Promoting Clean Energy

From smog-emitting coal plants to the toxic threat of nuclear power, the ways that we produce and use energy in Pennsylvania have a severe impact on our environment and health. PennEnvironment is working toward a new energy future that promotes clean, renewable energy and uses efficient technologies to help protect the planet. In 2012, we helped secure the future of wind energy in Pennsylvania by renewing a key federal wind program, saving thousands of jobs and ensuring that our state gets more of its energy from clean, renewable sources.

Clean energy incentives renewed
As 2012 came to a close, it looked like Congress was going to let an important wind energy program expire—putting the environmental and economic benefits of wind power at risk.

Working with a coalition of environmental groups and clean energy businesses, PennEnvironment was able to get thousands of residents to call on their legislators to support these clean energy programs. In the end, Congress listened. It renewed the wind energy tax credits, saving 35,000 jobs nationwide and ensuring that growing the clean energy sector will continue to cut global warming pollution.

New study outlined more benefits of wind energy
Wind energy is a true environmental and economic success story. It now powers the equivalent of nearly 180,000 homes in Pennsylvania, reducing our dependence on coal and oil, and creating a cleaner, healthier future for Pennsylvanians and all Americans.

And according to a recent PennEnvironment Research & Policy Center report, if wind power continues to grow at the existing pace, it would reduce Pennsylvania’s global warming pollution by as much as taking an additional 185,000 cars off the road.

The report was released across the commonwealth with supporters, including Pennsylvania Auditor General-elect Eugene DePasquale and Scranton Mayor Chris Doherty, who highlighted the economic benefits of wind power.
Global Warming Solutions

Global warming is the most pressing environmental problem facing the planet today—and Pennsylvania ranks third in the nation for global warming pollution. PennEnvironment is working aggressively to promote commonsense solutions to this profound challenge. In 2012, we helped see through cleaner nationwide car standards and advocated for the first-ever carbon pollution limits for coal-fired power plants. Combined, they will cut billions of tons of pollution in the coming years.

Superstorm Sandy as it hits the East Coast

The impact of Superstorm Sandy on New Jersey beach communities
To our members

“We helped stave off Marcellus Shale gas drilling and fracking near the Delaware River, and we helped push historic steps to get the nation off oil and reduce air pollution.”

Dear PennEnvironment member,

As we look back on the past year, I think we’d all admit that it’s a tough time to be an advocate for our environment. Washington, D.C. is mired in gridlock and it often feels like our state Legislature and governor in Harrisburg are working to undo years (if not decades) of effective environmental protections.

That being said, 2012 showed us that we can still deliver concrete victories for our environment and public health when we fight the good fight; when we speak truth to power; and when we take the principled position.

It often takes more elbow grease than we’d like, but that’s not surprising when you remember that we’re taking on many powerful interests with deep pockets. Some days, it’s the gas drilling companies such as Halliburton, ExxonMobil and Chevron. Other days, it may be coal companies or the lobbyists for the homebuilders or the electric utilities.

Yet day in and day out, you and I have worked together to stand for what’s right—often with positive results. When Gov. Tom Corbett proposed eliminating one of Pennsylvania’s most important conservation programs—the Keystone Fund—we jumped to action and helped to defend that program from cuts. When we uncovered an illegal polluter upstream from Pittsburgh, along the Allegheny River, we took legal action under the Clean Water Act to bring this company to court. And after years of advocating for cleaner cars in order to reduce air pollution and our carbon footprint, we played a critical role in the national effort to implement cleaner car standards across the country. By 2025, our cars will get nearly 55 miles per gallon—the single largest step we’ve taken as a nation to reduce our global warming pollution.

You can read about these and other accomplishments you helped us achieve in our 2012 annual report. And I hope you’ll pat yourself on the back for the important part you played in making these victories possible. They’re hard fought—but they are the crucial legacy of a healthier environment and planet that we will be able to leave for our kids and future generations, so thank you for making all of our work possible.

