Congress threatens New Hampshire’s air, water

Over the past year, with the public’s attention focused on the economy, anti-environmental extremists in Congress have quietly launched an all-out attack on the laws that protect New Hampshire’s waters, from Lake Winnipesaukee to Lake Sunapee—as well as the air we breathe and the places we love.

It’s the most radical, reckless attack on our environment in our lifetimes—and it’s happening under the radar, through provisions slipped into massive budget bills.

191 anti-environment votes

According to U.S. Rep. Henry Waxman, in the U.S. House alone, lawmakers cast an incredible 191 roll call votes in 2011 on measures that would block the EPA from keeping our waters clean, making our air safer to breathe, or enforcing other environmental protections.

In February, the House rammed through a budget bill that took aim at our rivers and streams, our air, and funding for national parks. In August, the U.S. House passed a bill containing 39 separate environmental attacks.

The voting record of New Hampshire’s members of Congress has been mixed. Sen. Jeanne Shaheen has been a consistent environmental supporter. Rep. Frank Guinta, however, has cast 30 votes against the environment—more than any other member of our delegation.

So far, we’ve blocked the attacks

So far, none of these attacks have become law, with Environment New Hampshire research, advocacy and grassroots action helping to hold the line.

In 2011, we released five research reports, including one entitled “New Hampshire’s Biggest Mercury Polluters,” which helped spotlight the consequences of lowering our guard against pollution. We’ve personally made our case to members of our congressional delegation and their aides in both New Hampshire and Washington, D.C. Our members have called, emailed or petitioned their lawmakers to reject any bills that threaten our air and water.

With the Senate rejecting four of the worst proposals this fall, the tide might be starting to turn. We’ll keep you informed, so you can let your lawmakers know where you stand. To sign up for alerts, visit our new website at www.EnvironmentNewHampshire.org.

In 2011, House lawmakers cast 191 roll-call votes on anti-environment measures, including ones that would allow more pollution of New Hampshire’s air and water.
More than ever, we are seeing an alarming disconnect between the concerns of American families and the policy debates in Washington. Polluters continue to contaminate the air we breathe and the water we drink, yet we’re fighting against rollbacks on the protections we already have. Unemployment rates remain astronomical, yet oil subsidies direct our tax dollars to multinational oil companies while we struggle to fund green development at home. Global fossil fuel emissions have reached higher levels than ever, yet members of Congress continue to deny any human effect on the Earth’s climate.

Yet we can shift the momentum. And we’re going to do that from the ground up—in our local communities and state legislatures. By making New Hampshire a champion for clean water, clean air, and clean energy, we will move our country forward in 2012.

Sincerely,
Jessica O’Hare
Advocate

54.5 mpg standard nears finish line
This summer, the Obama administration announced a plan to require cars and trucks to meet a 54.5 miles per gallon standard by 2025. In November, the administration opened a public comment period on the proposed standards.

The standards mark the biggest step America has ever taken to fight global warming—and benefits would also be felt closer to home. By reducing oil consumption, the proposed standards would generate annual savings of $210 million by 2030 in New Hampshire alone.

Unfortunately, with the National Auto Dealers Association lobbying to weaken the new standards, and some of their allies in Congress vowing to block it altogether, this victory is not yet a done deal.

Our staff and members are urging the Obama administration to seize this important opportunity to get America off oil.

The way forward on global warming
With gridlock on energy and climate policy in Congress, it is clearer than ever that leading states such as New Hampshire must take matters into their own hands to dramatically reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Environment New Hampshire’s recent report, “The Way Forward On Global Warming,” finds that by adopting a suite of renewable energy and energy efficiency policies here in New Hampshire and across the country, we have the potential to reduce our carbon dioxide emissions from 2008 levels by over 20 percent by 2020—and by close to 50 percent by 2030.

What we need to do now is move swiftly on this agenda and take action to reduce emissions in any way we can. By showing that these solutions work, we can use our success to lead the way on climate policy.
The cost of our dependence on oil is out of control—and it’s putting the health, welfare, and security of New Hampshire families at risk.

