A recap of our work for our members in 2013
To our members

“PennEnvironment saw some real milestones to protect our natural heritage and our environment in 2013.”

Reflecting back on 2013, it’s clear that this year encapsulated the best and worst when it came to protecting our environment and convincing our elected officials to “do the right thing.”

That’s probably not too surprising, since poll after poll showed that the general public viewed 2013 as the “worst political year in memory,” due to the fiascos around the federal government shutdown. This type of toxic political climate chisels away at the general public’s faith in democracy and our elected officials.

Fortunately, the environment didn’t face this level of chaos in Harrisburg or Washington, D.C.

In fact, PennEnvironment saw some real milestones to protect our natural heritage and our environment in 2013. For example, PennEnvironment used the courts to press for compliance with clean air and clean water laws; helped stave off efforts to open up wild places to drilling; and in the waning days of 2013, the state Supreme Court gave a shot in the arm to those of us defending against fracking by repealing parts of Act 13, the state law that gave frackers the keys to the castle—a law opposed by PennEnvironment for years.

These victories were complemented by positive steps for our environment at the federal level as the Obama administration moved ahead with historic policies to tackle both global warming emissions, and pollution that degrades our rivers, lakes and streams.

Many of these are hard-fought victories, as the tenuous political environment in our nation’s capital seems to remind us daily. Yet, by promoting commonsense environmental policies that garner broad public support, we can make real headway—but only with your engagement and vigilance.

So thanks for your ongoing support—in the easy years and the hard ones.

Sincerely,

David Masur, Executive Director
Protect Our Parks

Valley Forge. Ohiopyle. Gettysburg. The Delaware Water Gap. These and dozens of Pennsylvania parks are the places where we go to hike, fish, and get a breath of fresh air with our friends and family. This year, PennEnvironment helped convince Sen. Robert Casey to support funding for one of America’s most important—and successful—park preservation programs. This will ensure the best places in Pennsylvania and across the nation will be funded and protected now and for future generations.

PennEnvironment launched a statewide conservation campaign

More than 50 million people visit Pennsylvania’s incredible network of state and national parks annually—but many of these parks wouldn’t exist without support from the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF). This fund has been instrumental in providing protection and maintenance for nearly 50 of our state parks. But for years, Congress has raided this critical fund—leaving the parks we love vulnerable to encroaching overdevelopment and increased pollution, and without the financial resources they need. In response, PennEnvironment launched a statewide campaign in 2013 to help push for dedicated funding for the places that define Pennsylvania.

- We ran a grassroots campaign that educated more than 100,000 Pennsylvanians about the lack of funding for the parks we love.
- Our staff collected and delivered more than 25,000 petition signatures from Pennsylvanians to Sen. Casey in support of park funding.
- All this hard work paid off when Sen. Casey added his name to the legislation pending in Congress to permanently fund the LWCF, a huge step that will help keep Pennsylvania’s parks protected.

PennEnvironment volunteers and partners lobbied Sen. Casey’s Legislative Director Dick Spiegelman and Legislative Assistant Liz Hermsen to protect our parks.
Defending Loyalsock

Loyalsock State Forest is one of the crown jewels of Pennsylvania’s state forest system, providing thousands of visitors with world-class hiking, canoeing and camping experiences each year. So when Gov. Tom Corbett proposed opening some of the most pristine parts of Loyalsock to fracking, PennEnvironment swung into action. Because of the public support we helped build in 2013, wild places like the crystal blue Rock Run and historic Old Loggers Path remain off-limits to drilling.
Citizens united to keep pristine places off-limits to drilling

Pennsylvanians who love our state’s outdoors bristled when they learned Loyalsock State Forest could be opened to more fracking. So this past March, dozens of concerned citizens joined PennEnvironment’s Executive Director David Masur to trek 12 miles from the heart of Loyalsock State Forest to the local office of state Sen. Gene Yaw, chairman of the Environmental Resources & Energy Committee. These activists called on Sen. Yaw to do everything in his power to keep more drilling out of one of our state’s best natural places.