David Masur
Director, PennEnvironment
Protecting Our Rivers and Streams

Pennsylvania’s rivers and streams are the lifeblood of our state, and we must ensure that they are clean enough for future generations to enjoy. Unfortunately, roughly 15,000 miles of those waterways are considered too polluted for fishing or swimming—enough to stretch from New York City to San Francisco and back three times. That’s why PennEnvironment and our members are taking action to hold polluters accountable when they pollute our great waterways, like our lawsuit against a major water polluter in 2012.

PennEnvironment announces Clean Water Act lawsuit
The beginning of 2012 was marked by PennEnvironment joining the Sierra Club to file a federal lawsuit against Pittsburgh Plate Glass (PPG) Industries, alleging ongoing violations of the federal Clean Water Act at the company’s Ford City plant. The site is located approximately 50 miles northeast of Pittsburgh on the banks of the Allegheny River.

PennEnvironment’s lawsuit against PPG contends that the company has failed to obtain the pollution permits required under the Clean Water Act, and that this has led to highly corrosive wastewater—including arsenic, lead, antimony, iron, aluminum and chromium—to be released from the Ford City site into the nearby river.

PennEnvironment strongly believes that PPG has the legal responsibility—and the financial ability—to comply with the law and stop the discharging of harmful pollutants from its Ford City site into the Allegheny.

“PPG has had five decades to properly remediate this site, stop its illegal pollution, and protect the Allegheny River. The time for action to clean up this site is now,” said Erika Staaf, PennEnvironment’s clean water advocate. “Our environmental laws are meaningless if polluters can violate them with impunity. When persistent violations are not addressed by the government, our federal environmental laws allow private citizens to enforce the law and protect the environment.”

While our lawsuit continues in 2013, we will keep our members and local citizens apprised of our progress.
Preserving Our Parks

From Erie’s Presque Isle to Ridley Creek State Park outside of Philadelphia, and everywhere in between, Pennsylvania’s parks and forests are the crown jewels of our natural heritage. When Gov. Tom Corbett attempted to eliminate the Keystone Fund, one of our state’s core conservation programs, PennEnvironment swung into action. With your support, PennEnvironment helped save the program—and we’ll keep speaking up for our parks, forests and trails whenever necessary.
Defending Pennsylvania’s cornerstone conservation program

Since 1993, the Keystone Recreation, Park and Conservation Fund—also called the Keystone Fund—has been one of the commonwealth’s most touted environmental programs. Since its creation, it has helped fund the protection and creation of state parks and open spaces throughout Pennsylvania. But last year, Gov. Tom Corbett attempted to eliminate this hugely effective program. With the help of our members and volunteers, we were able to halt the attacks on our parks, forests and Pennsylvania’s great natural heritage.

PennEnvironment responded to park funding attack

Over its twenty-year history, the Keystone Fund has been one of Pennsylvania’s most successful conservation programs, helping to protect more than 145,000 acres of threatened open spaces and critical habitat. It has also funded our incredible state park system—the places where Pennsylvanians go hiking, fishing and camping, to take their families to explore, and to just get away from it all.

That’s why PennEnvironment was shocked when Gov. Corbett proposed to eliminate the program over the summer of 2012. PennEnvironment jumped to action, mobilizing our members and activists in every corner of Pennsylvania. We also collaborated with other environmental groups to show Gov. Corbett and our legislators in Harrisburg that putting Pennsylvania’s great natural heritage on the chopping block is unacceptable.

Public outcry saved Keystone Fund

In response, PennEnvironment worked with our allies, members and volunteers across the state, and we were able to elevate the issue in the media. Our open spaces are what make Pennsylvania great; so upon hearing about the issue, Pennsylvanians emailed their legislators and the governor, sent letters, and made phone calls to Harrisburg. Our project was a huge success:

• Our staff and volunteers talked to more than 50,000 Pennsylvanians about the threats facing the Keystone Fund;

• Over 15,000 emails were sent to the governor and state legislators, urging them to not dissolve the Fund; and

• Thousands more handwritten notes were delivered to our politicians in Harrisburg.

