Progress for New Hampshire’s lakes in jeopardy

Congress attempts to block EPA from doing its job

This summer, Environment New Hampshire is building support for strong rules to protect the lakes and streams found here and across the country. But to do this we need to overcome opposition in Congress.

Whether we’re kayaking around the 253 islands in Lake Winnipesaukee, swimming in Lake Sunapee or casting for trout in Umbagog Lake, it isn’t summer in New Hampshire without a trip to one of our lakes. But our lakes face pollution and political opposition that could threaten our ability to enjoy these special places.

More than half of our streams at risk

Recent Supreme Court decisions have called into question whether more than half of New Hampshire’s streams, including waters that feed our lakes, are still protected by the Clean Water Act.

Without these protections, polluters can dump with impunity and developers can pave over wetlands. Ultimately, our lakes pay the price—and so could the nearly half a million New Hampshire residents whose drinking water sources may now be vulnerable to pollution.

EPA targeted by polluters

Last fall, we urged the Environmental Protection Agency to take the lead on restoring protections for New Hampshire’s lakes. In response, they agreed to strengthen protections for our lakes, rivers and streams across the country. Unfortunately, Congress is threatening to stop the EPA from taking these actions to protect our lakes.

In February, for example, the House passed a bill to block EPA action on clean water.

To stop this attack, Environment New Hampshire and our allies across the country worked to expose the polluter influence behind the House’s move, and to show broad public support for clean water. We presented EPA Administrator Lisa Jackson with thousands of petitions supporting protections for New Hampshire’s lakes and all of America’s lakes, rivers and streams.

So far, these efforts have helped defeat the worst assaults on clean water—but there is little doubt that polluters and their allies in Congress will try again. This summer, we will be talking to people across the state about the threats facing our lakes, and building the public support the EPA will need to protect them.

Visit our website to learn more about our work to protect New Hampshire’s lakes, and to get involved.

Links to additional content can be found online:
www.EnvironmentNewHampshire.org
Recent action

2010 was breakthrough year for solar

In an otherwise lackluster economy, in 2010 the solar industry shined brighter than ever with a 67 percent increase in the amount of solar energy projects installed across America compared to 2009.

That means more homes and businesses across the country powered by pollution-free solar energy, an increase made possible by strong solar policies implemented at the urging of Environment New Hampshire. In December, Federal Clean Energy Advocate Sean Garren led our charge in Congress to extend critical incentives for solar power.

Environment New Hampshire, along with the rest of the Environment America federation, continues to strategize with entrepreneurs within the solar industry to hit a far more ambitious benchmark: getting 10 percent of our nation’s energy from solar by 2030.

President pushes for conservation funding

Margie Alt, the director of our national federation, joined President Obama at the White House in February for his announcement that he’d seek the renewal of the federal Land and Water Conservation Fund.

What’s the Land and Water Conservation Fund? For the past 45 years the federal government has put a fraction of the revenue from offshore drilling into a trust fund to expand national parks, protect hunting and fishing areas, and aid local conservation and recreation projects like city parks and playing fields.

In 2010, the Land and Water Conservation Fund spent money protecting White Mountain National Forest, New Hampshire’s section of the Appalachian Trail, Lake Umbagog and more.

Our staff is currently building support for the approval of the conservation funding in Congress.

To our members

What does summer in New Hampshire mean to you? For some, it’s kayaking around the 253 islands in Lake Winnipesaukee. For the less adventurous among us, it’s a leisurely afternoon at one of our many lakefront beaches.

Our state’s waters are cleaner than they once were, thanks in part to the action of local citizens and the standards set and enforced by state and federal environmental officials. As times have changed, officials have updated these standards so we keep moving toward a goal of waters that are safe and clean enough to swim in, fish in or drink from.

As some in Congress consider whether to block the EPA from doing its job—protecting our lakes and the streams that feed them—I hope you’ll join us this summer in showing your support for clean water.

Sincerely,

Paul Burns
New England Regional Program Director
In 2008, New Hampshire became a clean energy leader with the passage of our cornerstone clean energy law, the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI). In 2011, Environment New Hampshire is working to defend RGGI—and our state’s progress toward a cleaner energy future—from the threat of a legislative rollback.