25,000 called for Loyalsock protection

Upon reaching Sen. Yaw’s office, hikers delivered thousands of petition signatures from citizens calling for no further drilling in Loyalsock State Forest. Some hikers came from parts of the state where they’ve already experienced the damages that gas drilling can inflict firsthand, many saying they felt the need to march to protect other state forests from encroaching fracking and gas drilling.

“I’m a fourth generation summer resident of Laporte,” said Jennifer Sellers, who joined PennEnvironment on the hike. “My grandmother grew up there and her father was the county judge. We’ve hiked, fished and swum in Loyalsock State Forest for more than 100 years … this is personal.”

Hundreds spoke at public hearing in Williamsport

For months, the Corbett administration negotiated with the Texas-based fracking company Anadarko Petroleum Corporation to open some of the best and untouched areas of Loyalsock State Forest to gas drilling. But thanks to public opposition we helped build in 2013—including delivering tens of thousands of petitions, convincing legislators to speak out, and organizing a widely-attended march—the governor’s staff finally held a long-awaited public hearing regarding their proposal to open up some of the most pristine parts of Loyalsock State Forest to drilling. Working with our allies, PennEnvironment turned out hundreds of concerned citizens to the hearing to tell their stories about why protecting Loyalsock State Forest is the only option.

- Nearly 500 Pennsylvanians came to speak at the hearing.
- Testifiers included a grandfather who talked about his youth hiking Loyalsock; children who learned how to fish in Rock Run; and birders who come every year during migration season to catch a glimpse of rare bird species, like the Yellow-bellied Flycatcher.
- In 2014, PennEnvironment will continue working to ensure Pennsylvanians and others will be able to enjoy this pristine part of our natural heritage for years to come.

Concerned citizens, like Dave Kagan of Torbert (middle), voiced their support to protect Loyalsock State Forest from fracking at a public hearing in Williamsport last June.
Keeping Pennsylvania Safe from Fracking

2013 was one of marked progress in our fight to protect Pennsylvania against Marcellus Shale gas drilling. We helped deliver the largest fracking petition of its kind in state history, released three new fracking reports, and helped produce a fracking exposé. But the biggest victory of the year came when the state’s heavily-slanted pro-drilling law that once gave drillers carte blanche to drill where they want, when they want, was finally overturned.
Unconstitutional drilling legislation overturned

On Dec. 19, 2013, the Pennsylvania Supreme Court overturned sections of the controversial and widely-panned fracking law known as Act 13. For years, PennEnvironment and others had argued that Act 13 was a handout to drillers and outrageous overreach by politicians in Harrisburg. And with this ruling, our local officials will once again control where fracking occurs in our communities. This victory is crucial for protecting public health, our environment and our communities.

History made: 100,000 petitions delivered

Over the summer of 2013, PennEnvironment was joined by a coalition of environmental, public health, and community groups to make history. Working together, we delivered more than 100,000 petition signatures to Gov. Tom Corbett calling for a moratorium on any further fracking in the state—a petition that is believed to be the largest of its kind in Pennsylvania history. So maybe it’s not surprising that recent polling shows that nearly two-thirds of Pennsylvanians support halting fracking in the state. On the heels of the growing public criticisms of fracking, Sen. Jim Ferlo introduced a moratorium bill last April. PennEnvironment stood with the senator as he announced his legislation, and has since worked to build support for his proposal.

Staff featured in nationally aired documentary

As 2013 came to a close, PennEnvironment and our national federation at Environment America worked with Martin Sheen’s “Breakthroughs” to produce a video exposé on fracking. To guide their investigation, our national staff briefed the production crew on drilling’s threats, and identified local experts and residents living on the frontlines of Pennsylvania’s fracking nightmare. A three-minute version, narrated in part by Martin Sheen, aired on public television stations, and a shorter commercial-length version of the video aired on national networks such as CNN and MSNBC.

