Annual Report
A recap of our work in 2011 for our members.
To our members

“We helped mobilize hundreds of Washingtonians to speak out in favor of clean energy. As a result, Washington will stop burning coal.”

It’s been an exciting and challenging year—both for Washington’s environment and for me, personally, as I assumed the role of field director after leading our citizen outreach efforts for the last two years. As I sit down to write this letter, I’m so proud of what we’ve accomplished together, and excited about the opportunities that lie ahead: to better protect Puget Sound and Mount Rainier, to help address large-scale problems like global warming and fossil fuel dependence, and much more.

I’m continually inspired by our team of passionate activists, who are out on the ground every day talking to their neighbors about the threats to our environment and the change that comes when the public gets involved. When I learned that Sens. Maria Cantwell and Patty Murray pledged their support for expanding Mount Rainier National Park—just days after our canvassers hand-delivered thousands of petitions—well, there’s no better feeling. We’re still pushing to ensure that Mount Rainier gets the funding it deserves so that the Carbon River Valley rainforest can be safe from drilling and destructive development. But with a broad base of passionate members on our side, I’m confident that we can make it happen.

Another highlight from last year: Gov. Chris Gregoire’s decision to close Washington’s last remaining coal-fired power plant. Our report, “Dirty Energy’s Assault on our Health,” shone a media spotlight on the health effects of the tons of mercury TransAlta released into our air each year, and helped mobilize hundreds of Washingtonians to speak out in favor of cleaner energy sources. As a result, Washington will stop burning coal by 2025, and TransAlta will immediately begin to invest in clean energy development.

That’s why, despite the many threats to our environment, I’m confident that by banding together we can win important victories for Puget Sound, Mount Rainier, and our air and water. I’m honored to help do this work, and to share the results of our efforts with you.

Sincerely,

Katrina Rosen
Field Director
Less waste in our water

From kayaking in Elliott Bay or strolling along Alki Beach to rafting the Columbia or camping on the banks of the Spokane, Washington’s waters are a vital part of our natural heritage and the legacy we want our kids to enjoy. That’s why we worked to stop sewage overflows and restore protections to thousands of miles of streams and hundreds of acres of wetlands. While much work remains to be done, by year’s end, we’d helped convince the EPA to take some vital steps to protect our waterways.

A plan to keep 690 million gallons of waste out of King County’s waters

During heavy rains, stormwater and sewage flow untreated into our waterways. Strengthening stormwater standards and promoting green infrastructure would go a long way toward solving the problem.

• Today, more than 230 overflows a year in King County alone dump 690 million gallons of untreated waste directly into local waterways.

• After Environment Washington and our allies submitted thousands of messages urging the Environmental Protection Agency to help Puget Sound, EPA Administrator Lisa Jackson announced a plan to strengthen stormwater regulations.

EPA moved to restore river protections

Nearly half of Washington’s streams and thousands of acres of wetlands are vulnerable to dumping and irresponsible development, due to legal loopholes in the Clean Water Act.

• After years of effort by Environment Washington and our allies, Administrator Jackson announced a plan to restore Clean Water Act protections. Now, we’re fighting to make sure polluters’ allies in Congress don’t block the EPA from doing its job.
Puget Sound is the pride of our state, home to hundreds of orcas, gray whales, sea lions and other wildlife. By banning disposable plastic bags, we can eliminate a major source of plastic pollution—beautifying the Sound and making it safer for wildlife. Our members and supporters helped Bellingham ban the bags; now we’re taking the effort statewide.
Effort launched to reduce plastic waste, protect Puget Sound wildlife

More than 290 million disposable bags are distributed each year in Seattle alone, and too many make their way into the Sound, where they pose a serious threat to wildlife. In April of 2010, a beached gray whale was found in West Seattle with 20 plastic bags in its stomach, highlighting this terrible problem. Because plastic bags are inefficient and costly to recycle—and because reusable bags are a cheap and readily available alternative—banning plastic bags is the simplest and most effective way to start protecting Puget Sound from plastic.

Awareness, support generated at Seattle event

Last December, Environment Washington joined Seattle City Councilmember Mike O’Brien, Surfrider Foundation, People for Puget Sound and Zero Waste Seattle to celebrate the fourth annual Day Without A Bag.

- Environment Washington staff member Adrianna Murch wore a costume of 500 plastic bags—the number the average shopper uses in one year—to raise awareness of the amount of waste created by our dependence on disposable bags.

- Other staff members distributed hundreds of reusable bags for Seattleites to use in their holiday shopping.

Timely action helped Bellingham ban the bags

In March, Bellingham City Council Member Seth Fleetwood introduced a plan to ban plastic bags in his city of 80,000.

- The weekend before the bill came up for a vote, Environment Washington members in Bellingham contacted their City Council members, urging them to support the bag ban.

- The Council voted 7-0 not only to ban disposable plastic bags but to require retailers to charge 5 cents for paper bags as an incentive for people to bring reusable alternatives.

- Bellingham is the second community in Washington—after Edmonds—to ban disposable plastic bags. We’re working with other communities to pass local bans, which will have an immediate impact to cut plastic pollution while building momentum for a statewide bag ban.

