



Winter Report

Photo: Andrea Schwalm, Creative Commons

Victory for Connecticut wind power

Push to get wind turbines spinning off our shores

When key federal wind incentives were set to expire at the end of the year, Environment Connecticut and our partners around the country went to work. Fortunately, with strong support from President Obama and our House and Senate allies—and thanks in part to the hundreds of Environment Connecticut activists who raised their voices on the issue—Congress renewed critical wind power tax credits as a part of the beginning-of-the-year deal to avert the “fiscal cliff.”

In November, as the fate of critical wind incentives faced the approaching “fiscal cliff,” Environment Connecticut Research & Policy Center released our latest report on wind energy. The report, “Wind Power for a Cleaner America,” outlines the core environmental and economic benefits that wind energy yields.

We used the report to call on United States lawmakers to commit to renewable energy by renewing the wind incentives that are critical to growing wind significantly in the U.S.

Like taking 113,000 cars off the road

Coal- and natural gas-fired power plants pollute our air, are major contributors to global warming, and consume and pollute vast amounts of water—harming our rivers and lakes and leaving less water for other uses. Wind energy has none of these problems. It produces no air pollution, makes no contribution to global warming, and uses no water.

Decreasing smog and soot pollution is par-



Photo: Chris Devers, Creative Commons

▲ Wind turbine in Hull

ticularly critical for Connecticut, where three metropolitan regions—Bridgeport, Stamford-Norwalk, and Danbury—made the top 20 lists for smoggiest U.S. cities of their size in 2010.

If wind development continues at a pace comparable to that of recent years through 2016, New England alone would reduce global warming pollution by the equivalent of taking 113,000 cars off the road. And we

would save enough water to meet the needs of nearly 10,000 people.

A bright future for offshore wind power

To achieve our full potential to harness the power of wind, construction of new generating capacity will need to continue to grow—which is now on track to happen thanks to these tax incentives and renewable electricity standards being extended and strengthened.



Photo: Seabarium, Creative Commons

more online

The amount of electricity America generates from wind power has increased dramatically, cutting harmful power plant emissions.

◀ *Manressa Island Power Plant in Norwalk, Conn.*



Photo: Staff

To our members

This year we are likely to, once again, see polluters try to convince the public that our environmental values are at odds with job creation and a healthy economy.

But you and I both know that this is a false choice. Recently I reviewed scenarios to strengthen the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative to reduce carbon pollution from power plants. The model that most aggressively reduced global warming emissions created five times more economic benefit than the other option. Likewise, every \$1 invested in national parks creates \$4 for local communities. And every dollar we invest in energy efficiency more than pays for itself in consumer savings, let alone job creation in our communities.

The truth is that protecting our environment goes hand in hand with creating and maintaining a strong and vibrant economic base in our communities. With your support, we'll continue to work for a flourishing and protected environment in Connecticut.

Sincerely,

Johanna Neumann
Regional Director

Recent action

Keeping up the fight for Long Island Sound

For 40 years, the Clean Water Act has helped care for and clean up Long Island Sound and waterways that feed into it. Still, work remains to be done. Polluters dumped nearly 300,000 pounds of toxic pollution into Connecticut's waters in 2010 alone, and much of this pollution makes its way to the Sound.

Adding insult to injury, over the past decade, polluters and irresponsible developers have used the courts to put Clean Water Act protections in legal limbo, arguing that the law doesn't cover the smaller streams and wetlands that feed and filter the Sound's waters.

This spring, Environment Connecticut will redouble its efforts to make sure President Obama doesn't back down to polluters and instead moves forward with restoring Clean Water Act protections to all of our waterways.

Conservation Connecticut: The Connecticut River

The Connecticut River and its tributaries represent the best of our state's natural heritage. The river's watershed is home to hundreds of animal species, including bald eagles, and is a treasured destination for thousands of Connecticut residents who visit the river and its shores for kayaking, hiking and other activities. In recognition of its ecological value, the Connecticut River watershed was designated a national wildlife refuge in 1995.

Yet, too many developers consider the land around the river an "investment opportunity" to be exploited. As a result, the unprotected lands that border the refuge are at risk of development, potentially endangering the integrity of this diverse ecosystem.

Fifty years ago, lawmakers created the Land and Water Conservation Fund to provide resources for states to protect wildlife refuges without using a single taxpayer dollar. But each year, Congress raids the fund and uses the money for other purposes. And the program itself is set to expire in the next few years if no action is taken. So, Environment Connecticut is bringing citizens together to ensure that Senators Blumenthal and Murphy make protecting the Connecticut River a top priority.



