Annual Report

A recap of our work for our members in 2013
I am excited to update you on a busy year for Environment Colorado, filled with accomplishments made possible by your support.

In the last year, Environment Colorado played a critical role in increasing renewable energy in the state by helping to pass SB 252—a piece of legislation that increases the renewable energy standard for rural co-ops and municipal utilities (which make up 40 percent of the state’s energy use) to 20 percent by 2020. As Colorado continues to endure severe weather events, from wildfires and drought to historic flooding, it is clear that we need to take action to reduce our carbon emissions, but the coal industry won’t let this happen without a fight. We generated hundreds of calls and emails from our members into our legislator’s offices, and organized dozens of rural farmers, ranchers and small business owners to call on our state officials to increase renewable energy in the state—and they listened.

As we enter this legislative session, there will be many attacks on the renewable energy standard. But I’ve seen time and again that when we combine the facts with citizen action and direct advocacy, we can win.

We also spoke with nearly 30,000 Coloradan’s across the state about protecting our parks and forests from fracking. We have some of the most beautiful parks and forests in the country. We’re working to make sure these pristine forest areas remain intact for years to come.

I am honored and grateful for all that we have accomplished, and ready to take on the next challenge as we push for clean energy, work to protect our parks and forests from fracking, and fight to stop global warming. Thank you for standing with us as we fight for a cleaner, greener Colorado.

Sincerely,

Kim Stevens
Campaign Director
Conservation Colorado

Rocky Mountain National Park is part of Colorado’s natural legacy. But our national parks are suffering from funding cuts, and the problem is getting worse. In the past year, Environment Colorado released a report detailing the threats posed by funding cuts and called on our senators to give our parks the resources they deserve.

Congress urged to restore parks funding

A recent Environment Colorado Research & Policy Center analysis, “Death by a Thousand Cuts,” exposed the challenges facing Rocky Mountain National Park as a result of mounting funding cuts to the National Park Service.

“Death by a Thousand Cuts”

“At Rocky Mountain National Park, the sequester cuts forced the park superintendent to close the Glacier Basin Campground through the entire 2013 season,” said Lindsey Wilson, field associate with Environment Colorado. “We don’t want a death by a thousand cuts for Rocky Mountain National Park.”

Rocky Mountain National Park provides critical habitat for wildlife like elk, pika and bighorn sheep. Visitors to the park have been enjoying some of the most beautiful hiking and camping in the country since the park opened in 1915.

We called on Sens. Michael Bennet and Mark Udall to keep fighting for places like Rocky Mountain National Park by ensuring they’re provided the full funding they need. Colorado park lovers are counting on it.
In 2013, the Obama administration announced a long-awaited plan to restore Clean Water Act protections to the nation’s streams and wetlands—including 75,000 miles of rivers and streams here in Colorado. For years, Environment Colorado has been calling for action to close these loopholes. More than 84,000 Americans joined our call for action; among them, 1,000 health professionals, 439 local elected officials and 180 farmers made their voices heard.
Administration’s plan to protect rivers

Last fall, the Obama administration took first steps to close the Clean Water Act loopholes and protect our waters. This is big news—we’re closer than ever to victory. To get these critical protections over the finish line, Environment Colorado is showing President Obama that Coloradans overwhelmingly support clean water.

75,000 miles of Colorado’s rivers and streams unprotected

The oil and gas industry, big factory farms, and developers have been taking advantage of loopholes in the Clean Water Act for years, and have been lobbying hard to keep the Obama administration from closing them.

- In the last decade, polluter-driven Supreme Court decisions left nearly 75,000 miles Colorado’s streams and hundreds of acres of wetlands vulnerable to pollution and development.

- And it’s not just small streams and wetlands—these waterways are the same ones that feed the Arkansas, the South Platte and all of our rivers and help to keep them clean.

- In 2010, polluters dumped 250,000 pounds of toxic pollution into the South Platte alone.

- Since 2006, we have been urging Congress to protect our rivers by simply declaring that the Clean Water Act applies to all of Colorado’s waters.

After urging, administration took first steps

- In the past three years alone, Environment Colorado and our sister organizations across the country had nearly 1 million face-to-face conversations with the public about the need to restore Clean Water Act protections to all of our waterways, activating citizens to submit 84,000 public comments to the Environment Protection Agency in the process.

- In September, the Obama administration announced it is moving forward with a rule to clarify protections for America’s waterways. Environment Colorado staff, supporters and allies will continue to mobilize the public and push for better clean water protections until our all our waterways our protected.

