



Summer Report

Progress for Long Island Sound in jeopardy

Congress attempts to block EPA from doing its job

This summer, Environment Connecticut is building support across the state for strong rules to protect Long Island Sound and waterways across the country—and to overcome opposition in Congress.

Whether we're fishing off Rocky Point, swimming at Hammonasset Beach or kayaking along the coast, it isn't summer in Connecticut without a trip to Long Island Sound. But the Sound faces a host of problems that threaten our ability to enjoy this special place.

180 square miles of dead zones

Two billion gallons of untreated sewage flow into the Sound and our rivers every year, contributing to the more than 100 beach closings or advisories that affect Connecticut's beaches each summer. This pollution also creates dead zones in the Sound each summer that can span up to 180 square miles—an area seven times the size of Manhattan.

To make matters worse, recent Supreme Court decisions called into question whether more than half of Connecticut's streams, including waters that feed Long Island Sound, are still protected by the Clean Water Act. Without these protections, polluters can dump with impunity.

EPA targeted by polluters

Last fall, we urged the Environmental Protection Agency to take the lead on restoring the Sound. In response, they agreed to strengthen protections for Long Island Sound and waters across the country.



Lisa Jacobs, Flickr

▲ Meigs Point at Hammonasset Beach.

Unfortunately, Congress is threatening to stop them from cleaning up the Sound. In February, for example, the House passed a bill to block EPA action on clean water.

To stop this attack, Environment Connecticut and our allies across the country worked to expose the polluter influence behind the House's move, and to show broad public support for clean water. We presented EPA Administrator Lisa Jackson

with thousands of petitions supporting protections for the Sound and other waters.

So far, these efforts have helped defeat the worst assaults on clean water—but there is little doubt that polluters and their allies in Congress will try again. This summer, we will be talking to people across the state about the threats facing the Sound, and building the public support the EPA will need to protect Long Island Sound.



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more online

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

www.EnvironmentConnecticut.org



To our members

What does summer in Connecticut mean to you? For some, it's whitewater rafting down the Farmington River. For the less adventurous among us, it's a leisurely afternoon at the beach.

Our state's waters are cleaner than they once were thanks in part to the action of local citizens and the standards set and enforced by state and federal environmental officials. As times have changed, officials have updated these standards so we keep moving toward a goal of waters that are safe and clean enough to swim in, fish in or drink from.

As some in Congress consider whether to block the EPA from doing its job—protecting Long Island Sound and the streams that feed it—I hope you'll join us this summer in showing your support for clean water.

Sincerely,

Christopher Phelps
Program Director

Recent action

2010 was breakthrough year for solar

In an otherwise lackluster economy, the solar industry shined brighter than ever in 2010, with a 67 percent increase in the amount of solar energy projects installed across America compared to 2009.

That means more homes and businesses across the country will be powered by pollution-free solar energy, an increase made possible by strong solar policies implemented at the urging of Environment Connecticut. In December, Federal Clean Energy Advocate Sean Garren led our charge in Congress to extend critical incentives for solar power.

Environment Connecticut, along with the rest of the Environment America federation, continues to strategize with entrepreneurs within the solar industry to hit a far more ambitious benchmark: getting 10 percent of our nation's energy from solar by 2030.

President pushes for conservation funding

Margie Alt, the director of our national federation, joined President Obama at the White House in February for his 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 the Connecticut River, the Silvio O. Conte National Fish and Wildlife Refuge, and the Stewart B. McKinney National Wildlife Refuge in Westbrook.

Our staff is currently building support for the approval of the conservation funding in Congress.

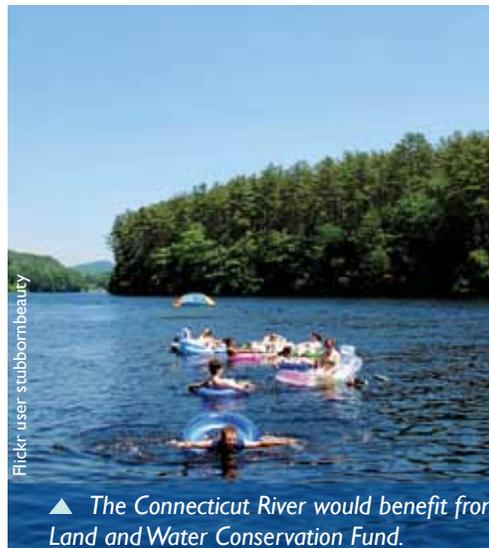
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Whitehouse.gov

▲ The Connecticut River would benefit from the renewal of the federal Land and Water Conservation Fund.