Enough wastewater to cover Philadelphia

To bolster this media blitz, PennEnvironment also released three new fracking studies documenting the impacts of this drilling. The effects are shocking:

- Gas development around the country has already created 280 billion gallons of toxic wastewater—enough to cover the entire city of Philadelphia with more than nine feet of toxic wastewater.

- There are more than 400 permitted well sites within a mile of schools, day care centers, and hospitals.
Whether you’re kayaking in Pittsburgh’s Three Rivers, fishing in the Susquehanna, or walking along the Schuylkill, our rivers and streams are a big part of what makes Pennsylvania so special. For decades, we’ve held the line for our waterways and fought tooth and nail to protect them from polluters. But in 2013, we came closer than ever to our biggest clean water victory in decades when President Obama took a much-needed step to close loopholes in the Clean Water Act that give polluters free rein to exploit the waters we love.
Making the 40-year-old Clean Water Act work for our waterways

Pennsylvania is a place defined by our rivers and streams. Yet 40 years after the passage of the Clean Water Act, polluters have continued to release harmful emissions into Pennsylvania’s waterways at will. More than 15,000 miles of streams and rivers—including segments of Nehaminy Creek, the Wissahickon and the Monongahela River—are considered too polluted for fishing and swimming. In 2013, PennEnvironment made big strides toward finally closing a major Clean Water Act loophole that has allowed polluters to treat the waters we love like their personal sewers for far too long.

45,000 miles of streams remain unprotected

In the fall of 2013, the Obama administration took the first steps to close these Clean Water Act loopholes and protect our waters. But polluters and developers are using all their power and resources to halt this proposal and maintain the status quo. And the effects are disastrous:

- Pollution makes Pittsburgh’s Three Rivers unsafe for swimming, fishing, or even touching for about 40 to 70 days each summer.

- More than half of Pennsylvania’s streams and rivers are currently vulnerable to more pollution, due to these loopholes. And until the loopholes in the Clean Water Act are closed, nearly 45,000 miles of streams in Pennsylvania will continue to lack the protections they need and truly deserve.

Our plan to get protections over the finish line

According to the EPA, the current loopholes in the Clean Water Act leave 59 percent of streams in Pennsylvania unprotected, which includes the drinking water sources for more than 8 million Pennsylvania residents. To get these critical protections over the finish line, PennEnvironment is working around the clock to show President Obama that Pennsylvanians overwhelmingly support clean water. Throughout 2013, we continued to press for closing these loopholes in the Clean Water Act—to protect our rivers and streams, now and for future generations.

- This past year, PennEnvironment worked to educate the public about these loopholes—and possible solutions—by reaching out to residents via email and through thousands of face-to-face conversations.

- In Pittsburgh, we worked with our allies to push for smart, green solutions, such as green roofs, that will help protect the Three Rivers and all our waterways from pollution.
Global Warming Solutions

Pennsylvania is already paying the price as global warming fuels more damaging storms like Superstorm Sandy. Protecting our kids from even more devastating consequences demands bold, swift action. That’s why we’ve fought alongside our national federation and won policies that are actively slashing global warming pollution from cars, trucks, power plants and more.
Historic climate action plan released

Last summer, President Obama announced a historic Climate Action Plan that will advance energy efficiency, increase the nation’s commitment to renewable energy, and most importantly, cut global warming pollution from the largest source—dirty power plants. Pennsylvania ranks third in the nation for global warming pollution, only behind California and Texas. This is due to our fleet of dirty coal-fired power plants, and sprawling development that requires extensive commuting for many. We also know that for Pennsylvania, global warming could mean more heat-related deaths, more extreme weather like the floods, droughts and severe winter storms we’ve experienced in recent years, and severe damage to fishing streams throughout the state. That’s why the president’s plan was a big victory for our campaign to tackle global warming and our entire state at large.

