Bag bans protect Puget Sound wildlife

Seattle, Bellingham, Edmonds... and counting

Environment Washington is working to protect wildlife in Puget Sound by banning the single-use plastic grocery bags that can choke, starve or poison orcas, seals and other animals. Just last year, a beached gray whale was found in West Seattle with 20 plastic bags in its stomach.

292 million fewer plastic bags

In December, Seattle’s City Council voted to ban disposable plastic bags after receiving hundreds of public comments from Environment Washington supporters, urging them to do so. The ban will keep 292 million plastic bags out of Seattle each year.

In the weeks leading up to the vote, Environment Washington Research & Policy Center released a report noting that more than 80 governments worldwide have cut plastic pollution by taking action against disposable plastic bags. Our staff, members and supporters attended public hearings to show support for the bag ban ordinance.

At press time, discussions were underway to ban the bags in Olympia, Lake Forest Park and Bainbridge Island as well. More than 1,200 Environment Washington supporters have urged their local leaders to ban disposable plastic bags, and more than 150 businesses have signed letters endorsing our campaign. By helping communities win local bag bans, we can make an immediate impact to cut plastic pollution while we work to ban the bags statewide. To that end, Program Associate Robb Krehbiel has met with the speaker of the Washington House and the chair of the House Environmental Committee; both expressed support for a statewide ban.

Momentum builds for statewide ban

Bellingham, Edmonds and Mukilteo have already banned disposable plastic bags.
Recent action

54.5 mpg standard nears finish line
In November, the Obama administration officially proposed new clean car standards that represent the biggest step the United States has ever taken to get off oil and tackle global warming.

The standards would require cars and light trucks in model years 2017-2025 to meet a fleet-wide average fuel efficiency and global warming pollution standards equivalent to 54.5 miles per gallon by 2025.

The environmental benefits of such a standard are enormous. By 2030, we could save more oil than we imported from Saudi Arabia last year, and slash global warming pollution by an amount equivalent to shutting down 70 coal-fired power plants.

The standard is based on a similar policy adopted in Washington in 2005, with our support, and in 13 other states from 2004 to 2008.

Citizens speak out against oil subsidies
With Sen. Patty Murray serving as co-chair of the federal debt-reduction supercommittee, Environment Washington and our allies seized the opportunity to urge her to cut taxpayer subsidies to Big Oil.

At press events in Seattle, Tacoma and Olympia, we were joined by activists and allies to protest the fact that while the top five oil companies posted record profits of $67 billion in the first half of 2011, they also received more than $44 billion in taxpayer subsidies.

We also traveled to Yakima to reveal a roadside billboard urging Rep. Doc Hastings to end his support of subsidies for Big Oil. We got his attention: Rep. Hastings’s office issued an official response after the local NBC TV affiliate ran a story about our efforts.

To our members

As winter rain refreshes the landscape in 2012, Environment Washington hopes the new year finds you enjoying your favorite places and discovering new ones. Your financial support and activism play an invaluable role in their preservation.

I am excited to join you in continuing to protect Washington’s natural treasures as your new field director. In this newsletter, you’ll learn about the latest developments to protect Mount Rainier from logging and development, keep plastic bags out of Puget Sound, reduce air pollution, and much more.

This winter, go enjoy the snowy slopes of Mount Olympus, the trails along the Skykomish River, or a special place closer to home, knowing that Environment Washington is working hard to ensure they are just as beautiful for future generations.

Sincerely,

Katrina Rosen
Field Director
We have scored each member of our state’s congressional delegation based on how they have voted on environmental legislation. Sens. Patty Murray and Maria Cantwell (top, l-r) have voted for the environment on every bill. Reps. Jaime Herrera Beutler and Cathy McMorris Rodgers (bottom, l-r) voted against the environment more than 90 percent of the time.

To find how your representative is voting, visit www.EnvironmentAmerica.org/scorecard and select Washington.

For the full interview with Lisa Jackson, visit EnvironmentWashington.org/page/wae/newsletters.
Fed. report could help Mount Rainier

Our work continues to expand Mount Rainier National Park to protect the adjacent Carbon River Valley Rainforest, one of the last inland rainforests in all of North America.

In October, Sec. Ken Salazar released a report, “America’s Great Outdoors,” that lays the groundwork for new preservation efforts across the United States. We’re working to make sure that the Carbon River Valley rainforest gets the protection it deserves.

We’ve spoken with more than 200,000 people in Washington State about this issue, and our staff members delivered thousands of public comments to Washington, D.C., urging Sec. Salazar to expand the borders of Mount Rainier National Park to protect the Carbon River Valley rainforest’s unique ecosystem.

To add your voice to the growing call to save the Carbon River Valley by expanding the borders of Mount Rainier National Park, visit www.EnvironmentWashington.org.