Annual Report
A recap of our work in 2011 for our members.
Back in my basketball-playing days, our coach always used to say that the best offense came from a good defense. In fact, we made it all the way to the state championship game by stifling opposing teams with an aggressive full-court press. From the turnovers we forced, we converted easy lay-up after easy lay-up. It was clear that our defensive strategy paved the way for victory.

Looking back at 2011, a year defined by strategic, aggressive, persistent defense of environmental progress at the state and national levels, I am reminded that my coach was right. From numerous attacks in the state Legislature against our strong clean energy framework, to relentless and unfounded criticism of EPA efforts to protect our air and our water, to a lawsuit challenging the constitutionality of our state’s Renewable Electricity Standard, we were fighting on every front to ensure that our landmark environmental efforts of the past decade and longer stayed in place, and that the Obama administration retained the authority it needed to move forward in cleaning up a decade of environmental mismanagement.

Having weathered the storm, we are not only stronger than before but also positioned to move faster and further. While our opposition was busy on the attack, we quietly solidified some critical victories in support of public health and the environment.

At the state level, we blocked every potential rollback and continued to strengthen the clean energy economy, helping to establish a fair system for solar power permits and ensuring the approval of a state plan for regional haze compliance that eliminated thousands of tons of toxic pollutants from our air. Nationally, we took a huge step toward getting America off oil when the Obama administration announced ambitious fuel economy standards for cars and light trucks.

Thanks to your support, a strong and growing coalition of allies, and a smart defensive strategy, we’ve stayed on the offensive to deliver stronger and better protections for our air, our land, our water and our wildlife.

Thanks for being on our team.

Sincerely,

Pam Kiely
Program Director
Preserving Colorado

Colorado’s amazing open spaces are treasures to be prized—from the Roan Plateau, known for its big game hunting, to Dolores River Canyon, where rafting enthusiasts flock when the spring waters run, to St. Vrain State Park, with its peaceful ponds and family-friendly amenities. Our natural heritage and the health of our environment must not be sacrificed for short-term financial gain. We’re working to protect our land and water from damage caused by drilling and destructive development.

South Park Basin short-sale prevented—for now
Earlier this year, the Colorado Land Board opened a wildlife area in the South Park Basin to drilling and planned an auction to sell more wildlife habitat and important streams and rivers, including the Middle Fork of the South Platte.

- Drilling could endanger important habitat for pronghorn antelope, black bears and mule deer—as well as Gold Medal fisheries and drinking water for more than 1.5 million Coloradans.

- We sounded the alarm and mobilized hundreds of Environment Colorado members to tell the Land Board not to sell the South Park Basin. They tabled the decision pending further analysis.

Fighting for St. Vrain and Dolores River protections
When the State Parks Board issued a plan to lease St. Vrain for drilling, we mobilized hundreds of members to urge them to reconsider. No drilling has happened so far, and we’ll be fighting to keep St. Vrain pristine.

We joined with The Wilderness Society to deliver 13,700 comments to Sens. Michael Bennet and Mark Udall in support of new protections for Browns Canyon, Dolores Canyon and other beloved places. Unfortunately, at press time, Congress was moving in the direction of less wilderness protection, not more. We’ll keep building a broad base of support to ensure that our special places get the protection they deserve.

Our staff is working to keep the South Park Basin, St. Vrain National Park and the Dolores River Canyon safe from mining, drilling and irresponsible development.
Colorado Rivers Project

We want Colorado’s rivers to thrive—so we can raft, swim and fish, so our drinking water can be safe and so wildlife can survive. After years of research and advocacy by Environment Colorado and our coalition partners, the Environmental Protection Agency took action last spring to protect our waters from pollution and irresponsible development. Now, we must stop polluters’ allies in Congress from blocking the EPA’s work.
After years of effort, real progress to protect 65,000 miles of streams

For nearly 40 years, the Clean Water Act has protected the streams and wetlands that feed Colorado’s waterways and help keep them clean. But a pair of poorly reasoned, short-sighted decisions by the Supreme Court have put our water at risk—leaving 65,000 miles of streams in Colorado without any protection whatsoever from pollution and overdevelopment. These smaller waterways feed and protect all our rivers, from the South Platte to the Arkansas. They also provide drinking water for 3.5 million Coloradans.

After thousands signed petition, Senate rejected anti-clean water amendments

- We presented Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Administrator Lisa Jackson with thousands of signatures urging her to protect Colorado’s waters. Our federal coalition presented her with thousands more signatures calling for similar protections for waterways across the country.

- Two weeks later, we issued a report showing the growing influence of corporate agribusiness and its systematic efforts to roll back clean water laws.

On March 9, the Senate rejected the budget package containing these anti-clean water amendments by a margin of 44-56.

EPA issued plan to restore protections for the Colorado, Arkansas, South Platte and others

In a landmark decision in April, EPA Administrator Lisa Jackson announced a plan to restore Clean Water Act protections to Colorado’s streams and wetlands. Unfortunately, polluters swung into action—urging their allies in Congress to stop the EPA from doing its job. ExxonMobil threatened “legal warfare” if the EPA moved forward.

