

Annual Report

Recapping our work in fiscal year 2015 for our members



To our members

"Behind each accomplishment were engaged and committed people like you who joined us in fighting for a cleaner, greener and healthier future. I'm grateful for the energy you bring to these fights, and the staying power you give our efforts."



Margie Alt
Environment America
Executive Director

From record-breaking, devastating wildfires and severe storms, it has become abundantly clear that global warming is happening now and requires bold action.

Unfortunately, opposition from the fossil fuel industry and their allies in Washington D.C., stands in the way of meaningful action, from ensuring clean water to realizing the full potential of solar power.

The challenges we face in protecting our environment are formidable, and daunting. But this past year also gave me a lot of hope for the future. At Environment Illinois, 2015 was all about people power. And, together, we have a lot to be proud of.



Anna Aurilio
Federal Legislative
Director

We took the biggest step for clean water in a decade: Since 2006, a pair of polluter-driven Supreme Court decisions left 2 million miles of streams without guaranteed protection under the Clean Water Act. After nine years of advocacy, and 800,000 comments from people like you, we saw these protections restored.

And, finally, we acted on climate: After Americans submitted 8 million comments of support for limiting carbon pollution from power plants, President Obama finalized the Clean Power Plan, which will do just that for the first time ever. Illinoisans' voices helped advance the policy and build the political will to win this victory, which will make a major dent in our country's contribution to global warming pollution and sets a precedent for other nations to follow.



John Rumpier
Senior Attorney

As you'll read in the following pages, behind each accomplishment were engaged and committed people like you who joined us in fighting for a cleaner, greener and healthier future. I'm grateful for the energy you bring to these fights, and the staying power you give our efforts. And working together, I am optimistic about our prospects for the future.

Thanks,

Shelley Vinyard
Regional Program Director

Margie Alt
Environment America Executive Director

No Bees, No Food

Millions of bees are dying off, with alarming consequences for our environment and our food supply. This past fiscal year, Environment Illinois mobilized grassroots support for protecting these vital pollinators. With your support, we called on the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to declare a nationwide moratorium on neonicotinoids—a class of bee-killing pesticides.

Fighting to give bees a chance

We rely on bees to pollinate everything from almonds to strawberries, to the alfalfa used to feed dairy cows. Yet, beekeepers report losing on average 30 percent of all honeybee colonies in recent years.

Scientists point to several causes behind the problem, including a class of bee-killing insecticides known as neonicotinoids, or neonics. Your support helped us call on the EPA to ban this dangerous class of pesticides.

4 million urged President Obama to save the bees

In March 2015, Environment Illinois and our national team, along with a coalition of beekeepers, farmers and others, delivered more than 4 million petitions calling on the Obama administration to issue strong protections for pollinators.

In May, the White House issued a new plan to stem the deaths of pollinators, but it fell short of banning neonics. Now, we're calling on federal officials to ban the use of neonics on farms and in garden stores.



Top: Members and supporters from all walks of life took action with "photo petitions" to protect bees.

Bottom: Beekeepers report losing on average 30 percent of all honeybee colonies each year.



Global Warming Solutions

You helped Environment Illinois and Environment Illinois Research & Education Center win the greatest step the United States has ever taken to address the climate crisis. Working with a broad coalition, we helped educate the public, engage elected leaders, and deliver an overwhelming 8 million comments of support for limiting power plant pollution—paving the way for President Obama and the EPA to finalize the historic Clean Power Plan.



▲ Federal Legislative Director Anna Aurilio (left) and Environment America Executive Director Margie Alt raised their voices for clean power at the People's Climate March in New York in September 2014.



▲ President Obama announced the final Clean Power Plan in August 2015.

You helped get the historic Clean Power Plan over the finish line

From record-breaking drought and devastating wildfires, to extreme downpours and flooding, Americans are feeling the impacts of global warming now. Scientists predict that without drastic cuts in global warming emissions, these effects will become catastrophic. In 2015, President Obama took decisive action to address this threat by moving forward with the first-ever plan to limit carbon emissions from power plants—America’s largest source of global warming pollution.

