Outreach staff delivers message face-to-face

As our citizen outreach staff goes door to door rallying support and raising money to protect our rivers and streams, we hear first-hand how much the Arksansas River, Boulder Creek and all of our waters mean to the people of Colorado.

With clean water protections under attack in Congress, we visited the offices of Sens. Mark Udall and Michael Bennet to make sure your voices are heard just as loudly as the polluters'.

“It’s my responsibility”

“I told the senators’ aides about a man I met in Evergreen,” said canvasser Daniel Walker-Murray. “Bear River Creek flowed right through his backyard, and as a kid he would kneel down and drink from it. His dad worked at a copper mine upstream. Today they wouldn’t even think of drinking from the creek, it’s so polluted.”

In Fort Collins, Jenny Archer met a recreational fisherman who said he’s seen a real decrease in the quality and quantity of fish populations. “He feels it’s his responsibility—and the responsibility of all Coloradans who enjoy getting out on the water—to do whatever he can to make sure his children can have the same opportunities,” Archer recounted.

Jamie Tuzzeo, an avid white-water rafter, sacrificed time on the water this summer to work as a field manager with Environment Colorado. “If I don’t stand up for our rivers now, I might not have rivers to raft on later,” she said.

A dozen dangerous proposals

Nearly 7 in 10 Coloradans strongly support restoring Clean Water Act protections to all of our rivers and streams, according to a poll commissioned by Environment Colorado and allied groups.

Yet in recent months the House has voted on a dozen proposals that would leave our waters even more vulnerable to pollution and development.

With polluters’ allies ascendent in the House, it’s crucial that Sens. Udall and Bennet serve as strong defenders of our rivers and streams. As we saw recently with the wind-energy tax credit (see page 2 for details), timely activism from Environment Colorado supporters can make a big difference.
Clean energy triumphs; fracking bills defeated

Timely activism from hundreds of Environment Colorado supporters—including a big push in the last 12 hours of the legislative session—helped secure important victories for clean energy in Colorado and preserve towns’ rights to defend themselves against fracking.

“Coloradans want to see our state continue to move forward, not backward, when it comes to clean energy,” said Jeanne Bassett, Environment Colorado’s senior associate. “The Legislature did the right thing by rejecting the dirty energy lobby’s repeated attempts to dismantle Colorado’s nation-leading clean energy initiatives, keeping the state’s 30 percent by 2020 Renewable Energy Standard intact.”

We also helped secure funding for the Governor’s Energy Office, which plays a critical role in promoting efficiency programs, as well as a measure that will bring more electric cars to Colorado.

Senator Udall champions conservation

For nearly 50 years, the Land and Water Conservation Fund has enabled Colorado and other states to protect and expand places like Great Sand Dunes National Park and Arapaho National Forest, without using a single taxpayer dollar. (The program is funded with fees paid for drilling and development leases.) But now, some members of Congress are trying to kill this successful program.

Fortunately, Colorado has a conservation champion in Sen. Mark Udall. “We applaud the senator’s leadership in the fight to secure land and water conservation funding,” said Environment Colorado Organizer Bessie Schwarz. “Senator Udall knows the value of safeguarding Colorado’s natural treasures. We urge him to keep fighting for the Fund, so that we can use it to protect treasured places for generations to come.”
Landmark law leads to major energy savings

In the five years since Environment Colorado helped pass a ground-breaking energy efficiency law, the measure has yielded major environmental and economic benefits for Coloradans.

A mandate to save

HB 1037, sponsored by Rep. Claire Levy and Sen. Joan Fitzgerald, directed the Colorado Public Utilities Commission to develop energy efficiency goals and incentives for investor-owned utilities Xcel Energy and Black Hills Energy. As a result, the companies invested $166 million in efficiency programs for their business and residential customers—and the payoff has been enormous.

Like taking 110,000 cars off the road

According to estimates from the Southwest Energy Efficiency Project, the new programs kept more than 1 million tons of carbon dioxide emissions out of the air from 2009-2011—the equivalent of taking 110,000 cars off the road.

Efficiency measures required under the law have saved about 800,000 kilowatt hours of electricity, or “the equivalent of about one midsized power plant,” said Jay Herrmann, Xcel Energy’s vice president of marketing. That’s enough to power 100,000 homes.

The measures have also saved natural gas equivalent to the amount used by 25,000 homes, as well as 1.5 billion gallons of water (since water is used as a coolant in power plants).

Good for customers, good for business

Gene Tang, owner of 1515 Restaurant in Denver, says utility rebates enabled him to afford a new high-efficiency air conditioner and furnace for the restaurant. Now, he saves $1,500 annually on utility bills, and he’s not alone. Collectively, efficiency programs have saved Coloradans a total of $640 million.

Xcel and Black Hills Energy are happy, too. Not only did they recover their collective $166 million investment, but they were awarded an additional $45 million in incentives for exceeding goals for cost-effectiveness and energy savings achieved.

“Whether it’s saving people and businesses money, reducing air pollution, reducing our reliance on natural gas, conserving our limited water resources or creating jobs, this policy has met and exceeded our expectations,” said Environment Colorado’s Jeanne Bassett. “Now, it’s important that we expand this program to get all Coloradans covered.”

The other 40 percent

HB 1037 applies only to investor-owned utilities, which serve 60 percent of Colorado’s population. The rest of the state is served by small municipal companies or rural cooperatives. With some exceptions, customers of those utilities still do not have access to robust energy efficiency audits, rebates and other services.

“There is still a lot of wasted energy and money to be saved,” said Rep. Levy. “But House Bill 1037 has shown what can be accomplished.”

more online

To see what rebates and incentives are available for you, and to find low- or no-cost tips to boost energy efficiency at home, check out our online guide at EnvironmentColoradoCenter.org/page/coc/plug-clean-energy.
Most Environment Colorado members know that climate change loads the dice for vicious wildfires by contributing to hotter and drier conditions. We also know that we can fight climate change—and improve air quality—by cutting carbon pollution.

This summer, we delivered nearly 50,000 public comments to the Environmental Protection Agency supporting smart new standards on carbon pollution from new power plants.

At the same time, our outreach staff traversed the state, educating folks about the devastating effects that climate change has on the West. We spoke face-to-face with thousands of people and distributed information detailing the connection between climate change and extreme weather. Education is the crucial first step toward building the groundswell of public support it will take to win policies that fight global warming.