Fiscal Year 2019 Annual Report
Thanks for making it all possible
From the Director

To be an environmentalist, you’ve got to wrestle with a conundrum: We need bold action on a short timeline ... with broad public support.

We need to do a lot, quickly, to preserve a livable planet. But progress has to earn and sustain the support of the people in order to last—so progress doesn’t often come in one big swooping action. It usually comes one small-ish victory at a time.

At Environment Colorado, we acknowledge the conundrum—and we embrace it. We believe in bold action on a large scale. But we work every day at the local, state and national levels to build, step by step, the support this action demands. Each college, or city or state that deploys more renewable energy helps win more people over to the possibility of a world that runs on the sun and the wind. Each company or state that phases out a single-use plastic product shows more people a way to end harm to ocean wildlife from plastic pollution.

These victories are smaller than the challenges demand. But as their pace picks up, their summary effect grows. A year ago, California became the second state to commit to 100 percent zero-carbon electricity. Now, there are six states with such commitments, plus Puerto Rico and Washington, D.C. Back in 2016, California banned single-use plastic bags. In 2019, five more states banned plastic bags, and Maine, Maryland and Vermont banned plastic foam take-out containers. Like all social changes, environmental solutions have tipping points.

Our natural world faces serious problems, and we’ve got to solve them. Our strategy is to make sure that each victory opens a door to the next. Thanks for being with us on the journey.

Sincerely,

Hannah Collazo
State Director, Environment Colorado
Clean Water & Air

Through our Clean Water & Air program, our staff and members tackled problems ranging from the Trump administration’s attempts to roll back clean water standards, to industrial discharges that violate the Clean Water and Clean Air Acts. Below, you’ll find reports on our Get the Lead Out campaign and our efforts to bolster investment in our nation’s water infrastructure.

The grades are in: Report finds states are failing to ensure safe drinking water for our children

MARCH 21, 2019: Lead contaminates the water coming out of drinking fountains and taps at schools across the country, and at least 22 states aren’t doing enough about it.

“Get the Lead Out,” a study published March 21 by our research partners Environment America Research & Policy Center and U.S. PIRG Education Fund, examined the policies of 31 states and Washington, D.C., and assigned grades based on how well they protect children from lead in drinking water at school. Twenty-two states earned an F grade, including Colorado, with only Illinois and D.C. grading above the C range.

“Waiting for more tests to confirm that our children are drinking water laced with lead is unconscionable,” said John Rumpler, senior director of our national network’s clean water campaign. “It’s time to get the lead out.”

Environment Colorado and our national network are working in Colorado and more than a dozen other states to protect drinking water for millions of children by advancing policies to proactively get the lead out.

Congress passes long overdue measures to protect our drinking water from lead, sewage

OCT. 23, 2018: Victories for clean water are rare in Washington, D.C., these days, so this is one to savor.

In October, Congress passed—and the president signed—America’s Water Infrastructure Act (S. 3021), which would double federal investment in safe drinking water, establish a small grant program for schools to address lead contamination, and expand monitoring of contaminants such as per- or polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS). Our national network’s advocates—and environmental champions such as Sen. Ben Cardin (Md.) and Rep. Paul Tonko (N.Y.)—shaped the legislation and ensured it contained the solutions we need.

“In 21st-century America, we should be able to keep lead and other toxins out of our drinking water, and sewage out of our rivers, lakes and bays,” said John. “These provisions are long overdue.”
Above: Cities are rapidly adopting solar energy and driving the renewable energy transition across the country, bringing pollution-free power to our homes, schools and workplace. Below: Environment Colorado staff toured the National Renewable Energy Lab in Golden.
Clean, Green & Renewable Energy

With support from Environment Colorado’s members, our national network promoted energy efficiency in our homes, educated city leaders about solar, and fostered the development of wind power. Here are updates on our network’s 100% Renewable Energy campaign and our research arm’s “Shining Cities” report.

Environment Colorado tours National Renewable Energy Laboratory
JULY 5, 2019: Electric transportation, grid modernization, geothermal and more.

In June, Environment Colorado staff got a glimpse of what a clean energy future looks like on a tour of the National Renewable Energy Lab in Golden, which has been leading research efforts on renewable energy and energy efficiency since it was established in 1974.

“Our society is ready to be powered by clean, renewable energy and built in a way that incorporates our environment rather than destroys it,” wrote Environment Colorado’s Graham Marema in her blog post on the tour. “But to get there, it will take strong policies and bold commitments to 100 percent renewable energy — the kinds of commitments we’ve already seen businesses, communities and entire states ramping up.”

Support for renewable energy is building across the country. Our national network has helped win the laws in California, New Mexico, Washington and Maine.

Solar power is growing fast. These cities are shining the brightest.
APRIL 9, 2019: Solar power is booming in dozens of major American cities.

“Shining Cities 2019,” researched by Environment America Research & Policy Center and released on April 9, found that solar energy capacity more than doubled in 45 of America’s 57 largest cities in the past six years. The report’s main event? The latest ranking of America’s top solar cities. Los Angeles topped the list for the second year in a row, and San Diego, Phoenix, Honolulu and San Jose rounded out the top five.

“Cities are rapidly adopting solar energy and driving the renewable energy transition across the country, bringing pollution-free power to our homes, schools and workplaces,” said Emma Searson, director of our national network’s Go Solar campaign.

The report also found that solar is not just a Sun Belt phenomenon. Other leading cities include New York City; Indianapolis; Washington, D.C.; Trenton, New Jersey; and Ypsilanti, Michigan.
Leaders of our national network’s canvass team met in Baltimore before spreading across the country to build public support for putting wildlife over waste by banning single-use plastics (top).

