Environment Connecticut helps win a victory for Long Island Sound this June, when a key Senate committee approved a bill that would inject new funds and energy into efforts to restore the Sound.

From swimming at Hammonasset Beach to sailing along the coast, Long Island Sound is part of our natural heritage and part of the legacy that we want our kids to enjoy. But the health of the Sound is at risk, and efforts to protect it are falling short.

Dead zones, sewage and pollution
Too much sewage is dumped into the Sound every year, too many beaches close down each summer, too much pollution runs off from overdevelopment, and too much of the Sound’s natural habitat is threatened. With a dead zone extending across as much as 180 square miles of the Sound during the summer, we cannot wait another year to restore Long Island Sound.

This year we have a chance to protect the Sound. Congress is considering legislation that would give Long Island Sound restoration efforts a much-needed shot in the arm. The Long Island Sound Restoration and Stewardship Act (S. 3119), approved by the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee on June 30, would provide the structure and funding necessary to restore the Sound’s ecosystem and clean up decades of pollution.

Building support on the street
To ramp up support for the bill this summer, our citizen outreach team went door to door in communities across Connecticut, speaking to more than 41,000 people. We gathered 3,600 petition signatures to members of Congress, urging them to support efforts to restore Long Island Sound. Our staff also wrote and released “America’s Great Waters,” a report highlighting the steps needed to restore the Sound and other great waterways. Environment Connecticut is working with lawmakers and building the public support necessary to sweep past opposition from polluters and their allies in Washington, D.C. Our goal is to pass the Long Island Sound Restoration and Stewardship Act into law this year so we can protect and restore the Sound for generations to come.
BP’s Deepwater Horizon stopped gushing—but we don't know what long-term damage the disaster will cause for the ecosystem and communities of the Gulf. There's no better reason to push toward a future in which Americans use as little oil as possible, protecting our oceans and beaches and reducing global warming pollution, as well.

Our staff is working in Hartford and Washington, D.C., to ensure BP is held fully responsible for the disaster, and to win a permanent ban on new drilling off our shores. But we must do more to prevent future tragedies.

Thus, Environment Connecticut is launching a major program to reduce our dependence on oil. Our work with Connecticut leaders, Congress, and with the Obama administration will slash oil consumption and move America toward a clean energy future.

Sincerely,

Christopher Phelps
Program Director

Recent action

400,000 strong against new offshore drilling

In the wake of the Gulf oil disaster, Environment Connecticut and our national federation, Environment America, rallied nearly half a million people to speak out against the Obama administration’s planned expansion of offshore drilling.

The impact of America’s dependence on oil became tragically apparent when BP’s Deepwater Horizon drill rig exploded in April, gushing more than 200 million gallons of oil into the Gulf of Mexico. The spill devastated wildlife, coastal marshes and the people who depend on the Gulf for their livelihoods—and the aftershocks will be felt for years.

The surest way to prevent a catastrophe like this from happening again is to ban any new drilling while better regulating existing operations. In June, Environment Connecticut and our allies submitted more than 400,000 petition signatures asking the president to stop the rush to expand offshore drilling.

Next step on clean cars

The BP oil disaster in the Gulf demonstrated in heartbreaking terms the need to move away from oil. That’s why Environment Connecticut is working to set aggressive new fuel efficiency standards for cars and trucks.

In May, President Obama announced historic clean car standards, which Environment Connecticut and our allies helped win. These new rules, which expire in 2016, could cut gasoline consumption by more than 11 billion gallons per year.

But the disaster in the Gulf demands that we go further. We are calling for even stronger rules requiring cars to travel 60 miles on a gallon of gas by 2025. Auto companies have the technological know-how to make it happen, so we’re working to convince the Obama administration. We’ll collect thousands of public comments and mobilize citizen support to make this goal a reality.

How do you want to be remembered?

You can be remembered as someone who cared enough to keep up the fight for a cleaner, greener, healthier future by making a bequest to Environment Connecticut.

For information, call 1-800-841-7299, or e-mail PlannedGiving@EnvironmentConnecticut.org.

Environment Connecticut

www.EnvironmentConnecticut.org/newsletters
Gov. Rell vetoes much-needed clean energy bill

“Kermit the Frog had it wrong all these years, I’m afraid. It is easy to be green. Solar, fuel cells, wind turbines and geothermal—all hold the keys to economic and energy prosperity.”

