Annual Report
A recap of our work in Fiscal Year 2012
Dear Environment Connecticut members,

The past year was a tough one for Connecticut’s environment, as polluting interests, emboldened by an increasingly divided political culture, leveled more extreme attacks on protections for our air, water and open spaces.

When polluting interests attempted to block long overdue clean water protections for Long Island Sound, we responded with a summer of grassroots action. Our citizen outreach staff spoke with more than 16,000 Connecticut residents about threats to the Sound.

But even as the fight against polluters continues, this year also saw victories for Connecticut’s environment, including the largest step to date that the United States has ever taken to tackle global warming. Our state-level and federal advocacy played a key role in winning historic clean car standards.

The victories we won this year remind us that even in the toughest circumstances, our combination of grassroots organizing, research and advocacy can make a difference. Your support will help us continue the fight for Connecticut’s environment.

Sincerely,

Johanna Neumann
Regional Director

Anna Aurilio
Federal Director

Shelley Vinyard
Federal Clean Water Advocate

Nathan Willcox
Global Warming Program Director
When Connecticut’s once thriving potential for clean energy began to falter, Environment Connecticut and our allies helped mobilize support for a groundbreaking clean energy bill. The bill became law in July 2011, and it has already put Connecticut back on the map as a leader for clean, renewable energy.

Groundbreaking state-level clean energy law passed

The pioneering clean energy law Environment Connecticut and our allies helped pass in 2011 has helped grow clean energy throughout the state. Now Connecticut’s solar industry, which previously saw production fleeing to Massachusetts and New Jersey, is repowering our homes, businesses and municipalities with non-polluting energy that never runs out.

Already, the new law has grown solar significantly in the state and helped thousands of Connecticut families install solar power systems on their homes. Over the next six years, the program will expand the production of not only solar, but also wind and other renewable energy systems across the state.

The clean energy law has made it easier for families to slash energy bills and reduce global warming pollution.
Keeping Wild Spaces Wild

In 2012, we fought to defend the Connecticut River watershed from encroaching development. In July, the House voted to cut an essential program to defend our open spaces, including the Connecticut River’s Silvio O. Conte National Fish and Wildlife Refuge. We went to work to convince Congress to maintain the program, and mobilized support for a bill that would protect the program, and our open spaces, forever.

Connecticut River the first National Blueway

This year Ken Salazar, Secretary of the Interior, visited the state to designate the Connecticut River as the first National Blueway. The Connecticut River and the open spaces that surround it represent some of the best of our state’s natural heritage. But despite this, the land around the Connecticut River is still at risk of development.

The wildlife refuge, like too many national parks and open spaces across the country, is dotted with privately owned land that could be sold and developed. Much of the river’s watershed is kept pristine because it is protected as part of the Silvio O. Conte National Fish and Wildlife Refuge.

The Land and Water Conservation Fund was established over 50 years ago to expand and protect national parks and open spaces by providing resources to purchase private land adjacent to parks when it comes up for sale.

Unfortunately, every year, Congress raids the Fund of the resources set aside for conservation and uses the money for unrelated purposes. This year marked a new low when the House voted to cut the Fund by 93 percent. The Fund must be strengthened and protected against budget raids in order to guarantee that the Fund fulfills its intended purpose.
We fought to strengthen the Fund and protect our river

Environment Connecticut began an effort to fix the Fund and see the Connecticut River completely, and permanently, protected. Thousands of people sent messages to our senators asking them to uphold the Fund, making it clear that Connecticut’s most treasured places should never be up for sale.

Unfortunately, the Fund was not maintained in the Senate. But Environment Connecticut is keeping up the fight for our open spaces. A bill in Congress would permanently guarantee the Land and Water Conservation Fund the resources it needs to protect the Connecticut River forever.

Environment Connecticut will continue to work for the preservation of the Connecticut River in the coming year.

Black-backed wood pecker in the Silvio O. Conte National Fish and Wildlife Refuge, Interior Secretary Ken Salazar visited Connecticut to designate the Connecticut River the nation’s first National Blueway.
Protecting Long Island Sound

Our research and advocacy helped build momentum for essential clean water protections for Long Island Sound. This year, we got closer than ever to closing loopholes in the Clean Water Act that endanger the Sound, but partisan politics stalled them in the home stretch. We are working hard to build the support needed to bring vital protections across the finish line.

