



Summer Report

Defending 40 years of progress on clean air

As EPA considers action, some in Congress resist

There's no doubt that the Clean Air Act, which turned 40 in 2010, has improved the health and well-being of millions of Americans. Its protections are credited with saving the lives of 160,000 Americans in 2010 alone.

Of course, air pollution remains a pressing health threat in this country, a stark reminder of the work still left to do. An estimated 13,200 Americans lost their lives to heart attacks, strokes, asthma attacks and other fatal conditions brought on or exacerbated by air pollution from power plants. It's estimated that one in six women of childbearing age has enough mercury in her bloodstream (a byproduct of coal power production) to put her child at risk should she become pregnant.

Thankfully, the Obama administration has announced it will seek to strengthen and update portions of the Clean Air Act in the coming months.

Clean air, healthy families

With some vocal opponents of the Clean Air Act throwing their weight around in Congress, Environment New Mexico, the American Lung Association and other public health organizations are building support to make sure the administration's proposals are successful.

In January, Environment New Mexico Federal Field Organizer Veronica Gutierrez released a hard-hitting examination of one of the most dangerous air pollutants: mercury. That report, "Dirty Energy's Assault



Caitlin Mirra*

▲ *We're calling on the EPA to update clean air safeguards.*

on our Health," documented waterways that carry advisories warning against fish consumption due to mercury pollution.

Showdown in Congress

The Obama administration's updates to the Clean Air Act face uncertainty, with polluting industries and their allies opposing them in Congress. In February, the House

of Representatives attached a provision to a federal funding bill that would have blocked the EPA from cutting mercury pollution from cement plants and cleaning up soot pollution. Less than a month later, the Senate rejected the funding bill, with many senators citing the environmental and public health attacks within the bill as one of the reasons for their opposition.



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Our research found the Four Corners Steam Electric Station released 1,481 pounds of mercury into the air in 2009.

To read the report "Dirty Energy's Assault on our Health," visit our website and click "Reports."



To our members

If the last few months are any indication, 2011 won't be an easy year in our work to stand up for the places we love and values we share. But despite a challenging political climate, we've been able to rebuff a number of attacks on our air and water—and that gives me hope that no matter what, New Mexicans still love our environment.

The year started off with Gov. Susana Martinez issuing executive orders to halt regulations that protect the water we drink and the air we breathe. Luckily, the New Mexico Supreme Court upheld our values, and ordered the regulations to continue.

In the Legislature, we saw similar attacks on our air, water and open spaces, but with your help and support we were able to stand up and protect New Mexico's environment and public health.

We're not going anywhere. We'll keep standing up for your drinking water, air and local parks, forests and rivers.

Thanks for your support,

Sanders Moore, Advocate

Recent action

Attempt to gut clean energy standard rebuffed

One of the reasons that solar and wind power is taking hold in New Mexico is our clean energy goal, which requires that New Mexico gets 20 percent of our electricity from clean, renewable sources by 2020. In one of many attempts to repeal environmental rules and regulations, foes tried to gut this critical clean energy goal—but we helped defeat this move.

The bill, "Amend Renewable Energy Portfolio Standards," would have halved our current clean energy goal, making the goal 10 percent of our electricity from renewable sources by 2020. We are on track to achieve 10 percent this year, so the bill would have eliminated requirements to continue increasing renewable energy in New Mexico.

Thanks to our members' phone calls, the bill died in the House Energy and Natural Resources Committee.

Conservation funding measure advances

Margie Alt, the director of our national federation, joined President Obama at the White House in February for the announcement that he'd seek the renewal of the federal Land and Water Conservation Fund.

What's the Land and Water Conservation Fund? For the past 45 years, the federal government has put a fraction of the revenue from offshore drilling into a trust fund to expand national parks, protect hunting and fishing areas, and aid local conservation and recreation projects like city parks and playing fields.

In 2010, the Land and Water Conservation Fund spent money protecting important natural places in New Mexico, including the Sevilleta National Wildlife Refuge and Petroglyph National Monument. In February, the bill passed the House, and our staff continues to work to help the bill reach the president.

