Don’t mess with Long Island Sound

Thousands speak out for EPA clean water rules

As polluting industries push to weaken legal safeguards and Republican leaders in Congress move to block the EPA from doing its job, Environment Connecticut is delivering a firm response: Don’t mess with Long Island Sound.

EPA moves to cut pollution

State officials estimate that more than 2 billion gallons of untreated sewage flow into Long Island Sound each year. Legal loopholes allow polluters to pave over wetlands and dump into more than half of Connecticut’s streams, including many that feed into the Sound.

The consequences are clear. High pollution levels have led to more than 100 beach closings or warnings in Connecticut each summer. Sewage pollution also creates dead zones in the Sound each summer that can grow to be up to seven times the size of Manhattan.

For the past several years, Environment Connecticut has been working to reduce sewage pollution and close the loopholes that weaken the Clean Water Act’s ability to protect our waters. This year, the EPA responded. In April, EPA Administrator Lisa Jackson announced a plan to restore Clean Water Act protections.

“Legal warfare”

Not surprisingly, oil companies, developers and other polluters immediately sprang into action to stop the EPA from closing the dirty water loophole—ExxonMobil lobbyists even met with the president to convince him to drop the issue, threatening “legal warfare” if the EPA moved forward.

Over the summer, polluters’ allies in both parties launched an unprecedented attack on the Clean Water Act in Congress. By mid-July, the U.S. House of Representatives had passed three separate measures attacking the EPA’s authority to protect our water. We saw this coming and had already begun building a campaign to defend the EPA’s clean water initiatives. Our field organizers have talked face to face with tens of thousands of people about the attacks on clean water. And, we worked with our allies to mobilize 170,000 people nationwide to send comments to Washington, D.C., urging support for clean water. As we work to protect our waters, we’ll be sure to remind officials that here in Connecticut, we want to see Long Island Sound—and all of America’s great waterways—protected.

Visit our website to learn more about our work to protect the Sound and to get involved.

www.EnvironmentConnecticut.org
Recent action

A way forward on tackling climate change

When it comes to global warming, it’s easy to succumb to gloom and pessimism, especially given the anti-environmental rhetoric and lack of action in Washington, D.C. Yet there is a way forward—and it starts in states like Connecticut. In 2008, our staff worked to pass the Global Warming Solutions Act, which requires the state to take steps to cut global warming pollution 10 percent below 1990 levels by 2020.

Across the country, state and local governments have followed Connecticut’s lead by adopting clean energy policies that are projected to cut more than 500 million tons of global warming pollution per year by 2020—nearly 10 percent of our nation’s total emissions. And our research shows states have the potential to go even further. In September Environment America Energy Program Director Rob Sargent and Environment Connecticut unveiled a study showing that states can cut global warming pollution 20 percent by 2020 by adopting clean energy and transportation policies like renewable energy standards, building energy codes and expanded public transportation.

New rules will cut air pollution, save lives

This year the Environmental Protection Agency took major steps to cut toxic air pollution from power plants, despite intense opposition from industrial polluters and their allies in Congress.

In March, the EPA proposed the first-ever nationwide limits on mercury pollution from power plants. The new rule would require power plants to implement existing technology to cut mercury emissions by 91 percent—a huge victory, given mercury’s effects on how kids think, learn and behave. Soon afterwards, in July, the EPA finalized a rule to protect communities from dangerous smog pollution, which could prevent as many as 34,000 premature deaths annually by 2014. Polluters and their allies in the U.S. Senate fought back with proposals to block the EPA. Our staff and activists helped defeat the measures, and in July we delivered more than 600,000 public comments to the EPA supporting the mercury rule—a strong show of support as Congress keeps trying to block EPA action.

To our members

Washington, D.C., is paralyzed by partisan warfare and dominated by powerful interests. But does that mean environmental progress is impossible?

Not by a long shot. Because right here in Connecticut, our staff and members are making a real difference.

Thanks in part to our work, in July Gov. Dannel P. Malloy signed a groundbreaking new clean energy bill into law. The new law will jumpstart Connecticut’s clean energy economy and make it easier for families and businesses to invest in rooftop solar systems, energy efficiency upgrades, and more.

Of course much remains to be done—we’re stepping up our work to win strong protections for Long Island Sound and cut toxic air pollution. But I am proud of what we’ve already accomplished together. I hope you are too.

Sincerely,

Christopher Phelps
Program Director

How do you want to be remembered?

You can be remembered as a 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 email PlannedGiving@EnvironmentConnecticut.org.

The EPA moved to cut mercury pollution from power plants. At right, EPA Administrator Lisa Jackson (left) with Margie Aft, director of our national federation.
For years, Connecticut has been left behind in the race to break our addiction to oil and build a clean, efficient and secure energy future.

The state's solar power industry, once growing by leaps and bounds, saw jobs flee to Massachusetts and New Jersey as state energy incentives in Connecticut dried up. While families and businesses struggled to pay their utility bills, a complicated alphabet soup of overlapping government agencies offered a patchwork of energy efficiency programs that too often failed to achieve their goals.

A new and improved energy law

But this summer, we saw the beginning of a change for the better for Connecticut’s energy future.

Environment Connecticut and our allies—from AARP to homegrown clean energy businesses—went to work advocating for a strong energy bill in 2011. In June that bill passed the Legislature by an overwhelming margin. Gov. Dannel Malloy signed it into law on July 1.

This bill, Environment Connecticut’s top priority in the 2011 legislative session, is a big down payment on a clean energy future for our state that can break our dependence on unaffordable, dangerous and polluting sources of energy like oil, gas, coal and nuclear power.

Just as important, it puts Connecticut back on the map as a competitor in the clean energy field.

As Bill Stillinger, manager of local solar business PV Squared, told the Hartford Courant: “The new legislation in this state is brilliant—it surpasses anything the other states are doing.”

Helping Connecticut families go solar

The new law helps Connecticut families install solar power systems on their homes. It will also help homeowners, businesses and municipalities slash their energy bills with low-cost loan programs and other innovative financing programs that will make it easier to afford energy efficiency retrofits and upgrades.

People will be put back to work across the state building new solar, wind, fuel cell and other renewable energy systems over the next six years—enough to power tens of thousands of Connecticut homes.

The new law also created the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection, bringing better coordination and focus to the state’s efforts to cut pollution, build a clean energy future and cut energy costs.

Helping Connecticut families go solar

The new law helps Connecticut families and business-owners reap the benefits of clean energy.

For starters, it will help thousands of Connecticut families install solar power systems on their homes. It will also help homeowners, businesses and municipalities slash their energy bills with low-cost loan programs and other innovative financing programs that will make it easier to afford energy efficiency retrofits and upgrades.

Environment Connecticut helps pass ground-breaking energy law
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.

As President Obama negotiated with auto companies to improve fuel efficiency this summer, Environment Connecticut and our partners across the country advocated for a strong standard to make our cars go farther on a tank of gas. More than 10,000 people signed our petition in support of cleaner cars. On July 22, the president announced a new standard of 54.5 miles per gallon by 2025—roughly twice as strong as the current standard.

Environment Connecticut applauded the proposed rules, which represent the biggest single step our country has ever taken toward getting off oil. By 2030, these rules will cut our annual gasoline use by 23 billion gallons, save Americans more than $80 billion at the pump annually, and reduce our annual global warming pollution by 280 million metric tons—the equivalent of shutting down 72 coal-fired power plants.

Our Federal Global Warming Director, Nathan Willcox, had the honor of thanking the president in person for the new, tougher fuel efficiency standards.

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