Thousands of supporters like you took action

Environment Illinois and our members came together to help build the momentum necessary to finalize the Clean Power Plan, and push past strong opposition from the fossil fuel industry and climate-deniers in Congress.

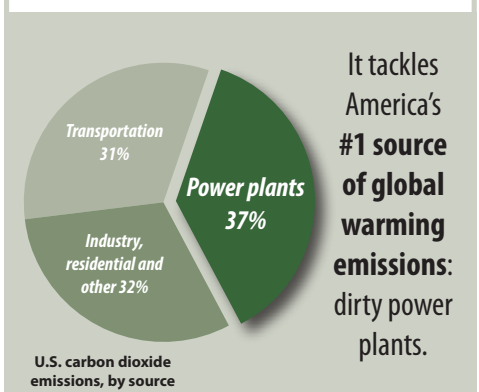
- During the public comment period for the Clean Power Plan, members and supporters of Environment Illinois submitted 713,000 comments in support of a strong plan.
- Hundreds of elected officials and solar businesses, and nearly 1,000 health professionals joined the chorus of support for limits on power plant pollution.
- This coming year, as a member of the Illinois Clean Energy Jobs Coalition, Environment Illinois will work to make sure Illinois gets a running start in implementing the Clean Power Plan by ramping up clean energy policies in the state.

Environment Illinois Research & Education Center showed need to limit carbon pollution

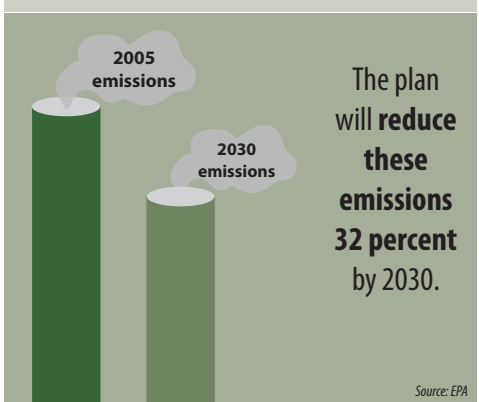
In 2015, Environment Illinois Research & Education Center analyses shone a spotlight on the threat of global warming and the meaningful impact of limiting carbon pollution from power plants.

- The report “America’s Dirtiest Power Plants” found that coal-fired power plants are America’s number one source of global warming pollution. Curbing this pollution will be essential to tackling the threats of climate change.
- The report “Dangerous Inheritance” revealed that the current generation is experiencing hotter temperatures and more intense storms than their predecessors did 40 years ago—and without urgent action to curb carbon pollution, global warming will continue to contribute to dangerous heat waves, severe storms, rising sea levels and more.

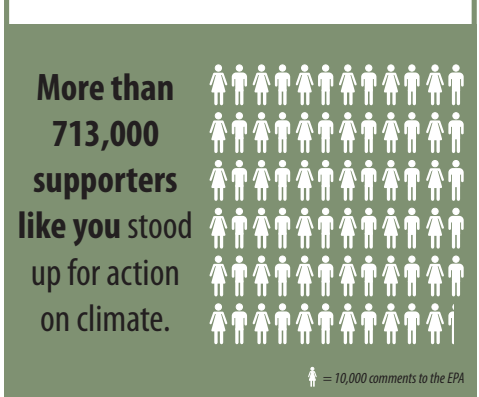
Why the Clean Power Plan matters...



It tackles America’s #1 source of global warming emissions: dirty power plants.



You called for action



Clean Water for America Protect Lake Michigan

In 2015, Environment Illinois and Environment Illinois Research & Education Center celebrated the biggest victory for clean water in a decade! In May, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) issued a rule to restore Clean Water Act protections to thousands of waters across the country. Our public education and outreach efforts, bolstered by action taken by our members, allies, and a diverse coalition of businesses, elected officials and farmers, built the momentum necessary to get the Clean Water Rule past polluter opposition and signed into law.