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▲ A cactus wren nest in Sevilleta National Wildlife Refuge

Progress for drinking water in jeopardy

While Environment New Mexico made significant progress for our drinking water over the last year, we need to overcome resistance in Congress before moving ahead.

Over the last decade, polluters have used litigation to strip Clean Water Act protections from 88 percent of streams in New Mexico. These smaller waterways feed and protect larger rivers. They also provide drinking water for more than 280,000 New Mexicans.

Water is too precious to waste here in New Mexico—we squander our limited resources every time we allow polluters to dump into our streams and wetlands. As our population continues to boom, we can't afford to waste a drop.

Last fall, when polluters stymied our efforts to fix this loophole in Congress, we urged the EPA to use its own authority to do so. In response, the agency began drafting formal instructions for its attorneys to apply clean water protections for our drinking water to the fullest extent allowed by law.

EPA targeted by "continuing resolution"

Exploiting the battle over the budget, lobbyists for factory farms, developers and other polluters got their allies on the Hill to include a number of amendments that strip environmental protections.

Among the amendments was one that would block the EPA from taking action to restore the Clean Water Act, as well as block pollution cuts from mountaintop mining, and slash funding for preventing sewage overflows.

To stop this onslaught, Environment New Mexico and our allies across the country worked to expose the polluter influence behind it and to show broad public support for clean water.

On Feb. 14, we presented EPA Administrator Lisa Jackson with thousands of valentines for clean water. Two weeks

later, we issued a report showing the growing influence of corporate agribusiness and its systematic efforts to roll back clean water laws.

On March 9, the Senate rejected the budget package containing these anti-clean water amendments by a margin of 44-56, but there is little doubt that polluters will try again soon.

Throughout the summer, we'll be building support for the EPA's efforts, giving them the public support they need to issue strong new rules that keep New Mexico's water supply safe.

We can't wait to restore protections: Between now and 2040, our demand for water will double. With population pressure mounting, we cannot wait another year to strengthen protections and improve restoration efforts for New Mexico's water supply.



Dirty water, dirty politics

Contaminating our water

Our research found that from 2005 to 2010, the 10 leading agribusiness interests spent \$127 million lobbying Congress and federal agencies.



Reps. Heinrich and Lujan named "Conservation Champions"

Environment New Mexico was pleased to present Reps. Martin Heinrich and Ben Ray Lujan with the "Conservation Champion" award because of their support for our water and land conservation.

In February, the U.S. House of Representatives presented a budget that heavily reduced funding to protect our water and open spaces. Luckily, here in New Mexico, we have champions who will stand up for our interests to protect our environment.

Rep. Heinrich has worked tirelessly in the U.S. House of Representatives to ensure that the open spaces that are essential to the Land of Enchantment are protected. Rep. Lujan also stood up to defend the Land and Water Conservation Fund, pointing out that it has helped "protect dozens of New Mexico icons including Tent Rocks National Monument."



Veronica Gutierrez presents an award to Rep. Ben Ray Lujan (top of column). Sanders Moore, Gutierrez and members of our citizen outreach team present an award to Rep. Heinrich (above).

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Environment New Mexico

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 New Mexico. We focus exclusively on protecting New Mexico'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.

Thousands join to protect Otero Mesa

Our campaign to permanently protect Otero Mesa is gaining momentum. Our members helped us demonstrate how important protecting the wildlife, natural resources and groundwater source located at Otero Mesa from drilling and mining is to New Mexicans.

With your support, we are showing President Obama that New Mexicans want to protect Otero Mesa now and for generations to come. Thousands of postcards have been signed and presented to the Obama administration; hundreds of hand-written letters have been sent directly to President Obama; countless calls have been made to our senators to ensure their support for an Otero Mesa National Monument; and thousands of New Mexicans have learned about the threats to Otero Mesa during one-on-one conversations with our citizen outreach team.



"We've been working to protect Otero Mesa for years and are grateful for the members of Environment New Mexico as they bolster our call."

—Nathan Newcomer, Associate Director, New Mexico Wilderness Alliance



For more ways to get involved, find Environment New Mexico on Facebook:

www.facebook.com/EnvNM