- By mid-July, the House of Representatives had passed three separate measures attacking the EPA’s authority to protect our waters. Luckily, we were prepared for this kind of assault and had already started building a campaign to defeat it.

- Along with our national federation, we delivered 150,000 signatures to the EPA, urging Administrator Jackson to stand strong for clean water. The battle raged on into fall, and we continued to send a clear message to Congress: Don’t mess with Colorado’s waters.
With a historic victory for Colorado’s environment—transitioning five units of our oldest, dirtiest power plants away from coal—we’re moving Colorado from a coal-powered past toward a clean-energy future. Colorado can and should be powered by the sun and wind, keeping our blue skies blue, improving public health, creating clean-energy jobs and ending our reliance on dirty, dangerous fossil fuels.
Back in 2010, energy companies, environmentalists and members of former Gov. Bill Ritter’s administration came together to chart a bold new course for clean air in Colorado. But the resulting Clean Air, Clean Jobs Act had crucial hurdles to overcome before its benefits could take effect. Our task last year was to defend the bill against attacks from polluters and their allies in the Statehouse while making sure that the Public Utilities Commission issued a strong order adopting a robust plan.

Five units of coal-fired power to close or convert by 2017

Naturally, the coal companies fought back, and it was “all hands on deck” to show state officials that the transition to clean energy has strong public support.

- Environment Colorado members and our allies delivered hundreds of signatures to the Public Utilities Commission, urging its members to resist pressure from polluters and stand up for clean air by requiring all the coal plants in the Denver metro area to be fully retired under the Clean Air, Clean Jobs plan.

- In December, 2010, the Public Utilities Commission issued its ruling: Four major coal units must close and a fifth must stop burning coal by 2017.

Plan approved to help Coloradans breathe easier

Under the federal Clean Air Act, each state is required to submit a plan for managing haze-causing emissions. As anyone who lives on the Front Range knows, this has been a particular challenge for Colorado. The Public Utilities Commission’s decision to close four plants and convert another was a huge step in the right direction, but we still had lots of work to do to convince the Legislature to approve the plan.

- We did it! A bill to approve the Regional Haze Plan—sponsored by House Speaker Frank McNulty (Highlands Ranch) and Senate Majority Leader John Morse (Colorado Springs)—passed by a bipartisan vote in late April.

- “This was the final piece of the puzzle,” said Program Director Pam Kiely. “The Legislature has answered Coloradans’ call for clean air by finalizing a plan that makes Colorado the envy of the nation.”
Getting off oil

The environmental costs of our oil dependence are out of control—from the damage caused by last spring’s spill in the Yellowstone River, to the smog that pollutes our air, to the threat of catastrophic climate change. We can stop the pollution and move toward a clean energy future by developing fuel-efficient cars and trucks, investing in public transportation, and adapting common-sense policies to promote energy efficiency and the development of renewable energy sources.
Two big steps to end oil dependence

With Colorado’s families paying more than ever at the pump, there has never been a better time to put our state—and the country—on a path to getting off oil for good. While much work remains to be done, we made important progress this year: President Obama doubled the nation’s federal fuel efficiency standards, and our own Sen. Michael Bennet introduced a bill that would eliminate our oil dependence by 2030.

New standards will save billions of gallons of gas
Years of research and advocacy by Environment Colorado and our national federation contributed to the passage of the most important federal policy ever enacted to break our addiction to fossil fuels. This summer, after our national federation and allies mobilized 10,000 people to voice their support for clean cars, the Obama administration announced two big steps toward getting America off oil:

- New fuel economy standards will make 54.5-mpg cars the norm by 2025. We helped to make sure the standards are as strong as possible by organizing state leaders, delivering comments from the public, and demonstrating that Coloradans—and people across the country—want cleaner cars.

- The Obama administration also announced the first-ever fuel efficiency standard for trucks, which will save more than 20 billion gallons of gasoline by 2018.

With strong support, Sen. Bennet led on clean energy
Oil companies are ramping up pressure on Congress to block clean energy initiatives—even holding industry-funded rallies to make it look like the American public supports Big Oil’s agenda. Sen. Michael Bennet didn’t fall for their propaganda, thanks in large part to Environment Colorado members and other concerned Coloradans who attended town hall meetings across the state.

- In July, Sen. Bennet introduced the Oil Independence for a Stronger America Act, which would reduce America’s oil consumption by 8 million barrels a day—completely eliminating our dependence on foreign oil by 2030.