A Million Solar Roofs

Colorado has some of the greatest solar potential in the country, and yet we get less energy from the sun than New Jersey. That’s why in 2013, we called on Gov. John Hickenlooper to set a big, bold goal of a million solar roofs in Colorado by 2030. We also helped pass critical legislation to increase Colorado’s renewable energy standard.
Broad coalition, 11,000 citizens urged support for solar energy

Across the state, we’re building support to go solar from citizens like you, clean energy businesses, industry leaders and advocates. By showing Gov. Hickenlooper, other state officials and local leaders a broad base of support from the public, businesses and cities across Colorado, Environment Colorado worked to reach a million solar roofs—and make Colorado a national leader in solar.

280 businesses and organizations

In 2013, we went door-to-door across Colorado and talked to tens of thousands of Coloradans about the issue. In total, 11,000 citizens took action, calling on the governor to stand up for solar and set this bold goal.

- To further highlight the vast support for solar across the state, we built a broad coalition of small business owners, farmers and ranchers and local elected officials who want a clean energy future. When we launched our campaign last summer, these leaders stood with us at press events across the state, pointing to the economic and environmental benefits of going solar.

- In addition, Environment Colorado Research & Policy Center released “Lighting the Way,” a report detailing the growth of solar in Colorado and other states—and ways to build on this progress.

- The report emphasized the importance of strong solar policies in harnessing our solar potential, including: net metering policies that compensate consumers for the solar electricity they provide to the grid; interconnection policies that allow easy connection to the grid; renewable electricity standards; and creative financing options, such as third-party power purchase agreements and property-assessed clean energy financing.

Renewable energy standard increased

In 2013, Environment Colorado also played a critical role in increasing renewable energy in the state by helping to pass SB 252—a piece of legislation that increased the renewable energy standard for rural co-ops and municipal utilities (which make up 40 percent of the state’s energy use) to 20 percent by 2020.

The coal industry came out swinging, but we generated hundreds of calls and emails from our members into our legislators’ offices, and organized dozens of rural farmers, ranchers and small business owners to call on our state officials to increase renewable energy in the state.

In 2014, we will continue to protect our state’s renewable energy and work on making Colorado a leader in clean energy.
Protect Our Parks from Drilling

As fracking spreads across the state, it has left a trail of destruction—air pollution, water contamination and forests turned to industrial zones. To make matters worse, our federal officials are close to expanding fracking in our national forests and near our national parks. Last year, Environment Colorado launched a campaign to protect these parks and forests from fracking.
Public mobilized to protect White River, Mesa Verde and more from fracking

Colorado is home to some of the most beautiful national parks and forests in the country. But several of these treasured places—from White River National Forest to Mesa Verde National Park—are now threatened by the oil and gas industry’s plan to expand fracking. In 2013, we talked to people across the state about the threat posed by fracking to Colorado’s natural heritage.

Thousands educated about fracking threats

We ran citizen outreach efforts educating Coloradans on the truth about fracking. We talked face-to-face with citizens across the state—from Durango, to the Roaring Fork Valley, to the Front Range—creating a groundswell of public support to protect Colorado’s special places from fracking. Thousands took action, urging federal officials to:

• Keep fracking out of our national forests and away from our national parks and drinking water sources; and

• Close the loopholes exempting fracking from key environmental laws—especially the one exempting billions of gallons of toxic fracking waste from our nation’s hazardous waste law.

“Fracking by the Numbers” report shows damage

Environment Colorado also raised awareness about fracking through reports and media outreach. Our report, “Fracking by the Numbers,” calculated the key impacts of fracking—the first of its kind to do so. The report’s findings included:

• In 2012 alone, fracking in Colorado generated 2.2 billion gallons of toxic wastewater. And too often, this fracking waste can find its way into our groundwater and water supplies—already, there have been more than 400 documented cases of water contamination from fracking operations in our state.

• 57,000 acres have been damaged by fracking activity in Colorado. That’s equal to one-third of the acreage of the entire state park system.

• In Colorado, fracking emits an estimated 38,000 tons of air pollutants that can have immediate negative health effects, including particulate matter, VOCs (volatile organic compounds) and carbon monoxide.

• Fracking operations emit millions of metric tons of methane, which is a global warming pollutant 25 times more powerful than carbon dioxide. Global warming-causing methane emissions from fracking in Colorado between 2005 and 2012 are estimated at 23 million metric tons.

Top: Hikers in the Hall Ranch Open Space Park
Bottom: During last September’s floods, fracking waste spilled into the floodwaters.
Wind Power for Colorado

Colorado generates the sixth-most wind energy of any state in the country. Our current wind generation in Colorado displaces more than 3 million metric tons of global warming pollution annually—the equivalent of taking over 700,000 cars off the road each year. Environment Colorado is working to continue wind power’s clean energy success story.

