, we must restore Clean Water Act protections to our waterways now.”

Businesses, farmers joined us
And when polluters launched a misinformation campaign targeting farmers and lobbied in Congress saying the rule would negatively impact small businesses, we hit the streets and, together with our national federation, gathered the signatures of 300 small business owners and collected comments from more than 200 farmers to call on the EPA to restore protections.

The fight is far from over, but we’re closing in on the finish line. With the public comment period coming to an end soon, we’re ramping up our efforts to show Congress the widespread support for clean water.
Recent action

Electric cars put the brakes on pollution

More than 220,000 electric and plug-in hybrid vehicles are on America’s roads today, delivering real benefits for our health and our environment, according to a new report released by Environment New Hampshire’s federal affiliate. In just the last two years, annual sales of electric vehicles have increased by 500 percent.

The report, “Driving Cleaner: More Electric Vehicles Mean Less Pollution,” shows that electric vehicles could prevent more than 139,000 metric tons of climate-changing carbon pollution annually in New Hampshire by 2025. That’s the equivalent of saving more than 15.6 million gallons of gasoline per year, or eliminating tailpipe pollution from more than 29,000 of today’s cars.

“We need more electric vehicles on the road,” said Shelley Vinyard, Environment New Hampshire regional director. “So we’re calling on our leaders to get in the driver’s seat and make electric cars as convenient, affordable and widespread as cars currently powered by oil.”

Protections for the White Mountains on the line

Holding the line for New Hampshire’s natural heritage is a key part of our mission. That’s why standing by as Congress attempts to zero out funding for the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF), our most successful parks and open space program, wasn’t an option for us.

This past July, the LWCF celebrated its 50th anniversary—50 years of protecting places like the White Mountains and the Appalachian Trail from overdevelopment, pollution and disrepair. When a section of the Appalachian Trail was devastated by out-of-state logging operations, it was restored through the Fund.

Along with our national federation, we’re bringing people together to urge our senators to make preserving our special places a priority. By standing up to anti-environment members of Congress, our senators can leave a lasting legacy for our parks.
EPA takes historic step to tackle global warming

June 2 will go down as a historic date in the fight to tackle global warming. The Environmental Protection Agency finally proposed the first-ever federal limits on carbon pollution from power plants.

Unbelievably, until now, there have been no federal limits on the amount of carbon power plants are permitted to spew into the atmosphere, despite the fact that these culprits are the largest single source of global warming pollution.

Environment New Hampshire enthusiastically applauded the proposal, which would reduce carbon pollution from power plants by 30 percent below 2005 levels by 2030. Once finalized, this will be the largest step the U.S. has taken to combat global warming.

“This announcement is exactly what we’ve been waiting for,” said Shelley Vinyard, regional program director of Environment New Hampshire. “This is America’s chance to lead and our best opportunity to give our children a legacy we can be proud of.”

Today’s consequences

The National Climate Assessment, released in May, recognized the current impacts of global warming and the urgent need for action: “Climate change, once considered an issue for a distant future, has moved firmly into the present.”

Here in New Hampshire, severe flooding and storms have devastated communities across the state and threatened public safety.

“This proposal is a huge win for New Hampshire,” said Vinyard. “It means a safer future to come.”

This step forward is in large part a testament to the millions of Americans, more than 600 local elected officials, and hundreds of small businesses who have already demanded the cutting of carbon pollution. But we’ve still got work to do.

Defending the plan

Following the announcement, Environment America, our national affiliate, launched a nationwide “Global Warming Solutions Campaign.” Active in 24 states, the $2.4 million campaign has helped Americans across the country connect the dots between the consequences of global warming and the meaningful impact of the Clean Power Plan.

In July, our national staff across the country testified in front of the EPA during hearings on their plan. Not surprisingly, the dirty energy industry showed up to stack these events and spread misinformation. But we were there too, standing up for the urgent need to act on climate.

“Once implemented, the Clean Power Plan will be the biggest step the U.S. has ever taken to cut global warming pollution,” said Vinyard. “This is a huge deal. But it’s not yet a done deal. The fossil energy lobby and other polluters are spending millions to oppose the EPA’s commonsense action. That’s where Environment New Hampshire comes in: To ensure this critically-important step is taken. Our kids’ future depends on it.”

Interview with Sen. Kelly Ayotte

Sen. Kelly Ayotte, an avid outdoor enthusiast, sat down with Environment New Hampshire to talk about her work to protect the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF).

The LWCF has successfully used non-taxpayer dollars to safeguard wild places from pollution and degradation. What do you think the future of this program is? Protecting New Hampshire’s parks, trails, and lands helps support our outdoor recreation economy, which is fundamental to our way of life.

The tangible success stories of LWCF prove that the future of the program is bright, and I will continue to highlight the critical work being done with LWCF funds and support these programs in the Senate.

Do you have any favorite places in New Hampshire that the LWCF has helped protect? Since its inception in 1965, LWCF has provided over $36 million to support projects on 49,000 acres and at least 200 parks across the Granite state. The benefits of the program can be seen everywhere.

What role can people play in seeing our natural legacy protected for future generations? By nature, Granite Staters enjoy outdoor recreation. By looking for ways to improve recreation areas and preserve special places in their local communities, New Hampshire citizens can help improve access to the outdoors for residents and tourists, which will benefit our environment, health, and local economy.

To find out more, visit: www.EnvironmentNewHampshireCenter.org

Staff in action
Strong policies drive solar

New Hampshire contributed to tripling solar energy nationwide between 2011 and 2013, according to our new report, “Lighting the Way: The Top 10 States that Helped Drive America’s Solar Energy Boom in 2013.” The report shows that it is not availability of sunlight that makes states solar leaders, but effective public policies. Solar in Granite State increased by 2 megawatts this past year, thanks to New Hampshire’s involvement in the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative and a set of policies—such as net metering and a renewable energy standard—to decrease global warming pollution.

“Recent progress on solar shows that a strong commitment with the policies to back it up make solar succeed,” said Ben McCormack, field organizer with Environment New Hampshire. “If we maintain momentum, we’ll reap the tremendous benefits of cleaner air and less carbon pollution from burning fossil fuels.”