- “In town halls all across Colorado, one thing everyone agrees on is the need to break our dependence on overseas oil,” said Bennet. As this report went to press, the bill was in committee. We’ll keep working to ensure that the voices of Coloradans aren’t drowned out by oil industry lobbyists.
Clean, efficient Colorado

With over 300 days of sunshine every year, our state’s energy future rises each morning. We need to plug in to Colorado’s best resource by building half a million solar roofs, developing large-scale solar power plants, and investing in solar water heaters. At the same time, simple policies to promote energy efficiency can save Coloradans millions on their electricity bills and dramatically reduce our greenhouse gas emissions.
Defending smart energy options for homes and businesses

Over the last few years, Colorado has built a strong clean energy economy, with solar power set to generate electricity for as many as 100,000 homes and businesses, and more than $500 million in venture capital flowing into the state for solar projects. Yet polluters and their allies tried to gut clean energy gains this year and put up fierce resistance to energy-saving measures.

Polluters’ rollbacks defeated

Some legislators in Denver began 2011 with aggressive plans to roll back our hard-won progress on clean energy. Among their proposals: reverting our state’s clean-energy standard to 2004 levels and preventing utility regulators from considering public health impacts while making decisions about how our electricity is produced.

• With help from partners in the conservation, health and business communities, we halted these and other attacks on our environment, ensuring the continued growth of renewable energy development in the state.

• We rallied constituency voices from across the state and worked closely with Senate President Brandon Shaffer (Longmont), whose leadership was critical in keeping our state on the path to a clean energy future.

Efficiency ratings idea advanced to Legislature

Since buildings use 40 percent of the energy we produce, improvements in energy efficiency offer an incredible opportunity to cut air pollution, reduce our dependence on fossil fuels and save Coloradans millions of dollars each month on utility bills. We pushed energy efficiency onto the legislative agenda in Denver, supporting several innovative initiatives:

• The building energy rating legislation we backed would create an efficiency rating system for buildings similar to the ratings for cars and appliances. The bill would allow small business owners to compare the energy efficiency of buildings before committing to a property—expanding the market for efficient buildings and helping businesses’ bottom lines.

• We also supported initiatives to help homeowners finance efficiency upgrades and to raise efficiency standards for all new structures. While the measures didn’t become law last session, the bills helped catapult efficiency to the top of the agenda in Denver.

Plug In To Efficiency

Efficiency is the cheapest and cleanest way to cut our fossil fuel use and pollution. Here are five simple ways to cut energy consumption.

1. Scrape—rather than rinse—dishes, and only run the dishwasher when you have a full load.

2. Turn your water heater down to 120 degrees (or “low”).

3. Replace incandescent light bulbs with CFLs to cut your lighting costs by up to 75 percent.

4. Use a laundry detergent formulated for use in cold water, and wash your laundry using cold water only.

5. Put aluminum foil behind radiators to reflect heat back into the room.
Preserving a national landmark

With our planet’s geologic history written on its walls and 25 endangered species sheltered in its caverns, the Grand Canyon is too important to risk. That’s why Environment Colorado worked with our national federation to extend the moratorium on toxic mining within five miles of Grand Canyon National Park.
The Grand Canyon: More valuable than uranium

Mining companies have laid more than 1,100 claims to mine for uranium within five miles of Grand Canyon National Park. The mining process often involves cyanide and sulfuric acid, posing grave risks to the Canyon and to the 25 million people who rely on the Colorado River for drinking water. This year, our staff and members tackled the threat head on.

Report revealed damage caused by mining

Uranium mining has left a toxic trail across the West. In July, Anna Aurilio, director of our Washington, D.C., office, released “Grand Canyon At Risk,” a report highlighting the damage that uranium mining has already caused—including here in Colorado. Findings include:

• Tailings—the waste rock and dirt left over from uranium extraction and milling—are 85 percent as radioactive on average as the original ore, and contain other toxic chemicals such as arsenic. Tailings piles can make mine sites permanently hazardous and leach toxic substances into the environment.

• Damage from uranium mining hits close to home: Residents of Lincoln Park, Colorado, a small community near a uranium mill, have had to stop drinking well water because of contamination from the mill’s old tailings pools. Residents have suffered health consequences from uranium and other toxic substances in their water.

Nearly 300,000 comments delivered in support of the Grand Canyon

Working with our national coalition and other allies, we helped mobilize more than 300,000 Americans to demand stronger protections for the Grand Canyon.

• In July, Interior Secretary Ken Salazar extended a temporary moratorium on uranium mining near the canyon and announced his support for a 20-year ban—the longest allowed by federal law.

• We’ll keep fighting to ensure that the voices of Coloradans—and everyone who wants to see the West protected from toxic mining—are heard just as loudly as the mining company lobbyists.

“The Grand Canyon fills me with awe. It is beyond comparison, beyond description.”
– Theodore Roosevelt
Citizen support is the cornerstone of Environment Colorado. Thousands of Colorado citizens supported Environment Colorado and the Environment Colorado Research & Policy Center by making membership contributions in fiscal year 2011. The members listed below were particularly generous in backing the organizations’ research and advocacy. Names that appear in italics denote Monthly Supporters. These members provide stability to the organizations’ resources through our monthly giving program.

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