Ready to say goodbye to the Trump administration’s Dirty Water Rule? So are we. Thankfully, we took a big step in that direction.

This summer, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) announced its plan to repeal and replace the “Dirty Water Rule”—a Trump administration policy that left the drinking water of millions of Americans at risk from polluters.

It’s the latest round in a decades-long debate over the Clean Water Act—and for our research partners at Environment America Research & Policy Center, it’s progress years in the making.

Decades-old protections restored

Fifty years ago, water pollution ran virtually unchecked, putting public health and the environment at risk. The solution? The 1972 Clean Water Act, which set enforceable, clear limits on what polluters could dump into our waterways.

For decades, the Clean Water Act yielded progress toward cleaning up and protecting our waters. But in 2006, a Supreme Court ruling left 20 million acres of wetlands and more than half our nation’s streams without clear protection under the Act.

From the Chesapeake Bay to Puget Sound, streams and wetlands protect our larger waterways, filtering out pollutants and providing wildlife habitat. Plus, the streams put at risk by the 2006 ruling help provide drinking water to 117 million Americans.

In the face of this dirty ruling, our national network got to work.

Environment America Research & Policy Center and the rest of Environment Colorado’s national network worked to bring the Clean Water Act back to its full water-saving potential.

We assembled more than 1 million supporters and 1,000 influential voices, including business owners, elected officials and more. Our research partners issued reports on the necessity of water protections while our advocates lobbied 50 congressional offices and advocated in front of Congress and the EPA.

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Colorado enacts sweeping single-use plastics law

Colorado has joined the ranks of states with laws targeting single-use plastic waste.

With Gov. Jared Polis’ signature of the Plastic Pollution Reduction Act on July 6, Colorado will begin phasing out plastic bags and foam containers statewide. Colorado is the 10th state to ban single-use plastic bags, the eighth to ban foam food containers, and the first to strike down its plastic preemption law that barred local ordinances from setting plastic restrictions.

“Coloradans value our beautiful wild places, and this law to reduce plastic waste is an important step toward ensuring the long-term protection of our state’s natural heritage,” said Environment Colorado Senior Program Director Rex Wilmouth. “With the governor’s signature, Colorado has chosen wildlife over waste.”

Environment Colorado hosted 400 participants at Plastic Pollution Youth Lobby Day and submitted petition signatures from 21,000 Coloradans and more than 200 small businesses to support the legislation.

Back on course: Biden administration moves to allow states to set stronger vehicle emissions standards

For nearly 50 years, federal law allowed California to set stronger clean air standards and more than a dozen other states to follow California’s lead—until the Trump administration tried to revoke their authority.

On April 26, the Biden administration started the process of undoing this action—checking off one of the “First things to fix” identified by our national research partners at Environment America Research & Policy Center, in a series of 20 recommendations shared with the Biden team before they took office.

“Thank you, President Biden, for taking this first step,” said Morgan Folger, Destination: Zero Carbon campaign director with our national research partners at Environment America Research & Policy Center. “Now it’s time to reaffirm that states can and should lead the way for clean air and cleaner cars.”

Vehicle tailpipes are a major source of climate-changing, health-harming air pollution. A report by our research partners showed that in 2018, 108 million Americans lived in areas that experienced more than 100 days of degraded air quality.

Charging stations at state parks mean Coloradans can recharge EVs while they recharge in nature

You shouldn’t have to choose between saving the planet and visiting our public lands.

That’s why Environment Colorado Research & Policy Center launched a campaign to get electric vehicle chargers installed at every Colorado state park, expanding access to our lands and wild places to people who get there using electric vehicles (EVs).

And in March, we won: Under a partnership between the state and EV company Rivian, all 42 state parks will get at least two chargers—at no installation cost to taxpayers.

“We can adopt a trail. We can adopt a mile. Why can’t people adopt EV chargers?” said Hannah Collazo, then-state director with Environment Colorado Research & Policy Center, to CPR News on the potential for more company-sponsored EV chargers like these.

Rivian will also maintain the chargers for 25 years.

Get more updates on our work online at http://environmentcolorado.org.
And in 2015, we won: The Obama administration enacted the Clean Water Rule, which protected our waterways once more.

**Restoring hope after attacks**

Then, the Trump administration vowed to repeal the Clean Water Rule on day one—and it even planned on replacing it with a policy known as the Dirty Water Rule.

So, Environment America Research & Policy Center stepped up again—organizing thousands to stop the Dirty Water Rule.

Despite our best efforts, the Dirty Water Rule was finalized in 2020 and reopened the floodgates for polluters. This new rule has left half our remaining wetlands and thousands of streams without federal protection.

But all hope was not lost: That same grassroots support—yours included—fueled our campaign to repeal the Dirty Water Rule.

First, we joined other groups in suing the Trump administration’s EPA. Second, we made sure the incoming Biden administration saw the overwhelming public support for stronger clean water protections.

Then, we saw progress: The EPA announced its intention to reverse the Dirty Water Rule.

But intention is not implementation—our work is far from over. Many of our waterways are still at the mercy of polluters. So we’re calling on the EPA and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to permanently protect our waterways.

The Clean Water Act turns 50 next year—and with your support, we will work to ensure that all our nation’s waters are protected under this bedrock environmental law.

By John Rumpler, Clean Water for America campaign director

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In 2014, a coalition led by our national network delivered more than 700,000 comments from Americans to the EPA in support of restoring protections to the nation’s streams and wetlands.

Thank you for supporting our work to take on the vast environmental challenges we face and to create a greener, healthier, more sustainable world. In these pages, you’ll find the stories of the advocacy you made possible.

Your action and support allow us to keep working for a better world. Thank you.

Rex Wilmouth
Senior Program Director
Over 47,000 supporters tell Amazon: Stop selling bee-killing pesticides

To save the bees, our staff have asked the world’s largest online retailer to stop selling the pesticides that kill them. And we’re not alone.

In March, Environment Colorado and our national network kicked off our campaign to convince Amazon to take neonicotinoid pesticides (or “neonics”)—the substances linked to a troubling decline in bee populations—off its (virtual) shelves.

By August, campaigners with our network had collected more than 47,000 petition signatures online and in 10 communities across the country.

“We need to reduce the use of this pesticide that’s contributing to the collapse of our most important pollinators,” said Malia Libby, our national Save the Bees campaign associate. “Amazon should join other retailers in doing the right thing and taking it off its shelves.”

Our ask is far from unprecedented: The Home Depot and Lowe’s have already pledged to phase out the use of neonics on their live plants, and Lowe’s has committed to taking the pesticides off its shelves altogether.

Our national network’s summer canvassers talked to tens of thousands of people across the country about our campaign to get Amazon to stop the sale of bee-killing pesticides.

Our mission:
We all want clean air, clean water and open spaces. But it takes independent research and tough-minded advocacy to win concrete results for our environment, especially when powerful interests stand in the way of environmental progress.

That’s the idea behind Environment Colorado, Inc., a project of Environment America. We focus on protecting Colorado’s air, water and open spaces. We speak out and take action at the local, state and national levels to improve the quality of our environment and our lives.