Critical wind incentives renewed

Wind power is a fast-growing industry in Colorado, and one that is helping Colorado reduce carbon pollution and reach its renewable energy standard of 30 percent by 2020. Environment Colorado worked to extend critical tax incentives for wind power in early 2013.

In the end, we won the fight to extend critical tax incentives for wind power, enabling the industry to continue building and growing. As a result, 2013 saw tremendous growth in wind power. However, these short-term extensions have caused uncertainty within the industry. Environment Colorado is working to make sure wind’s growth continues in 2014 and beyond.

“Wind Energy for a Cleaner America II”

A 2013 Environment Colorado Research & Policy Center report showed that wind energy has a myriad of environmental benefits, including reducing carbon pollution that fuels global warming and saving water.

- Specifically, the new report found that Colorado’s wind energy is already displacing more than 3 million metric tons of climate-altering carbon pollution, which is the equivalent of taking over 700,000 cars off the road.

- Wind energy is also saving more than 1.5 million gallons of water per year, which is enough to meet the needs of 36,990 people.
Energy Efficiency for Colorado

America’s buildings are responsible for nearly half our nation’s greenhouse gas emissions. Energy efficiency programs are the fastest, cheapest and cleanest way to cut the pollution fueling global warming, and save consumers money at the same time. Environment Colorado is working with our coalition members to make Colorado more energy efficient.

Advocates push for more efficiency programs

As Environment Colorado works to reduce carbon emissions and move our state to a clean energy future, energy efficiency is a key piece of the puzzle.

Our utilities can play an important role in helping Coloradans reduce their energy use through rebates on energy efficient appliances and building materials, as well as through audit and energy consulting programs. These programs have a big impact: Xcel Energy, Colorado’s largest utility, will reduce its consumer demand by 11.5 percent by 2020 through its consumer energy efficiency programs. The result? Less global warming pollution.

Unfortunately, many utilities in Colorado lack energy efficiency programs. As a result, thousands of Coloradans are missing out simply because their utility offers no option. So we are working to ensure all utilities offer robust energy efficiency programs.

We are talking to these utilities’ customers across the state to see which utilities are leading on energy efficiency and which utilities are falling behind. We are also working to make sure that our state’s largest utility—Xcel Energy—continues to set the bar high, continuing to grow and expand their energy saving programs.

There are many different ways to increase energy efficiency—from insulating windows to switching old lighting to newer technologies.
In 2013, after urging from Environment Colorado and our allies, President Obama announced a Climate Action Plan that will limit carbon emissions from power plants, the single largest source of global warming pollution. More than 50,000 Coloradans rallied to support the new limits after Environment Colorado and our allies ran a grassroots campaign demanding action to protect our children and future generations from global warming.
Massive support built for limits on the pollution causing global warming

As Colorado experienced two years of severe drought and destructive wildfire seasons, followed by historic flooding, Environment Colorado’s staff and activists worked with our colleagues in the environmental and public health communities and beyond to mobilize record levels of support for limiting the carbon pollution that fuels global warming.

50,000 Coloradans submitted comments

Power plants are the largest single source of carbon pollution in America, accounting for 40 percent of emissions, and yet there are no federal limits on the amount of carbon pollution power plants can pump into the atmosphere.

With intense opposition from power companies that reap huge profits selling dirty energy, we need overwhelming support from the public if the state and nation are going to move forward to limit global warming pollution.

Together with our allies, we helped galvanize over 50,000 Coloradans (a part of 3.2 million Americans nationally) to send public comments in support of limits on carbon pollution from power plants. That’s more than twice the record for any previous environmental rule.

We also released a report, “America’s Dirtiest Power Plants,” detailing the contribution of coal-fired power plants to the pollution fueling global warming.

After push, president announced climate plan

On June 25, President Obama announced a plan to address climate change. The plan, which can be fully implemented administratively, is a major step forward in the campaign to address global warming, and Environment Colorado is working to make sure the president follows through on his promise. The plan will:

- **Limit carbon pollution from new and existing power plants**—the single largest source of global warming pollution in the country.

- **Invest in energy efficiency.** New energy efficiency measures will cut carbon pollution by reducing overall energy demand.

- **Build more renewable energy,** such as wind and solar.

- **Support affected communities.** The plan will help ensure that communities are better equipped to deal with the effects of global warming.

- **Rebuild U.S. leadership internationally.** The plan calls for the U.S. to engage in international efforts to address climate change.