Those were the words of Gov. M. Jodi Rell in her final budget speech to the Legislature in February. She was right—Connecticut’s dependence on oil and other dangerous and increasingly unaffordable energy sources threatens our economy and our environment. Unfortunately, Gov. Rell failed to follow her own advice this spring, when she vetoed a comprehensive clean energy bill sent to her desk with bipartisan support in the state legislature.

Conn. lags in the clean energy race

Our state is falling behind in efforts to invest in wind, solar, energy efficiency and other clean energy technologies that will create jobs, break our dependence on oil, and cut pollution. While our neighbors in Massachusetts, New Jersey and other northeastern states have increased support for new solar power systems on homes, businesses and public buildings, Connecticut has pulled the plug on many of its solar power programs in recent years.

That’s why Environment Connecticut worked to pass a comprehensive energy bill in the Legislature this year. The bill passed in both the State House and Senate in May. This legislation streamlined the alphabet soup of state energy agencies, making them better equipped to move Connecticut toward a clean energy future.

It also created market-based incentive programs for solar and other renewable energy sources, which could help build enough solar systems to power nearly 100,000 Connecticut homes. Another provision would help homeowners, businesses and communities finance clean energy systems and energy efficiency retrofits in order to slash energy use—and costs—for homes, businesses and public buildings.

Clean energy future vetoed

After the bill made it through the Legislature, we worked to persuade Gov. Rell to sign it into law. Unfortunately, despite pressure from our staff and members, Gov. Rell chose to turn her back on Connecticut’s clean energy future, and sided with power company lobbyists by vetoing the bill. With the help of Environment Connecticut members who donated to our efforts, we ran an ad in her hometown newspaper, the Danskbr News-Times, taking her to task for vetoing the bill.

This fall, Environment Connecticut is urging candidates for governor and the Legislature to make it a top priority to pass a comprehensive clean energy bill when they take office in January. We’re calling on candidates to support policies to increase the amount of energy we get from sources like the wind and the sun, and slash the amount of energy used by our homes, businesses and public buildings.

In the news

Thanks to the generous support of our members, Environment Connecticut was able to run an ad in Gov. Rell’s hometown newspaper taking her to task for vetoing the clean energy bill.

Defeating a handout for Big Oil

As oil flowed into the Gulf of Mexico in June, Sens. Chris Dodd and Joe Lieberman voted against a binding resolution that would have increased America’s dependence on oil and block Clean Air Act rules.

The measure, dubbed the “Dirty Air Act,” would have crippled future attempts to reduce our dependence on oil by blocking any regulation of global warming pollution—including new federal clean car standards that our staff helped secure. According to our analysis, by 2016 the resolution would have increased our state’s dependence on oil by at least 5 million gallons and cost Connecticut residents $15 million at the gas pump.

“How now the Senate must get down to business passing a bill to lessen the extensive damage caused in the Gulf, cut our oil dependence, and move to a clean energy economy that caps carbon pollution and finally prioritizes energy efficiency and clean, renewable energy,” said Emily Figdor, our federal global warming program director, in a statement following the Senate’s vote.
In July, Environment Connecticut and a coalition of advocates and elected officials held a news conference at Branford Point Beach in Branford, to mark the release of the 2010 “Testing the Waters” report from the Natural Resources Defense Council. This annual study examines water quality and beach closing data, and it found that in 2009, there were 108 beach closings and advisories at Connecticut’s beaches. Most of the incidents were due to stormwater runoff, elevated bacteria levels and heavy rainfall. Sadly, three beaches won the dubious distinction of having the dirtiest beach water in Connecticut: Kiddie Beach in Waterford, Marvin Beach in Norwalk, and Eastern Point Beach in Groton.

When families go to the beach, they shouldn’t have to worry about swimming in polluted water that can make them sick. That’s why Environment Connecticut is working with officials in Hartford and in Washington, D.C., to crack down on dangerous pollution, such as stormwater overflows into our rivers, streams and Long Island Sound.

Read more about protecting our water from dangerous pollution on our website:
www.EnvironmentConnecticut.org/reports