Photo: Brian Gudzevich, Creative Commons

▲ Connecticut River

Heeding Sandy's wake-up call

Photo: NASA

Connecticut can lead the response

Environment Connecticut is responding to this past year's extreme weather with a focused campaign to significantly reduce global warming pollution in the state, including strengthening the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI). Connecticut is a founding member of the RGGI program which works to reduce carbon emissions in Connecticut and across the Northeast.

Sadly, Superstorm Sandy was the worst possible wake-up call, reminding us all that global warming is happening now, and that the resulting increase in extreme weather has tragic consequences.

That's because the air over a warming planet holds more moisture, with warming temperatures in our oceans leading to more powerful storms. At the same time, rising sea levels mean that when storms hit our coasts, flooding is more severe. Deadlier, more powerful, more damaging storms like Superstorm Sandy are exactly what scientists have warned us will happen if we fail to reduce carbon pollution, warnings that were outlined in a report we released this past summer: "When It Rains, It Pours."

It doesn't have to be this way. And in 2012, Environment Connecticut and our allies made encouraging progress towards our goal of breaking America's oil addiction and moving towards cleaner sources of energy that don't fuel global warming.

Hopeful progress already underway

Connecticut organizations, businesses, and officials joined more than three hundred stakeholders from across the region in calling on Governor Malloy and other Northeast and Mid-Atlantic governors to build on progress, reducing pollution and promoting clean energy, by improving the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI). The coalition highlighted RGGI's success to date and called for strengthening the program's pollution reduction targets and increasing investment in clean energy and energy efficiency measures that benefit the climate, the economy, public health,

and energy consumers. In November, the program came up for re-evaluation, and thanks in part to the advocacy of Environment Connecticut and our supporters the weakened versions of RGGI put forth by state officials were not approved.

In another hopeful step to cut global warming pollution, in 2012 the Obama administration took the largest single step the United States has ever taken to tackle global warming by finalizing carbon pollution standards for cars that will cut carbon pollution by 2.8 metric tons in Connecticut alone. Environment Connecticut staff and supporters helped win these standards, first by helping to win the state standards that paved the way for this historic national step, then by working at the national level to overcome polluter opposition and see the standards finalized.

"Winning clean cars and clean energy policies, Connecticut has been a leader in tackling carbon pollution," Johanna Neumann, Environment Connecticut. "We look forward to working with state leaders to assist them in strengthening policies like RGGI that promote clean energy and limit carbon pollution and with the Obama administration to take on these critical issues federally."



Read the full report "Wind Power for a Cleaner America" online at: www.EnvironmentConnecticut.org.



Offshore wind on the horizon

We are on the cusp of seeing the first offshore wind farms spinning in the United States off the Atlantic Coast. Offshore wind has potential to be a major player in moving our country away from polluting fossil fuels.

The National Renewable Energy Laboratory estimates that we have enough feasible offshore wind potential off the Atlantic coast to power 55 million households, the equivalent energy produced by more than 200 good-sized coal plants. But despite this potential, offshore wind power remains completely untapped in the U.S.

However, thanks in part to our advocacy, the Obama administration made huge strides over the last year. The Department of the Interior announced in December the first two areas off the Atlantic Coast to be leased for wind development—an area off the coast of Massachusetts and Rhode Island and an area off the coast of Virginia—which together could produce enough wind energy to power 1.4 million homes.

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Environment Connecticut

Our mission

We all want clean air, clean water and open space. 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 Connecticut. We focus exclusively on protecting Connecticut's air, water and open space. We speak out and take action at the local, state and national levels to improve the quality of our environment and our lives.

Protecting our water from fracking waste

In communities throughout Pennsylvania, Ohio and Texas, the dangerous gas drilling practice known as fracking is leaving a trail of contaminated water, polluted air, sickened families and marred landscapes in its wake.

The disposal of fracking wastewater in open pits contributes to air pollution, while leakage from improperly lined pits has contaminated groundwater and surface water. Chemicals present in fracking wastewater have been linked to serious health problems, including cancer.

Rather than building expensive water treatment facilities to process fracking wastewater in the states where drilling is happening, the industry has explored exporting the water to other states. Environment Connecticut and our allies are working with state lawmakers to keep toxic fracking wastewater out of Connecticut.



Photo: B. Mark Schmerling

◀ *Contaminated drinking water in Bedford County, Penn.*

The importation of toxic waste from dangerous gas drilling (fracking) threatens to contaminate Connecticut waterways.