Defending 40 years of progress on clean air

Mike Van Valen/Flickr

There's no doubt that the Clean Air Act, which celebrated its 40th birthday 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 as a result of 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 Connecticut and our national federation at Environment America, along with the American Lung Association and other public health associations are building support to make sure the administration's proposals go through.

In January, Environment Connecticut released a hard-hitting examination of one of the most dangerous air pollutants: mercury. According to that report, "Dirty Energy's Assault on our Health," power plants in Connecticut emitted 219 pounds of mercury pollution in 2009. Even very small amounts of mercury can have significant impacts, as studies suggest that a gram-sized drop of mercury can contaminate an entire 20-acre lake.

This is the first in a series of reports Environment Connecticut's staff plan

to publish in our examination of the health threats posed by the burning of coal.

Showdown in Congress

The Obama administration's updates to the Clean Air Act face great uncertainty, with polluting industries and their allies in Congress having launched an all-out assault on the Clean Air Act.

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, cleaning up soot pollution, and reducing carbon dioxide from coal-fired plants.

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.

Yet, with some members of Congress still trying to block the EPA from doing its job in protecting our air, Environment Connecticut is continuing to work for clean air and a healthier future.



Staff

Clean Air,
Healthy Families



Join our Clean Air, Healthy Families campaign on Facebook, and tell us why clean air is important to you:
facebook.com/CleanAirHealthyFamilies



nrc.gov

How could nuclear ever be worth the risk?

Our hearts go out to the families in Japan that were stricken by a massive natural disaster in March.

After an earthquake and tsunami ravaged Japan, the country remains in the midst of a nuclear crisis. The fallout from this disaster has touched millions of lives in Japan and is being felt worldwide. The health threats are numbing: Drinking water samples in Tokyo are contaminated with radioactive iodine at a level dangerous to infants; a dozen agricultural products from the Fukushima region are radioactive at dangerous levels; hundreds of thousands of people have been evacuated from the area around the reactors; and many other effects are just being assessed—including high radiation levels in the nearby ocean waters.

The events in Japan must be a wake-up call for Americans about the dangers of nuclear power. We must ask ourselves: Is it worth the risk? Our current use of nuclear power gambles with our children's health and our environment. In Japan, Mother Nature yet again proved stronger than anything we can design. Isn't that possible here as well?

We must act now to ensure the relative safety of existing plants, put a moratorium on any new plants, and begin to phase out our use of nuclear power. We can and must move away from energy technologies that put our environment and health at massive risk and repower our country with clean, renewable energy, like wind and solar power.

▲ Millstone Nuclear Power Plant in Waterford, Conn.

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ENVIRONMENT
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Clean Air. Clean Water. Open Space.

Environment Connecticut

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 Connecticut. We focus exclusively on protecting Connecticut'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.

Report: Solar hot water could save \$10 billion

Americans could save nearly \$10 billion annually on their energy bills by using solar water heaters in their homes and businesses, according to a new report from the Environment Connecticut Research & Policy Center.

The report, "Smart, Clean and Ready to Go," also found that the widespread use of cost-effective solar hot water technology could cut our dependence on coal and other fossil fuels, and reduce Connecticut's oil consumption by 13.4 million gallons per year. Nationwide, solar hot water could reduce global warming emissions by the equivalent of taking nearly 10 million cars off the road.

"We have long had the technology and the know-how to harness the free heat of the sun to get hot water," noted Environment Connecticut's Chris Phelps, "and more than ever we have a workforce that is ready to install these affordable solar panels on roofs across the state."



Read more about the benefits of solar hot water on our website:

www.EnvironmentConnecticut.org/reports