Our response to the president’s plan

The president’s plan is arguably the strongest step the nation has taken to tackle global warming, and PennEnvironment has been working around the clock to make sure this proposal is as strong as possible, fully enforced, and reflects the full urgency of the fight to protect Pennsylvania and our environment from the worst impacts of climate change. In response to the president’s plan, PennEnvironment:

• Partnered with hundreds of elected officials, businesses and doctors across Pennsylvania to demonstrate strong public support for promoting global warming solutions;

• Activated tens of thousands of concerned citizens to call for strong action to cut global warming pollution from power plants;

• Worked in conjunction with the agencies that will be implementing the Climate Action Plan, and testified at hearings held by the EPA and the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) in order to guide the development of strong and historic standards; and

• Released major reports on the impacts of global warming, which led to hundreds of news articles, editorials and letters to the editor in nearly every major Pennsylvanian media outlet.

Wind power to double over next five years

In order to tackle global warming in 2013, PennEnvironment actively worked to advance clean energy solutions, like wind and solar power, to replace our reliance on dirty energy sources. This past fall, PennEnvironment Research & Policy Center released a new study showing that Pennsylvania’s wind energy is on the rise and providing huge environmental benefits for the state.

Our report, “Wind Power for a Cleaner America,” showed that wind power in Pennsylvania is projected to nearly double over the next five years. If wind development continues at a pace comparable to that of recent years through 2016, Pennsylvania would reduce global warming pollution by as much as taking an additional 185,000 cars off the road.
Holding Polluters Accountable

When it comes to polluters breaking our cornerstone environmental laws or regulators who aren’t taking the proper steps to make sure polluters comply with these laws, PennEnvironment has long worked to use the power of citizen enforcement actions under the Clean Water Act and Clean Air Act to address these issues. In 2013, PennEnvironment announced two legal actions to address the lax behavior of polluters and state agencies that caused more air and water pollution in Pennsylvania.

Fish hatchery accused of illegal dumping
In October of 2013, PennEnvironment teamed up with the Environmental Integrity Project and announced our intent to bring suit against the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission for ongoing Clean Water Act violations at the agency’s Bellefonte Fish Hatchery. The hatchery has been illegally discharging nitrogen and other pollutants into the nearby Susquehanna River and the Chesapeake Bay downstream.

“It’s unacceptable to have this facility, whose mission is to help us enjoy Pennsylvania’s waterways, turn around and pollute them,” said PennEnvironment’s Executive Director David Masur.

Lawsuit resulted in tighter air quality permits
As a result of a lawsuit brought by Earthjustice on behalf of PennEnvironment and other groups, the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) agreed to update and strengthen the operating permits for seven Pennsylvania coal-fired power plants. The DEP will also provide additional protections against public health threats posed by three of the plants.

“This is a significant victory for the people of Pennsylvania, for those who suffer from asthma and other respiratory ailments, and for anyone living downwind from these facilities,” said Masur.
Protecting Endangered Species

The blue-spotted salamander. The osprey. The Indiana bat. Pennsylvania is lucky to be home to incredible endangered wildlife, sadly found in few other places around the world. Yet our most vulnerable species recently came under attack by politicians in Harrisburg wanting to roll back the protections that keep them safe in our state. In 2013, PennEnvironment stepped up to ensure our endangered and threatened wildlife get the protections they need and deserve.

We pushed back against shortsighted proposals to remove protections

When fracking, oil, coal, and gas companies did a full court press to change Pennsylvania’s endangered species laws, PennEnvironment was there to join a statewide coalition of groups to defend against this rollback. This shortsighted proposal would:

- Remove the classification of “endangered” or “threatened” for all species categorized as such by the state—and require them all to be redesignated—or lose protections;
- Put the fate of these creatures in the hands of politicians by removing the power to protect species from ecologists and scientists; and
- Allow developers, frackers and other polluters to turn a blind eye to our endangered species by changing rules that require these companies to search for endangered and threatened species before starting destructive activities in their ecosystems.

While we fully expect legislators to press for the passage of this anti-environmental proposal in 2014, PennEnvironment will continue to defend against this rollback being pushed by frackers and their deep-pocketed lobbyists in the Capitol.

PennEnvironment Field Director Adam Garber spoke to the public about the importance of considering and protecting Pennsylvania’s vulnerable species in the places frackers are looking to drill.