To our members

“We have you to thank for our victories, as well as for our continued ability to take on polluting special interests and protect our air, our water and the places we cherish.”

Over the past year, your support helped us win a number of landmark victories, both here in Washington and nationwide.

Here at home, after years of hard work, we finally won protection for the Carbon River Valley rainforest from logging and development. And we continued to build support for a statewide ban on single-use plastic bags, which make their way into Puget Sound and endanger whales, seabirds and other wildlife. As we mobilized the public for a statewide ban, we also worked with communities such as Seattle and Bellingham to enact local bag bans.

Together with our national federation, we helped build support for a number of historic victories for clean air and clean water. Thanks in part to our efforts, President Obama announced the first-ever nationwide limits on toxic mercury pollution from power plants. And in June, we rallied support for these limits and defeated a proposal to overturn them in the Senate.

But as we look back on the victories of the past year, it’s important to remember that we have so much more to do. The coal industry is spending millions to stop the Environmental Protection Agency from finalizing limits on global warming-causing carbon pollution from power plants, and we’re fighting back—already, we’ve helped mobilize a record-shattering 3 million people in support of the carbon standards.

We have you to thank for these victories, as well as for our continued ability to take on polluting special interests and protect our air, our water and the places we cherish. With you by our side, we will continue to fight for clean energy, a healthier planet and a brighter future.

Sincerely,

Katrina Rosen
Field Director
Clean Air, Healthy Families

Washington’s environment and our families will reap the benefits of two Environment Washington-backed decisions announced by the Obama administration in late 2011 and 2012. As a result, existing power plants will slash their emissions of toxic mercury, and new power plants will emit far less carbon into our atmosphere.

**Washington’s last coal-fired plant to close by 2025**

Power plants, such as the Centralia plant, emit mercury pollution and other toxics that can seriously endanger our health. They also pump massive amounts of carbon pollution into our air—the same pollution that causes global warming. In the last year we focused on cutting these two dangerous sources of pollution—and won a pair of historic victories.

- Mercury exposure can affect the way kids learn, think and behave. To reduce mercury pollution, Environment Washington and our nationwide allies sent the EPA more than 800,000 public comments in support of strong action on mercury. The show of support helped overcome intense opposition by polluters as the Obama administration announced in December 2011 the first-ever nationwide limits on mercury pollution from power plants. Thanks to your support, power plants must slash their mercury pollution by 90 percent.

- We also took a huge step toward cutting carbon pollution: In March 2012, the EPA proposed standards on carbon pollution from new power plants. If passed, they will be the first nationwide limits on the largest single source of global warming pollution. However, the coal industry is opposing the standards. To counter their influence, our national coalition helped collect a record-smashing 3 million comments in support.

Mercury and carbon emissions from power plants threaten the health of our children. In the last year, Environment Washington helped win two unprecedented victories for clean air.
Plastic Out of Puget Sound

Nothing we use for a few minutes should endanger Puget Sound’s whales, seals and other wildlife. By 2012, at least seven Washington state communities had opted to ban plastic disposable bags, many of which end up in the Sound. Environment Washington helped mobilize support for the bans. Now, we’re building support for a statewide ban on single-use plastic bags.
Seven communities ban plastic bags

Two billion plastic bags are distributed annually throughout the state, and the plastic debris harms or kills thousands of sea turtles, seabirds and marine mammals each year. Even more disturbingly, researchers have found plastic pollution in every sample taken from Puget Sound. We’re urging Washington’s leaders to stop the flow of plastic into Puget Sound by banning disposable plastic bags.

Marine life put in danger

Too many plastic bags end up as litter in Puget Sound, and it’s creating an ecological disaster:

- Whales and seabirds can ingest floating plastic, mistaking it for food. They also get entangled in bags and can drown or die of suffocation. A beached grey whale was found in West Seattle in 2010 with 20 plastic bags in its stomach.

- Adult seabirds inadvertently feed small bits of plastic to their chicks—often causing them to starve to death after their stomachs become filled with plastic.

- Small pieces of plastic can absorb toxic pollutants like DDT and PCB. Scientists have found that fish are ingesting these toxins when they ingest plastic, concentrating the chemicals in the food chain. There is a good chance that we also absorb these pollutants when we eat fish.

- What’s really scary is that scientists tell us this plastic may never biodegrade. And every day we go without tackling this problem, it gets worse.

Momentum grew to take ban statewide

The good news is, we can drastically cut down on the amount of plastic pollution to Puget Sound simply by banning single-use plastic bags. In fact, a statewide ban could keep more than 2 billion single-use plastic bags out of our environment each year.

- We’ve worked with communities across the state, building support for local bag bans. In 2009, Edmonds became the first city in the state to ban plastic bags. In 2011, six other cities joined the effort. Bellingham, Mukilteo, Seattle, Bainbridge Island, Port Townsend, and Issaquah all banned the bag, significantly cutting down on the amount of plastic flowing into Puget Sound.

