Annual Report
Recapping our work in 2014 for our members
To our members

“I’m confident that in 2015 we’ll be able to continue our efforts together and deliver more environmental victories for future generations.”

As I look back on 2014, I’m proud to say that PennEnvironment was able to fight tenaciously to deliver much-needed, concrete victories for our environment here in Pennsylvania and across the country.

While it’s easy to get down on politics these days (especially given the ongoing assault on our environment taking place in Washington, D.C., and Harrisburg), we are confident in our time-tested strategies for victory. And when combined with our massive network of more than 100,000 PennEnvironment members and activists who are watchdogging the process—we can make real progress that’s necessary to defend and protect our environment.

I think you’ll see the fruit of our labor highlighted in this year’s annual report. Over the past year, we helped bring illegal water polluters to justice; defended proposals of truly historic proportions to tackle global warming pollution; advocated for newly-proposed regulations that will further protect nearly 50,000 miles of Pennsylvania’s rivers and streams; and continued to stand up to the gas drilling companies that put our health, environment and communities at risk from fracking.

There are so many things to be proud of when it comes to our work to protect the environment in 2014. And while it takes a lot of elbow grease and vigilance, I’m confident that in 2015 we’ll be able to continue our efforts together and deliver more environmental victories for future generations.

Thank you,

David Masur
Executive Director
In 2014, PennEnvironment took crucial steps to protect Valley Forge National Park and Valley Creek from illegal pollution. Our legal action under the federal Clean Water Act helped hold a local township accountable for the illegal discharge of millions of gallons of raw sewage from a burst pipeline, and will require the township to replace the pipeline and prevent future sewage blowouts.

PenEnvironment’s action held illegal water polluter accountable
When PennEnvironment learned that the Tredyffrin Township sewage pipeline running through Valley Forge National Park had repeatedly released millions of gallons of raw sewage into the park and Valley Creek, we joined forces with Trout Unlimited to bring this illegal pollution to an end.

- On Sept. 29, 2014, PennEnvironment and the Valley Forge Chapter of Trout Unlimited sent a formal notice of intent to sue Tredyffrin Township for a series of disastrous pipeline malfunctions that released massive amounts of sewage into Valley Forge and violated the Clean Water Act.

- The pipeline in question first ruptured into Valley Forge and the Valley Creek in 2012, followed by two massive blowouts in February and March 2014, discharging approximately 21 million gallons of untreated sewage directly into the creek, which flows into the Schuylkill River.

- The settlement between the township and the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection included a $110,500 penalty, and a legally binding court order to prevent future spills and replace the antiquated pipeline.

“One of the most effective aspects of the federal Clean Water Act is that it empowers local residents and citizen groups to take action when the local polluter and environmental regulators won't,” said David Masur, executive director of PennEnvironment. “This case is a perfect example of how concerned citizens have the ability to achieve speedy and effective resolution of serious environmental problems.”

Executive Director David Masur spoke to local reporters about PennEnvironment’s action to protect Valley Forge National Park from illegal water pollution.
Keeping Pennsylvania Safe From Drilling

In 2014, PennEnvironment organized thousands of citizens and other key allies to protect Pennsylvania’s air, water, communities and environment from fracking. We turned out hundreds to attend public hearings in an effort to ban open air fracking waste pits, and built a powerful coalition of nearly 1,000 doctors, nurses and other health professionals to speak out against the dangerous drilling practice.
Organizing to demand stronger protections from fracking

Across Pennsylvania, fracking has continued to expand, spreading pollution and public health risks in its wake. This drilling practice has damaged drinking water supplies, and evidence is mounting that air pollution and cancer-causing chemicals produced through fracking are hurting the health of nearby communities. In 2014, PennEnvironment continued to stand up for communities impacted by fracking, and demanded the state reform the way it addresses the dangers of fracking.