Working to protect more than half of Connecticut’s streams

From Hammonasset Beach to Rocky Neck State Park, the beauty of Long Island Sound is part of Connecticut’s natural heritage. But too many of the rivers and streams that feed the Sound are vulnerable to toxic pollution, contributing to massive dead zones that plague the Sound each summer.

Even as the Sound suffers from billions of gallons of untreated sewage entering its waters every year, recent polluter-friendly decisions from the U.S. Supreme Court resulted in loopholes in the Clean Water Act. Now more than half of the smaller waterways in Connecticut that feed and clean the Sound are vulnerable to more toxic pollution, dumping and development. The consequences of a still-unprotected Sound are troubling:

• Connecticut experiences 100 beach closings or water safety warnings every summer.

• Annually, a dead zone appears in Long Island Sound that chokes ocean life and can grow to seven times the size of Manhattan.

Environment Connecticut has been fighting to see the Sound fully protected. Last year, the Environmental Protection Agency responded to our efforts with a plan to restore Clean Water Act protections to the Sound and the rivers and streams that feed it.
Defending the EPA’s clean water initiatives

This summer, when the EPA was on the verge of finalizing critical protections, polluting industries and their allies in Congress began a massive pushback. As a result, the guidelines have yet to be finalized.

Big polluters, including the oil and gas industry, agricultural industry, and developers are forming new front groups like the U.S. Farmers & Ranchers Alliance with the intention of striking down our critical environmental safeguards, in addition to simply weakening them.

So to counter the voices of powerful polluters, Environment Connecticut went to work to demonstrate widespread support for protecting all our waterways, including those that feed and filter the Sound.

Our organizers spoke to more than 16,000 concerned Connecticut residents about the issue and encouraged them to contact their legislators. Together with our allies, we mobilized more than 200,000 people in support of protections for all our waterways. We will continue the fight for the Sound until protections that guarantee its health are finalized.

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**Frequency of Hypoxia in Long Island Sound bottom waters**

**Percent of Hypoxic years (1991-2008) (3.5 mg/L)**

| 10 | 20 | 30 | 40 | 50 | 60 | 70 | 80 | 90 | 100 |

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Pollution causes dead zones in Long Island Sound that choke marine life.
Global Warming Solutions

This summer, we saw the United States take the single largest action against global warming to date. In August, the Obama administration finalized national clean car standards that will dramatically reduce carbon pollution. Our state research and advocacy made this victory possible, as our work here in Connecticut helped secure a statewide standard that served as crucial groundwork for the national standard.

Paving the way for a historic national step

New clean car standards will drastically reduce emissions of carbon pollution and cut oil use in Connecticut and nationwide. Limiting carbon emissions is essential to curbing the worst effects of global warming, and this step will make a big difference. This is real concrete action to address global warming, and it started here in Connecticut.

These new rules will dramatically impact our carbon emissions, statewide and nationally. Environment Connecticut fought for and won statewide clean car standards—standards that laid the groundwork for national action.

By 2030, in Connecticut alone, the standards will cut carbon pollution from vehicles by nearly 2.8 million metric tons—the equivalent of the annual pollution of roughly 424,000 of today’s vehicles—and save more than 235 million gallons of fuel.

Nationwide, the standards will cut carbon pollution from vehicles in the United States by 270 million metric tons—the equivalent of annual pollution from 40 million of today’s vehicles—and save 1.5 million barrels of oil every day.
Strengthening RGGI

Connecticut has proven to be a leader for clean energy and addressing global warming. Our participation in RGGI, North America’s first carbon cap and trade program, is an example of this leadership. This year, Environment Connecticut worked to strengthen the program and released research that demonstrated how RGGI cuts pollution and grows the economy.

Strengthening a program that works

As the first program in the country to limit global warming emissions from power plants, the ten-state Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI) demonstrates that a program that sells pollution permits and uses the money to invest in clean energy options can work.

Unfortunately, fossil-fuel interests have mounted a well-financed campaign to roll back this landmark program in some other states, including New Jersey, New Hampshire and Maine. Connecticut was a founding member of RGGI, and our staff are supporting our sister organizations working to defend the program in other states.

We’re also urging Gov. Dannel Malloy to strengthen the program to reduce current carbon emissions even more. In December, we helped enlist 250 environmental groups, clean energy businesses and public health officials on to a set of principles to strengthen the program.

Connecticut and the nine other states that participate in the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative have cut per capita carbon dioxide emissions 20 percent faster than the rest of the nation, even as the region’s gross product per capita grew 87 percent faster than the rest of the United States.