Our bag monster (Adrianna Murch) raised awareness of the 500 plastic bags the average shopper uses in a year. Many of these bags find their way into Puget Sound, threatening wildlife.
Nestled against Mount Rainier National Park, the Carbon River Valley rainforest is a sanctuary for black bears, marbled murrelet, and Van Dyke’s salamander. Humans, too, find solace along the banks of the crystal clear Carbon River and under the canopy of old-growth forest. We made important progress toward expanding the protective boundaries of Mount Rainier National Park to include the Carbon River Valley and preserve it for generations to come.
Just beyond Mount Rainier’s protective borders, the nation’s last inland rainforest lies vulnerable to logging and development. Right now, we have a unique opportunity to protect this species-rich ecosystem by extending the boundaries of Mount Rainier National Park to include the Carbon River Valley Rainforest. By generating a broad base of public support and convincing our leaders to act, we can create a wildlife corridor from the park to Puget Sound, and guarantee that the beauty and ecological value of the forest remains unspoiled.

**We helped put Carbon River on president’s agenda**

When President Obama announced a plan to protect America’s natural treasures by boosting conservation funds, Environment Washington staff sprung into action:

- We delivered thousands of signatures to Interior Secretary Ken Salazar urging him to keep the Carbon River Valley Rainforest at the top of his list, and rallied more than 100 Environment Washington supporters to speak out for Mount Rainier at a live event in Seattle.

- In October, Environment Washington staff held a press conference about our plan to expand Mount Rainier, earning press coverage in the Seattle Times and other news outlets throughout the Northwest.

**Senators Cantwell and Murray pledged support**

Last February, Environment Washington staff flew to Washington, D.C. to meet with Sens. Maria Cantwell and Patty Murray about expanding the parks’ boundaries. Meanwhile, Environment Washington outreach staff continued to build a broad base of support among Washingtonians. Our efforts paid off in a big way:

- In June, our campaign staff hand-delivered more than 2,000 postcards to the offices of Sens. Cantwell and Murray.

- The very next day, both senators pledged to support robust funding for the federal Land and Water Conservation Fund, in order to complete the Mount Rainier expansion.

Top: By extending the protective boundaries of Mount Rainier National Park, we can protect a unique ecosystem that shelters endangered and threatened species. Middle: Logging and development can be seen encroaching upon the Carbon River Valley from satellite. Bottom: The day after our staff hand-delivered more than 2,000 signatures urging Sens. Patty Murray (right, with former staffer Kristin Dumas) and Maria Cantwell to protect the Carbon River Valley rainforest, both senators pledged support for our plan.
A coal-free future

Toxic emissions from coal-fired power plants pollute our air and put our health at risk. Our state can do better—and soon, we will. Environment Washington’s research, advocacy, and action over the last year helped convince decision-makers in Olympia to start the transition to a clean energy future. In April, Gov. Chris Gregoire signed a law setting a shut-down date for the state’s last coal-fired power plant and requiring its owner, TransAlta, to invest in clean-energy alternatives.

360 pounds of mercury pollution eliminated
In January, Environment Washington released a report, “Dirty Energy’s Assault on our Health: Mercury,” showing that the 360 pounds of mercury TransAlta emits each year harm the environment and create a widespread health risk:

- The Olympian, the Tacoma News Tribune and other media outlets covered the report, focusing attention on the damage caused by our reliance on dirty fuels.
- Environment Washington helped lead a grassroots effort to close down the plant, dramatically reducing this pollution.

No more coal by 2025
Thousands of Environment Washington supporters made contributions, contacted their legislators and appeared at community forums to help build a case for a coal-free future. In April, our efforts paid off. Gov. Gregoire signed a bill requiring TransAlta to:

- Stop burning coal in the state by 2025;
- Immediately reduce the Centralia facility’s emissions of toxic chemicals;
- Invest in energy efficiency projects and clean energy technology development to promote clean power across the state.
Getting off of oil

Instead of oil spills and air pollution, we can have clean transportation, efficient public transit, fuel-efficient cars, and vehicles powered by renewable energy. Instead of relying on foreign oil to power our lives, we can harness the potential of the sun, wind and other renewable energy sources right here in Washington. Our state-based advocacy paved the way for last year’s decision to double federal fuel-efficiency standards by 2025.

Federal fuel efficiency standards doubled

Washington’s Clean Cars standard—which we helped win—laid the groundwork for what could be the most important federal policy ever enacted to break our dependence on fossil fuels. This summer, after we and our allies mobilized 10,000 people to voice support for clean cars, the Obama administration announced:

• New fuel economy standards will make 54.5-mpg cars the norm by 2025. We helped make sure the standards are as strong as possible by organizing state leaders and demonstrating broad public support for cleaner cars.

• The first-ever fuel-efficiency standard for trucks will save more than 20 billion gallons of gasoline by 2018.

Bold plan released to cut oil use

While fuel-efficiency standards will have a huge impact, there are other important steps we can take to cut our oil consumption. In July, our national federation released a set of common-sense policy solutions to save more than 344 million gallons of gas each year in Washington alone by 2030. Besides keeping millions of tons of global warming emissions out of the atmosphere, the plan would also help wildlife by reducing the need for oil exploration and drilling.
Citizen support is the cornerstone of Environment Washington. Thousands of Washington citizens supported Environment Washington and the Environment Washington Research & Policy Center by making membership contributions in Fiscal Year 2011. The members listed below were particularly generous in backing the organizations’ research and advocacy. Names that appear in italics denote Monthly Supporters. These members provide stability to the organizations’ resources through our monthly giving program.
Planning for a cleaner, greener, healthier future

Environment Washington and Environment Washington Research & Policy Center gratefully accept bequests, beneficiary designations of IRAs and life insurance, and gifts of securities to support our work. Your gift will assure that we can continue to protect Washington’s air, water and open spaces for future generations. For more information, call 1-800-841-7299 or send an email to: plannedgiving@EnvironmentWashington.org.
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