Photo credits: (clockwise from top) Lake Stein, Philip Huffeldt, Wool Hat Creative, Ted Gotwals, Chris Holman via Shutterstock
Our network’s staff and members sought to save the bees from toxic pesticides, and to spare Arctic wildlife from oil and gas exploration and drilling. Below, find more on our national network’s efforts to protect wildlife from plastic pollution and revive the country’s best conservation and recreation program.

More than 20,000 Coloradans are ready to put wildlife over waste

March 5, 2019: Plastic foam cups and single-use plastic bags are a common sight on the steps of the Colorado State Capitol, but not like this: On Feb. 28, the cups and bags, gathered by volunteers in cleanups, formed the number 22,898. That’s the number of petition signatures gathered by Environment Colorado, CoPIRG and other groups, urging state legislators to take action on plastic pollution. Every day, Coloradans throw away 1 million polystyrene foam cups, commonly known as Styrofoam. Polystyrene is one of the worst forms of plastic pollution: It never fully degrades, instead just breaking into smaller pieces that often get into waterways and harm our environment and wildlife.

“As a headwater state, our polluted water travels into eight different states and eventually reaches the ocean, where it will harm wildlife for centuries,” said Environment Colorado’s Jeanne Bassett. “We have the responsibility to address this problem right here in Colorado, at the source. That’s why we are working to ban plastic bags and polystyrene statewide.”

Environment Colorado kicks off summer No Bees No Food campaign

May 23, 2019: On World Bee Day, Environment Colorado set out to save our most vital pollinators.

On May 20, Environment Colorado launched our No Bees, No Food campaign, urging state legislators to ban the most common and troubling uses of the bee-killing pesticides known as neonicotinoid pesticides, or neonic. Each winter, beekeepers are losing 30 percent of their honeybee colonies. Why is that such bad news? Worldwide, 100 crops make up 90 percent of our food supply. We rely on bees to pollinate 71 of these essential 100 crops.

“The first step in saving the bees is getting rid of the pesticides that kill them,” said Environment Colorado’s Jeanne Bassett. “Banning neonics is a step Colorado can take today to preserve our vital pollinators.”

This summer, Environment Colorado canvassers are knocking on thousands of doors to build public support to save the bees from the pesticides that threaten their survival.
Above: Staff from our national research partner Environment America Research & Policy Center, along with their allies, delivered 350,000 public comments in support of federal Clean Car standards to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. Below: Andrea McGimsey and Environment America Research & Policy Center staff hosted a tour of an electric bus facility (upper middle and bottom right).
Global Warming Solutions

Environment Colorado worked with other state groups in our network to reduce carbon emissions from power plants, transportation and other sources. Here’s more on what our network did to promote state-level action across the country and defend strong pollution standards for cars and trucks.

Twelve ways a governor can start tackling climate change right now

Jan. 10, 2019: As 20 new governors took office in January, a new report outlined actions all governors could take to lead the way on climate solutions.

On Jan. 10, our national research partner Environment America Research & Policy Center released a report titled “Climate Solutions from Day One,” which detailed 12 executive actions that governors can take immediately to help solve the climate crisis. These range from updating building codes to improve energy efficiency—as Gov. Kate Brown has already done in Oregon—to collaborating in regional climate initiatives like the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative in the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic.

“With the stroke of a pen, governors can start cutting global warming pollution today by increasing renewable energy use, reducing transportation emissions and curbing energy waste,” said Andrea McGimsey, senior director of our national network’s Global Warming Solutions program.

Our network urged governors across the country to adopt these recommendations.

Colorado unanimously votes to consider zero emission vehicle standard

May 12, 2019: Colorado is accelerating a little faster toward a future with more electric vehicles on the road.

On May 10, the Colorado Air Quality Control Commission (AQCC) voted unanimously to consider the Zero Emission Vehicle (ZEV) standard for the state. If adopted, the ZEV program will be one of the biggest Colorado has taken to reduce air pollution, tackle climate change, save consumers money, and increase electric vehicles available at Colorado dealerships.

“Electric vehicles are cheaper to drive and they don’t come with tailpipe emissions. Colorado needs to adopt strong electric vehicle standards to protect our air and our environment,” said Environment Colorado’s Jeanne Bassett.

According to the Colorado Department of Public Health and the Environment, the ZEV rule would cut 2.2 million metric tons of greenhouse gasses and save Coloradans an estimated $1.1 billion in fuel and maintenance costs by 2030.

Electric vehicles are cheaper to drive and they don’t come with tailpipe emissions. Colorado needs to adopt strong electric vehicle standards to protect our air and our environment.

Jeanne Bassett
Senior Associate
Our staff (partial list)

Hannah Collazo
State Director

Jeanne Bassett
Donor Program Senior Associate

Andrea McGimsey
Senior Director, Global Warming Solutions Campaign

Rob Sargent
Senior Director, Campaign for 100% Renewable Energy

Bronte Payne
Director, Campaign for 100% Renewable Campuses

John Rumpler
Senior Director, Clean Water for America Campaign and Senior Attorney

Andrea McGimsey
Senior Director, Global Warming Solutions Campaign

Steve Blackledge
Senior Director, Conservation Campaign

Jesse Torrence
Senior Director, Climate Campaigns

Emma Searson
Director, Go Solar Campaign

Morgan Folger
Director, Clean Car Communities

Bart Johnsen-Harris
Environmental Defense: Our Water, Advocate

Susan Rakov
Director, Research & Reports

Doug Casler
Director, Membership

Adam Rothschild
Director, National Canvasses

Wendy Wendlandt
Political Director

Katrina Riley
Deputy Editor

Pam Clough
Director, Donor Program