We pushed much-needed health reforms for fracking

Incredibly, whistle-blowers at the Pennsylvania Department of Health revealed that the agency had been burying health complaints about fracking—instead of assisting those in need. PennEnvironment and our allies responded rapidly and mobilized more than 800 doctors and nurses to join us in demanding reforms, such as:

- Closing the loopholes that exempt fracking from key provisions of our national and state environmental laws;
- Lifting the existing gag order placed on health professionals under the state’s fracking law, which prohibits medical experts from discussing the impact that fracking may have on their patients, or sharing information for research purposes;
- Empowering the state Department of Health to monitor, study, evaluate and regularly report on the short- and long-term health impacts of fracking across Pennsylvania;
- And placing a moratorium on all new gas drilling permits until we can ensure that the public’s health is protected.

10,000 called for ban on fracking waste pits

In 2014, PennEnvironment also worked to ban open-air fracking waste pits, which are known to release toxic air pollution, leak contaminated frack water, and in some cases, even explode or catch fire.

- Over the course of the year, we mobilized 10,000 Pennsylvanians to halt a proposal that would grant the fracking industry immunity for accidents and spills related to the disposal of their fracking fluid.
- We released “Shalefield Stories” with Friends of the Harmed, a local group of citizens affected by fracking. The booklet details how shale gas drilling is harming Pennsylvanians by poisoning their homes with toxic chemicals and contaminating their drinking water.
Don’t frack our parks

PennEnvironment helped stave off years of attempts by former Gov. Tom Corbett to open up Pennsylvania’s state parks and forests to fracking. While in office, Gov. Corbett announced his intentions to open up some of the state’s greatest public lands to fracking in 2014, and PennEnvironment worked tirelessly to organize tens of thousands of Pennsylvanians against this effort. Together with our allies and supporters, we beat back Gov. Corbett’s proposal and defended our parks from fracking and the irreparable damage it causes.
Fracking moratorium in parks reinstated

Fracking is one of the greatest threats facing Pennsylvania’s environment, health and quality of life—and it surely doesn’t belong in some of our most beautiful and cherished places, like our state parks and forests. Moreover, Pennsylvanians from all walks of life spoke with one voice: They support protecting our parks and forests from fracking. That’s why PennEnvironment was in disbelief when former Gov. Tom Corbett proposed opening up more state forestlands for fracking—and allowing fracking in Pennsylvania’s state parks for the first time ever.

Research and citizen action built momentum for victory

Immediately on the heels of the announcement to threaten our state parks to fracking, PennEnvironment launched a statewide campaign to send a clear message to the then-governor and our elected officials in Harrisburg: Pennsylvanians want their parks protected from fracking.

• We flooded the governor’s office with more than 10,000 emails, phone calls and letters from PennEnvironment members and activists.

• Our outreach efforts earned media coverage across Pennsylvania, shining a bright spotlight on Gov. Corbett’s effort to hand our parks over to the frackers.

• The PennEnvironment Research & Policy Center released a new hard-hitting study showing the damage fracking will do to our parks—and the economic and recreational benefits to keeping these great public lands preserved.

Gov. Wolf followed through on pledge to protect parks

After helping to build a groundswell of support from Pennsylvania residents for protecting our state parks and forests, it became clear that it would be difficult for Gov. Corbett to get his short-sighted plan over the finish line before his term in office expired in January.

• In the fall, PennEnvironment kept the pressure up on Gov. Corbett to keep him from moving ahead with fracking in our parks and forests.

• Given the broad public opposition to this proposal, newly elected Gov. Tom Wolf latched onto this issue during election season, pledging to protect these important public lands from fracking.

• Within days of his inauguration, Gov. Wolf held a press conference signing an executive order reinstating the moratorium against fracking under our state parks or further fracking in state forests. PennEnvironment staff were invited to join the media event.
Polluters shouldn’t be allowed to treat Pennsylvania’s great waterways like their own personal sewer. That’s the message PennEnvironment took to more than 75,000 people in 2014 as part of a renewed effort to close loopholes in the federal Clean Water Act that leave nearly 50,000 miles of Pennsylvania’s streams vulnerable to pollution. We collected and delivered more than 30,000 public comments to the EPA, and built a coalition of farmers and elected officials to restore protection to all of Pennsylvania’s waterways.
EPA put forth a plan to strengthen the Clean Water Act

After a chemical spill in West Virginia, a toxic algae bloom in Ohio, and other pollution disasters, it's clearer than ever that protecting America's waterways is crucial. To that end, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) put forth a proposal on March 2014 to close loopholes in the Clean Water Act that have left nearly 50,000 miles of Pennsylvania's streams—the drinking water source for 8 million Pennsylvanians—at risk of increased pollution. In 2014, PennEnvironment's grassroots advocacy helped build a groundswell of support to stand up to polluters and their political allies in Washington, D.C., who are doing everything in their power to stop this clean water plan from moving ahead.