This work culminated in a news conference on the steps of the Capitol right before the big vote. Speakers called on Gov. Corbett to reverse his plan to eliminate the Keystone Fund, and PennEnvironment delivered the thousands of petitions and letters that were collected. And when the dust settled, legislators on both sides of the aisle worked together to defend the Keystone Fund from Gov. Corbett’s proposal, saving this critical conservation program—and the places it helps to protect—for generations to come.
Keep Pennsylvania Safe From Drilling

When Marcellus Shale drilling came to Pennsylvania, we were among the first groups to sound the alarm. We advocated for and won tougher regulations, kept drilling far away from the Delaware River, gathered tens of thousands of signatures on an anti-drilling petition, and joined hundreds of local activists in standing up to the drillers who are threatening our health, our communities, our forests and our rivers.
Defending Pennsylvania from drilling

All across Pennsylvania, the gas drilling industry has left a trail of environmental pollution and public health risks in its wake. Drilling and associated activities have contaminated drinking water with highly dangerous contaminants, and health experts are finding increased levels of air pollution near drilling sites. Incredibly, drilling has even been allowed on hundreds of thousands of acres in Pennsylvania’s state forests.

PennEnvironment continues to stand up for families, residents and all Pennsylvanians who want to leave a clean and safe environment for generations to come.

Over 1,000 concerned citizens trained

As Pennsylvania residents grappled with questions about fracking in their communities and how best to address the issue, PennEnvironment developed an activist training program to help create a better-informed citizenry throughout the state.

In all corners of Pennsylvania and everywhere in between, PennEnvironment held more than 40 training sessions over the course of a year, providing more than 1,000 individuals with information about the environmental and health effects of fracking, and training participants on skills such as media engagement, citizen advocacy and lobbying.

Report: “The Costs of Fracking”

PennEnvironment released a report documenting a wide range of dollars and cents costs imposed by dirty gas drilling across the state and nationwide. “The Costs of Fracking” details the commonly overlooked costs of air pollution, ruined roads, contaminated water and lost property value:

• In Dimock, Pa., where fracking operations contaminated the drinking water wells of several households. Providing a permanent new source of clean drinking water for this community would have cost nearly $12 million.

• A 2010 study in Texas concluded that houses valued at more than $250,000 and within 1,000 feet of a well site saw their values decrease by 3 to 14 percent.

• Moreover, as with previous extractive booms, fracking will impose long-term costs as well. For example, the coal boom left Pennsylvania with billions of dollars in cleanup costs—still impacting the state’s taxpayers today.

“We already know about shale gas drilling’s damage to our environment and health. These dollars and cents costs are one more reason to reject this dirty drilling practice,” said Erika Staaf, clean water advocate.
**Historic steps to tackle global warming**

Unfortunately, 2012 weather headlines for Pennsylvania and the nation provided a stark reminder that the impacts of global warming are moving even faster than previously predicted.

To that end, PennEnvironment helped pass historic new clean cars standards that are the most far-reaching policies the U.S. has implemented to tackle global warming. But instead of resting on our laurels, we immediately moved to build support for the first-ever carbon pollution standards for new coal-fired power plants.

**Supporters rallied for cleaner cars...**

More than 100 citizens, including doctors, academics, religious leaders, elected officials and small business owners turned out to voice their support for cleaner cars at a federal hearing held in Philadelphia in January 2012.

Overall, more than 282,000 Americans submitted formal comments in support of the proposed clean cars standards, along with key leaders in the business, consumer, labor and environmental communities.

These standards will push automakers to begin developing even cleaner cars, including electric vehicles, as highlighted by a PennEnvironment Research & Policy Center report released last July.

**...and pollution limits for power plants**

Pennsylvania is the third largest contributor to global warming through emissions pollution. So when President Obama proposed the first-ever carbon pollution standards for power plants, we went to work to make sure the standards became a reality.

- All told, we collected over 150,000 public comments from Pennsylvanians—more residents than have ever commented on an EPA-proposed rule. To reach all of these citizens, PennEnvironment canvassed door-to-door and on city streets, mobilized public support through an aggressive online campaign, and reached out to our members and concerned citizens by phone.