- Today, communities including Olympia and Shoreline are considering similar legislation. Local bans have an immediate impact and are a great start—but we can’t stop until bags are banned statewide. To achieve this goal, we’re talking to thousands of Washingtonians and building a coalition of businesses in support of a statewide ban.
Located at the northwest corner of Mount Rainier National Park, the Carbon River Valley rainforest is one of the last inland temperate rainforests in the world, and is home to many unique and endangered species. In 2012, after years of hard work, Environment Washington and our allies finally won protection for the rainforest from logging and development.
Carbon River Valley protected forever

The Carbon River Valley rainforest provides critical habitat for Chinook and sockeye salmon, steelhead trout, marbled murrelet and the Van Dyke's salamander. But for years, logging and development along the park’s borders threatened to cause irreparable harm to the forest—as well as the wildlife that depend on it for survival.

Protection from logging and development

But recently, thanks to a huge outpouring of public support from Environment Washington members, we were able to convince our leaders in Washington to expand Mt. Rainier National Park and protect this rare rainforest.

• National parks have been called “America’s best idea,” and Mount Rainier is living proof, providing families and friends with breathtaking vistas, quiet trails, and unique opportunities to connect with the outdoors.

• By extending the park’s protective borders to include the Carbon River Valley rainforest, we have started the creation of a wildlife corridor from the park to Puget Sound. This protects a critical lifeline for several species that travel between these two Washington treasures.

With your help, the rainforest is now safe

Your activism and our advocacy are a powerful combination. With your help, we were able to build the public support it took to expand Mount Rainier National Park and protect the Carbon River Valley rainforest.

• Our canvassers and online organizers reached out to people across the state, gathering thousands of signatures in favor of our plan. Dozens of small businesses also joined in support.

• The U.S. House approved legislation that would provide the $2.2 million needed to add the rainforest to Mt. Rainier National Park. We made our case to Washington’s representatives and, in the end, Reps. Brian Baird, Norman Dicks, Rick Larsen, Jim McDermott and Adam Smith voted with us.

• Our staff delivered 2,000 petition signatures to Sens. Maria Cantwell and Patty Murray asking them to make expanding Mt. Rainier a top priority. A day later, both senators committed to support robust funding for the federal Land and Water Conservation Fund to complete the expansion.

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Protect Washington’s Waterways

We should be able to paddle on the Columbia River and swim in Lake Sammamish without worrying about toxic pollution. But in the last decade, polluter-driven Supreme Court decisions put more than half of the waterways that feed our rivers and lakes at risk. In 2011 and 2012, in response to calls to action by Environment Washington and others, the Obama administration moved to restore protections to all our waterways.

Administration moved to restore protections

Two recent U.S. Supreme Court decisions left more than half of Washington’s streams and wetlands at risk of more pollution—the same streams and wetlands that feed and filter our rivers and lakes. Fortunately, President Obama is on the verge of taking a major step to protect our waterways by setting new guidelines that will reduce pollution to the these streams and wetlands.

• Environment Washington played a critical role in getting the administration to act. Along with our national federation, we talked to more than half a million people, gathered 88,000 public comments, and mobilized more than 500 elected officials, farmers and recreational businesses in support of the proposed guidelines.

• Once the guidelines are final, this will be the biggest victory for our waterways in a decade. But our work is not done. Many in Congress are working to stop the president from finalizing these guidelines. To counter their efforts, we’ve been building massive public support for our rivers and lakes all across Washington.

Top: Washingtonians enjoying the Washougal River. The Obama administration is close to finalizing crucial protections for all our waterways.
Protect the San Juan Islands

Whether hiking on Iceberg Point, kayaking within sight of orca pods off of San Juan Island, or spotting nesting peregrine falcons on Chadwick Hill, the San Juan Islands offer amazing opportunities to get closer to nature. But 1,000 acres of federal lands remain unprotected from destructive development, including special places on San Juan, Orcas, and Lopez islands. In 2012, Environment Washington raised awareness of the problem and issued a new call to action.

Call issued to protect 1,000 acres

The San Juan Islands are beautiful and unique. Thousands of visitors come to the islands every year, from all over the world, for some of the best whale watching experiences on earth. But 1,000 acres remain at risk of development. We’re calling on the president to fix this by declaring these lands a national monument.

- Over the years, developers have tried to buy off these priceless pieces of land—including beaches, reefs and pristine forests—for timber and mineral extraction. So far, island residents have managed to fight off every reckless proposal, but we can’t allow that to happen to these lands: The San Juan Islands are just too precious.

- Environment Washington is joining with local citizens to call on the president to declare the San Juan Islands a national monument, protecting them forever. Already, hundreds of San Juan Islanders have written to the president in support of this campaign. In 2012, we helped show President Obama that Washingtonians from across the state treasure these islands. With your help, we can protect the San Juans forever.

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