30,000 Pennsylvanians joined our call to action

From Bucks County's meandering Neshaminy Creek to Pittsburgh's beautiful Nine Mile Run, to the other small streams that crisscross across Pennsylvania, our waterways are part of our heritage and make our state a great place to live.

To that end, PennEnvironment delivered comments from more than 30,000 supportive Pennsylvanians to protect these vital rivers and streams. Farmers, anglers and small business owners were among the thousands of concerned Pennsylvanians who added their voices to the call for cleaner water.

Unfortunately, some in Congress—including Pennsylvania's own Sen. Pat Toomey—continue to oppose the EPA's commonsense proposal and instead are supporting polluters' efforts to defeat the proposal.

10 million pounds of toxics dumped in PA waterways

In June 2014, the PennEnvironment Research & Policy Center released “Wasting Our Waterways,” a report revealing that nearly 10 million pounds of toxic chemicals were dumped into Pennsylvania's rivers and streams in 2012 alone. This ranked Pennsylvania seventh nationwide for toxic releases in waterways.

And, as the Clean Water Act celebrated its 42nd anniversary in 2014, the PennEnvironment Research & Policy Center released “Waterways Restored,” a report documenting powerful examples of how the landmark law has cleaned up and preserved waterways across the country. In Pennsylvania, the report highlighted the Conemaugh River, where bass populations are recovering thanks in part to a Clean Water Act lawsuit that PennEnvironment won against a major industrial polluter. Without a strong, vibrant Clean Water Act, none of it would have been possible.
Global Warming Solutions

Together, we took bold and historic steps to reduce global warming pollution. PennEnvironment and our citizen Climate Defenders collected nearly 40,000 comments across the state, joining the millions of Americans urging President Obama to limit global warming pollution from power plants. In 2014, the president proposed just such a plan—one that would cut power plant pollution by 30 percent within the next decade.
A historic plan to tackle global warming

From severe storms like Superstorm Sandy to devastating summer heat waves, the consequences of global warming here in Pennsylvania are becoming increasingly clear. As the third worst emitter of global warming pollution in the nation, Pennsylvania has an important role to play in taking action to reduce carbon emissions. The good news is that in 2014, President Obama proposed what’s being called “the strongest action ever taken” on climate change—the Clean Power Plan. Sadly, polluters and their allies in Congress have vowed to block this historic plan.

A plan to cut power plant pollution

In 2014, PennEnvironment worked to build support for the president’s Clean Power Plan, which would set the first-ever limits for carbon emissions from America’s number one source of global warming pollution: dirty power plants.

- The Clean Power Plan would reduce power plant pollution by 32 percent below 2005 levels by 2030, and help Pennsylvania transition to clean energy sources like wind and solar power.

- The Clean Power Plan is a historic proposal—but it’s not a done deal. The proposal has been the subject of fierce attacks by the coal industry and some utilities and their allies in Congress, who have vowed to do everything in their power to block the plan.

8 million comments backed the Clean Power Plan

In 2014, PennEnvironment helped shape the national conversation around climate by showing that Pennsylvanians aren’t willing to compromise on our health, our safety, and our children’s futures by ignoring the largest environmental crisis of our age.

- Together with our allies and our national federation, PennEnvironment helped collect 8 million comments of support for limiting carbon pollution from dirty power plants, which we delivered to the EPA on Dec. 2 as the public comment period for the plan came to a close.

- 250 academics from across the state also joined our call, signing PennEnvironment’s letter in support of the Clean Power Plan and immediate action to address climate change.
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