Getting New Hampshire off oil
Between our drafty homes, businesses and other buildings, and our heavy use of heating oil each winter, New Hampshire tops the list for per capita oil consumption. Every year we send $2.6 billion to other states and countries to pay for the energy that lights and heats our homes.

That’s where RGGI comes in. The law invests critical funding in energy efficiency programs, helping to lower our utility bills, shrink our carbon footprint, and keep energy dollars in our state. Since 2008, it has brought more than $28 million into New Hampshire’s economy.

Already, New Hampshire’s landmark clean energy law is helping families, businesses and communities across the state kickstart local clean energy and efficiency projects. To name just one example, a RGGI grant given to the Lakes Region Community College helped develop a new job training program to put residents back to work in the growing energy efficiency industry.

State House votes to repeal RGGI
RGGI is a win-win-win for the Granite State, helping us save money on our utility bills, create local jobs and protect our environment.

But unfortunately, polluters and their allies in the state House see things differently. Out-of-state oil and coal interests have spent millions on misleading ad campaigns and lobbying efforts in New Hampshire to repeal RGGI and avoid having to pay to upgrade their fossil-fueled power plants. And their allies in the Legislature are happy to oblige—in March, the House voted to repeal RGGI by a vote of 251-108.

Environment New Hampshire is working to stop the rollback of this bedrock clean energy program. Gov. John Lynch has been very supportive, sending a strong message to the Legislature urging them to protect a program that’s good for our economy and our environment. In a letter to the state House he wrote, “Withdrawal from RGGI would be a blow to our economy and to our state’s efforts to become more energy efficient and energy independent.”

But with powerful out-of-state polluters itching to loosen limits on harmful emissions and stall energy conservation efforts, this critical program needs all the support we can muster. As the repeal measure moves to the Senate, we’ve banded together with the state’s environmental community, veterans’ groups, clean energy businesses and activists to rally thousands of people statewide to send our lawmakers a message: Defend our clean energy programs and RGGI.

More online
Visit us online to take action in support of RGGI and protect our energy efficiency programs
www.EnvironmentNewHampshire.org/action

Defending New Hampshire’s progress on clean energy

How could nuclear ever be worth the risk?

Our hearts go out to the families in Japan that were stricken by a massive natural disaster in March.

After an earthquake and tsunami ravaged Japan, the country remains in the midst of a nuclear crisis. The fallout from this disaster has touched millions of lives in Japan and is being felt worldwide. The health threats are numbing: Drinking water samples in Tokyo are contaminated with radioactive iodine at a level dangerous to infants; a dozen agricultural products from the Fukushima region are radioactive at dangerous levels; hundreds of thousands of people have been evacuated from the area around the reactors, and many other effects are just being assessed—including high radiation levels in the nearby ocean waters.

The events in Japan must be a wake-up call for Americans about the dangers of nuclear power. We must ask ourselves: Is it worth the risk? Our current use of nuclear power gambles with our children’s health and our environment. In Japan, Mother Nature yet again proved stronger than anything we can design. Isn’t that possible here as well? How secure are nearby nuclear power plants, like Seabrook or Vermont Yankee?

We must act now to ensure the safety of existing plants, put a moratorium on any new plants, and begin to phase out our use of nuclear power. We can and must move away from energy technologies that put our environment and health at massive risk and repower our country with clean, renewable energy, like wind and solar power.
Americans could save nearly $10 billion annually on their energy bills by using solar water heaters in their homes and businesses, according to a new report from the Environment New Hampshire Research & Policy Center. According to the report, New Hampshire ranks seventh in the nation for oil savings from solar hot water.

The report, “Smart, Clean and Ready to Go,” also found that the widespread use of cost-effective solar hot water technology could cut our dependence on fossil fuels and reduce New Hampshire’s global warming pollution by the equivalent of taking nearly 22,000 cars off the road each year.

Environment New Hampshire’s Jessica O’Hare released the report alongside Jack Bingham of SEA Solar Store and state Sens. Amanda Merrill and Nancy Stiles. “We have long had the technology and the know-how to harness the free heat of the sun to get hot water,” noted O’Hare, “and more than ever we have a workforce that is ready to install these affordable solar panels on roofs across the state.”