▲ EPA Administrator Gina McCarthy (sitting, right) and U.S. Assistant Secretary of the Army Jo Ellen Darcy (sitting, left) signed the Clean Water for America rule on May 27, 2015, with Margie Alt, Environment America executive director (second from left).



▲ Canvassers celebrated the EPA's announcement of the Clean Water Rule.

Winning the biggest step forward for clean water in a decade

For nearly a decade, Environment Illinois has gone toe-to-toe with powerful polluters and their allies in Congress to restore the Clean Water Act and protect our waters—permanently. And in 2015, our efforts finally paid off when President Obama restored federal protections to more than half the nation’s streams, which feed drinking water sources for one in three Americans.

More than 48,000 miles of streams in Illinois regained protections

The Clean Water Rule closed loopholes in the Clean Water Act, returning protection to more than 48,000 miles of streams in Illinois. You gave Environment Illinois the resources to advocate in Congress, mobilize a diverse and powerful coalition, and rally the grassroots to demand action.

- We helped our national team gather more than 800,000 comments and held more than half a million face-to-face conversations about the need to close loopholes in the Clean Water Act.
- With the rule under threat, our national team held meetings with more than 50 congressional offices, urging them to champion the voice of the public and stand up for clean water.
- Disappointingly, at press time, a federal appeals court blocked the new protections we just won for our waters. We’ve put together a legal strategy to defend the Clean Water Rule, and given its strong legal and scientific basis, the courts should ultimately reject all efforts to weaken it.

Research highlighted legacy of Clean Water Act

Our waterways provide drinking water, essential habitat for wildlife, and treasured destinations for fishing, swimming and boating. Last year, together with our affiliated state groups across the country, Environment Illinois Research & Education Center’s research on the threats facing Lake Michigan and the impact of the Clean Water Act earned nearly 1,000 media hits nationally.

- The report “Wasting Our Waterways” documented toxic pollution entering our waterways and threatening our health and drinking water supplies. It found that 206 million pounds of toxic chemicals were dumped in America’s waterways in 2012 alone.
- The report “Waterways Restored” presented 15 case studies that show how the Clean Water Act restores and protects waterways—like the Cuyahoga River, which was once so polluted it caught fire, but today is clean enough for canoeing.

Polluting industries carved loopholes in the Clean Water Act, leaving 2 million miles of streams across the country open to pollution.

With a resounding call from supporters like you and our allies nationwide, we worked to protect America’s waterways.

800,000 comments to the EPA

1 million took action online

1,000 letters to the editor

1,000 business owners, farmers and elected officials

VICTORY!
On May 27, 2015, the Clean Water Act was restored.

An algae bloom caused by runoff pollution

Go Solar, Illinois

Solar power is growing so fast across the country that goals once considered ambitious are now seen as readily achievable. Spurred by pro-solar policies, we're getting more of our energy from the sun, putting us on the road to 100 percent clean energy. In 2015, Environment Illinois Research & Education Center presented hard-hitting research and made the case for setting bold solar goals.

Strong policies fuel solar's success

With another panel or project installed every four minutes in 2013 and the rate only getting faster, solar power is on the rise across the country.

- Environment Illinois Research & Education Center's report "Lighting the Way" found that the top 10 states for solar, which hold 87 percent of the nation's total installed solar electric capacity, have implemented strong policies that are enabling increasing numbers of homeowners, businesses and communities to "go solar."
- "Shining Cities," a report we released in March, found that cities are also playing a crucial role in growing national solar capacity. Chicago ranked 2nd in the region in our report.

Let's get to 10 percent solar—and beyond

To continue solar's growth, the whole nation must follow the lead of cities and states that have prioritized solar in their energy policies and set bold goals for solar.

- Across the country, nearly 600 civic leaders, 500 businesses and more than 20,000 citizens signed onto a goal of 10 percent solar by 2030.
- If this goal were achieved nationally, the United States would generate enough clean energy to replace half our coal-fired power plants.



Top: A residential rooftop solar installation

Bottom: Environment America Research & Policy Center and its state affiliates released "Shining Cities" nationally in April 2015.

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