- We organized a town hall hosted by Philadelphia City Councilwoman Blondell Reynolds Brown, where over 50 Pennsylvanians testified about the impacts that global warming was having on their lives.

- We wrote two new studies on global warming and extreme weather, releasing them at news conferences held across Pennsylvania.

**Victories will cut billions of tons of pollution**

Thanks to these efforts, the nation will make significant progress in tackling global warming.

The new clean cars standard is the single largest step we’ve ever taken to cut global warming pollution as a nation—reducing our carbon footprint by the equivalent of taking 1.2 million cars off the road. And, we hope the Obama administration will finalize the power plant standards in the near future.
Clean Air, Healthy Families

Our research shows that each year, thousands of our neighbors across the state die prematurely because of soot and mercury pollution from coal-fired power plants and other industrial polluters. In 2012, we organized thousands of voices to support stronger standards for soot pollution from vehicles and power plants proposed by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). We also generated calls from across the state into key senate offices and helped fend off an attack by polluters and their allies in Congress on new mercury standards that are projected to save 11,000 lives nationwide each year.

Life-saving soot pollution limit passed
Current air quality standards for soot pollution are too weak, and it costs tens of thousands of American lives every year. In June, the EPA moved to fix this by proposing stronger soot pollution standards for power plants and diesel trucks. PennEnvironment staff went to work to ensure these new standards would become a reality:

- Our staff and volunteers helped collect thousands of public comments.
- Concerned citizens joined us to testify at a local hearing.

Mercury protections saved from rollbacks
Unfortunately, what many have called “the most anti-environmental Congress in history” continued to attack these and other critical safeguards. PennEnvironment helped defeat their attempt to roll back life-saving mercury standards by creating a groundswell of support:

- Over 100 public health experts joined us in speaking out for strong protections from mercury pollution;
- Tens of thousands of public comments were gathered in support of the rules; and
- When Congress tried to rollback these new clean air protections, we worked with U.S. Sen. Bob Casey and the rest of Pennsylvania’s congressional delegation to stop these rollbacks.

Town hall meeting on clean air
PennEnvironment stood up for clean air protections that will save 46,000 lives a year. Field Director Adam Garber testified on behalf of the public (top) and brought a crowd to support his case (below).
Protecting Our Local Open Space

The neighborhood parks and open spaces that dot our communities are a huge part of what makes living in Pennsylvania so great—providing much needed green space for walking, relaxing, taking our children to play, and farmland that provides food for our tables. Sadly, our local parks and open spaces faced real threats in 2012—from budget cuts to attempts to outright eliminate protections that preserve our nearby parks and endangered family farms. PennEnvironment stood up for our parks and open spaces in Harrisburg and helped to save them from the threat of irreparable harm.

Attack on farmland preservation program defeated

In its 24-year history, Pennsylvania’s Farmland Preservation Program has protected more than 460,000 acres of threatened farmland. Yet in 2012, Gov. Corbett proposed to dissolve this crucial program.

In response, PennEnvironment members and volunteers emailed, sent letters and called their legislators in Harrisburg to send a clear message: Our working family farms are a critical part of what makes Pennsylvania great. Together, we were able to defend Pennsylvania’s crown jewel farmland preservation program from attack.

Proposal to sell off local parks thwarted

No matter where you live in Pennsylvania, we all have a favorite park: somewhere to go for a walk or a picnic on a beautiful day. That’s why it was shocking to see legislators in Harrisburg push a proposal to allow local politicians to sell off parklands to the highest bidder for quick and easy cash. So PennEnvironment joined other environmental groups, local parks organizations, and concerned citizens to defeat this reckless proposal.

Our online response network alerted tens of thousands of PennEnvironment members about this threat—and connected them directly with their state senators to rapidly voice their opposition.

The public scrutiny paid off. As the legislative session ended in Harrisburg, our legislators chose not to pass this shortsighted proposal.