A summer spent fighting for clean water

Canvass made progress to close loopholes
From the Colorado River to Boulder Creek, and all of the rivers and streams in between, our waterways are a big part of what makes living in Colorado so great. Whether it’s fishing, swimming or just walking along the banks, every Coloradan should be able to enjoy his or her local waterway knowing it’s protected from irresponsible development and unchecked pollution.

That’s why this summer, we continued our campaign to close loopholes in the Clean Water Act that leave 68 percent of Colorado’s streams at risk of pollution and development—the same streams that feed our rivers.

100,000 comments collected
Together with our national federation of state groups, Environment Colorado staff and volunteers talked to more than 400,000 people this summer, educating them about the need to protect our waterways and support the Environmental Protection Agency’s (EPA) pending rulemaking to restore Clean Water Act protections.

We ran our outreach offices from Denver and Boulder and helped collect more than 100,000 public comments supporting strong protections for our waterways.

Report highlighted toxic pollution
In addition to our outreach work, we released a new Environment Colorado Research & Policy Center Report, “Wasting our Waterways,” showing that industrial facilities dumped nearly 850,000 pounds of toxic chemicals into Colorado’s waterways in 2012. Colorado ranked 36th in the nation in terms of toxic discharges. The most polluting facility in the state in 2012 was the Cargill Meat Solutions facility in Fort Morgan, which accounted for nearly half the state’s total discharges.

“Colorado’s rivers should be clean—for swimming, drinking and supporting wildlife,” said Andrew Fish, campaign organizer with Environment Colorado.

“But too often, our waters have been used as a dumping ground for polluters. The first step in curbing this tide of toxic pollution is to restore Clean Water Act protections to all our waterways.”

The fight is far from over, but we’re closing in on the finish line. With the public comment period coming to a close soon, we’re ramping up our efforts to show the EPA the widespread public support for clean water.

To learn more about our work to protect Colorado’s rivers and other campaigns, visit: www.EnvironmentColorado.org.
This past summer was a whirlwind. Our citizen outreach staff talked to people across the state and collected thousands of petition signatures to protect our rivers. We’ve made so much progress, and we owe that success to members like you.

Now, as fall gets underway, it’s important to remember another important aspect of the movement for a cleaner, greener Colorado: Electing leaders who will do the right thing for our environment. Elections can have huge implications, and if our elected officials are willing to stand up for clean air, clean water and open spaces, we stand a far better chance of winning lasting improvements.

So, if you haven’t already done so, I encourage you to make plans to vote, and to bring family and friends with you to the polls. It’s our environment and our future—let’s get out there and vote!

Sincerely,

Kim Stevens
Campaign Director

Crucial conservation program threatened

With Congress moving to eliminate funding for the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) as early as 2015, Environment Colorado and our national federation of state groups are working to show decision-makers that the public wants to protect our state’s parks and open spaces.

The LWCF is our nation’s most important conservation program, crucial for protecting treasured places like Rocky Mountain National Park and South Boulder Creek. But Congress could cut funding for the LWCF completely by 2015, putting our parks and iconic natural treasures at risk.

This past summer, our national federation helped raise public awareness of the threats facing our parks and open spaces and mobilized thousands to call on Congress to fully fund the LWCF. In addition, we mobilized small business owners, outdoor enthusiasts, conservationists and historians to take action.

Dozens of groups unite for solar day of action

On June 21, Environment Colorado and dozens of our allies celebrated the summer solstice by organizing a “Solar Day of Action” to expand solar in communities across Colorado and the country. Our outreach efforts, along with those of our national federation of state groups, generated more than 17,000 emails to President Obama, urging him to put solar on federal buildings.

In addition, Environment Colorado recently released a report, “Lighting the Way,” which reveals the top 10 states in terms of installed solar. Colorado ranked ninth, and thanks to strong policies, solar grew 18 percent in our state in 2013 alone. Colorado’s progress on solar has helped fuel a tripling of solar energy nationwide between 2011 and 2013. In 2013, solar capacity in Colorado grew from 270 MW to 331 MW. The report emphasizes that it is not the availability of sunlight that makes states solar leaders, but the degree to which state and local governments have created effective public policy to help capture the virtually unlimited and pollution-free energy from the sun.
In June, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) proposed a Clean Power Plan that includes first-ever federal limits on carbon pollution from power plants, the largest single source of global warming pollution in America.

Environment Colorado enthusiastically applauded the proposed limits. Once finalized, will be the largest step our nation has ever taken to combat global warming.

**Colorado will play a critical role in finalizing carbon rules**

“This announcement is exactly what we’ve been waiting for,” said Environment Colorado Campaign Director Kim Stevens. “This is Colorado’s chance to lead and our best chance to give our children a legacy we can be proud of.”

The EPA’s Clean Power Plan will set targets for states to reduce global warming pollution from dirty power plants. States will do so by investing in renewable energy and energy efficiency, cleaning up existing power plants, and switching to cleaner fuels.

Feeling the heat from global warming

Coloradans are feeling the consequences of global warming. In 2011 and 2012, the number of heat waves was nearly three times higher than the long-term average, and severe drought and devastating wildfires are threatening water supplies and communities.

The National Climate Assessment, released in May, recognized today’s impacts with the statement, “Climate change, once considered an issue for a distant future, has moved firmly into the present.”

Nationwide campaign launched

Until now, there have been no federal limits on the amount of carbon pollution power plants are permitted to spew into the atmosphere.

“This announcement is a huge win for the health of our families and our environ-

Environment Colorado Global Warming Program Director Julian Boggs issued the following statement: “We know Americans across the nation—from Washington state to Florida—are already feeling the effects of global warming. And scientists warn that things will only get much worse for future generations, unless the largest source of this problem is tackled. That’s what the EPA’s Clean Power Plan does.

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Two weeks after the announcement, Environment Colorado and our national federation of state groups launched a nationwide “Global Warming Solutions Campaign.” Active in 24 states, the $2.4 million campaign will help Americans connect the dots between the consequences of global warming and the meaningful impact of the Clean Power Plan.

“The dirty energy companies that oppose this move may question the science and predict economic apocalypse if we act. They can make up whatever claims they want. But a cleaner, more energy-efficient economy and environment is not going to undermine our prosperity. In fact, our kids’ future depends on it,” concluded Stevens.

In July, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) took input on its Clean Power Plan from citizens and businesses at hearings across the country, including one in Denver.

The proposed plan, which will cut global warming pollution from power plants, has been under fire from dirty energy companies and other special interests since it was announced in June. In fact, the coal industry bused people into Denver in an attempt to pack the EPA’s hearing.

But Environment Colorado staff, allies and members were ready. Dozens of supporters of the EPA’s Clean Power Plan testified at the hearings, letting the agency know that the public wants to cut carbon pollution and take strong action to address global warming.

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Momentum grows against 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.

With the fracking boom, the oil and gas industry is aiming to bring its dirty drilling to more of our treasured places across our state. But if enough of us speak out, we can make sure our parks and forests are protected from fracking. Environment Colorado is calling on our federal officials to keep fracking out of our national forests and away from our national parks and drinking water sources. With your support, we can get our decision-makers to do the right thing for Colorado’s parks and forests.