Over the past year, our oil consumption has transferred more than $2 billion out of our state to oil companies and oil-producing nations—eating up paychecks, undermining our economic recovery, and costing our state jobs.

For generations, politicians in both parties have bemoaned our dependence on oil. And yet, nearly four decades after the 1973 oil embargo first exposed the economic costs of our oil dependence, New Hampshire and the country as a whole still remain dangerously addicted to petroleum.

N.H. leads in oil consumption
As a result of New Hampshire’s heavy reliance on oil for both heating and transportation, we rank among the top 20 states for per capita oil consumption.

Oil is a leading cause of many of our most intractable environmental problems, including air pollution, water pollution, global warming and habitat destruction.

New Hampshire’s oil dependence is also a huge drain on our economy. According to the governor’s Office of Energy and Planning, we send $2.6 billion out of state each year for the energy we use to heat and light our homes and businesses. That’s equal to .75 cents for every dollar that circulates through our economy.

Discussing solutions to oil dependence
On December 6, Environment New Hampshire hosted a “Get Off Oil” forum at Red Blazer Restaurant & Pub in Concord. Advocate Jessica O’Hare and organizers from the Truman National Security Project, an organization of veterans concerned about our dependence on foreign oil and climate change, led the event. They joined experts on clean energy and transportation to discuss the problems with our dependence on oil and how we can break our addiction. The forum got the ball rolling on a discussion of how to pass meaningful measures to move New Hampshire beyond oil.

New Hampshire’s dependence on oil is more than a century in the making, and ending it won’t be easy. But the technology exists to take the first steps.

We can slash our oil consumption by improving the energy efficiency of our homes and businesses, moving people and goods more efficiently, and finding sustainable substitutes for petroleum.

But to get there we need a game plan—concrete goals, a plan that helps get us on track, and a way to hold our leaders accountable.

Environment New Hampshire’s Get Off Oil Forum was the first step toward an aggressive plan to end our dependence on oil. The broad coalition of environmental advocates, health groups, veterans and clean energy business leaders who joined us made the forum a success.

Q&A with America’s top environmental regulator

The EPA has recently worked on several clean air standards including the Mercury and Air Toxics Standard and the Cross-State Air Pollution Rule. Can you explain what these standards mean for the average American family?

These new Clean Air Act standards mean cleaner, healthier air for American families.

The Mercury and Air Toxics Standard and the Cross-State Air Pollution Rule are part of a series of commonsense steps under the Clean Air Act to reduce emissions of mercury, acid gas, particulate matter, arsenic and other harmful chemicals from some of the biggest polluters in the nation.

These reasonable steps will provide dramatic protections to our children and loved ones—they will save tens of thousands of lives and prevent hundreds of thousands of asthma and heart attacks.

What’s the best way for our members and supporters to express their opinions on these issues?

Unfortunately, we are at a point where we have to remind some leaders in Washington to put the health of their constituents above the wish lists of special interests. Speaking directly to those who want to undermine commonsense environmental protections is one of the best ways to stand up for your right to clean air and clean water.

For the full interview, visit www.EnvironmentNewHampshire.org/page/NHE/Lisa-Jackson-interview
Environment New Hampshire

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 New Hampshire. We focus exclusively on protecting New Hampshire’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.

EPA to cut mercury, save 25,000 lives

In December, the Environmental Protection Agency moved ahead with efforts to significantly reduce mercury, soot and smog pollution from power plants.

We expect these standards to save more than 25,000 lives every year. We built support across New Hampshire to ensure these rules were adopted:

• We released two reports this fall on the health impacts of smog and mercury pollution. The reports also reveal how much pollution is emitted by specific power plants.

• We partnered with our national coalition of allies to help motivate more than 800,000 people across America to send the EPA public comments in support of strong action on mercury—no other single EPA rule has ever received so much public support.

Here in New Hampshire, the threat of mercury contamination led the Department of Health to recommend against eating fish caught in Crystal Lake, Mascoma Lake, Ashuelot Pond, and other lakes, rivers and ponds.