Annual Report

Recapping our work in Fiscal Year 2011 for our members
To our members

“The water we drink and the air we breathe deserve the strongest protections possible.”

Dear Environment New York members,

The past year has seen a whirlwind of attacks on our waters and air from polluters and their allies in government. But despite the pressure, I’m happy to say we are standing strong for the protections our environment deserves.

In 2010, after nearly a year of around-the-clock campaigning, we helped to make New York the first state in the nation to impose a temporary ban on the most dangerous form of gas drilling. We cheered this victory for our drinking water and beautiful places like the Catskills, but we’re not out of the woods yet—now we’re working even harder to stop Gov. Andrew Cuomo from reversing our progress and opening the state to drilling.

Meanwhile, our members helped our national coalition gather a record-breaking 800,000 messages to the EPA in support of cutting mercury emissions from power plants. The water we drink and the air we breathe deserve the strongest protections possible, but industry lobbyists haven’t given up in their battle to weaken them. With your support, we’ll continue to fight for a cleaner, greener New York.

Sincerely,

Anna Aurilio
Federal Legislative Director

Getting Off Oil

Oil spills, smog, global warming… the environmental costs of our oil dependence are out of control. With New Yorkers paying more than ever at the pump, there has never been a better time to start getting off oil for good. We can get there through investments in fuel-efficient cars and trucks, new technologies like electric vehicles, and public transportation.

54.5 mpg: A big move to get off oil

This summer, after our staff and allies mobilized 10,000 people to voice their support for clean cars, the Obama administration announced two big steps toward getting America off oil:

• In July, the administration announced new fuel economy standards that will make 54.5-mpg cars the norm by 2025, as well as the first-ever standards for trucks. This is the single biggest step the United States has ever taken to reduce oil consumption and global warming pollution. We helped ensure the standards are as strong as possible by delivering comments from New Yorkers in support of clean cars.

• By 2030, the new standards will cut America’s annual gasoline use by 23 billion gallons and reduce our annual global warming pollution by 280 million metric tons—the equivalent of shutting down 72 coal plants.

Roadmap to an oil-free future

Our report “Getting Off Oil: A 50 state Roadmap,” found we can reduce oil consumption by:

• Improving fuel efficiency standards, saving New York 561 million gallons by 2030.
• Expanding public transit to double ridership and improve reliability, saving New York 60 million gallons by 2030.
• Retrofitting commercial buildings, saving New York 2 million gallons by 2030.
Protect The Catskills

The wooded mountains of the Catskills, the Finger Lakes’ glacial waters, the family farms and rural communities in between—New York is known for its beauty. But gas drilling in the Marcellus Shale threatens to destroy our countryside with forest clearcuts, toxic pollution, and thousands of drill rigs and pipelines. We are working to protect the places we love from Marcellus Shale drilling before it’s too late.

Grassroots advocacy won nation’s first temporary drilling ban

Marcellus Shale gas drilling poses a tremendous threat to New York’s communities and environment. New Yorkers could face heightened health risks, and beloved places like the Catskills could face serious degradation:

- State officials estimate that over 60,000 wells could be drilled in New York, including thousands in the Catskills, destroying more than 120,000 acres.

- Gas companies have a track record of reckless disregard for the law. In neighboring Pennsylvania, gas companies have violated environmental laws more than 2,700 times since 2008—leading to contaminated water wells, drinking water advisories for more than 325,000 residents near Pittsburgh, and explosions and accidents that put local families and workers at risk.

In December 2010, after Environment New York campaigned for nearly a year to protect our state from drilling, then-Gov. David Paterson announced a ban on the most dangerous forms of gas drilling in New York State until an Environmental Impact Study was completed—the first time that a state denied industry efforts to expand drilling. It was not an easy victory, but the support of our members made it possible. In the months leading up to the ban, thousands of our members called and emailed the governor and other state leaders to press Albany for action.

Thousands urge Gov. Cuomo not to green-light drilling

Shockingly, in September 2011, Gov. Andrew Cuomo announced a plan to open more than 85 percent of the state to drilling. While his proposal sets some limits on drilling in the areas that provide New York City and Syracuse with drinking water, huge swaths of the state would remain vulnerable—including much of the Catskills. Environment New York has ramped up our campaign to establish permanent protections.

- Our staff is educating the public about the threat of drilling. This year we spoke with more than 60,000 New Yorkers, from Ithaca to Westchester to the Upper West Side, and released a series of videos documenting how gas drilling has already impacted people’s lives in Pennsylvania.

- We’ve mobilized thousands of people to call, email or sign petitions to the governor, putting pressure on him to change course. We’ve also turned out our members to public hearings on gas drilling, to voice their disapproval of his plan.

Where they want to drill

Environment New York’s staff have spoken with more than 60,000 New Yorkers about the threat of drilling (left). The Catskills region, which provides drinking water for millions of New Yorkers, lies in the path of Marcellus Shale drilling (right).

Photo credits: (page 3-4 background) benswing*; (page 4 top-left, clockwise) prefersaltmarsh*, nyc.gov, staff.
Protecting Long Island Sound

Whether we're fishing off Montauk or swimming at Rye Beach, Long Island Sound is vital to our ecology, economy and quality of life. Yet the Sound’s waters face serious threats—from overdevelopment, sewage runoff and more. Environment New York is working to rein in the pollution, and restore Long Island Sound to health.

EPA takes steps to protect the Sound from sewage

Each year, billions of gallons of untreated sewage flow into the Sound. To make matters worse, recent Supreme Court decisions have called into question whether more than half of New York’s streams, including waters that feed the Sound, are still protected by the Clean Water Act. The consequences are clear:

- High pollution levels have led to hundreds of beach closings or warnings in New York each year.
- Sewage pollution creates dead zones in Long Island Sound each summer that can grow to be up to seven times the size of Manhattan.

For the past several years, Environment New York and our allies have been working to reduce sewage pollution and close the loopholes that weaken the Clean Water Act’s ability to protect our waters.

In 2010, we urged the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to take the lead. In 2011, they responded—in April, EPA Administrator Lisa Jackson announced a new plan to restore Clean Water Act protections to Long Island Sound and all our waters. The agency is also gearing up to cut sewage pollution by setting national standards.

Thousands defended the Sound against polluters’ threat

Not surprisingly, oil companies, developers and other polluters immediately sprang into action to stop the EPA from closing the clean water loopholes. ExxonMobil lobbyists even met with the president to try to convince him to drop the issue, threatening “legal warfare” if the EPA moved forward. Polluters’ allies in both parties have launched an unprecedented attack on the Clean Water Act in Congress. By the summer of 2011, the U.S. House of Representatives had passed three separate measures attacking the EPA’s authority to protect our waters.

We saw this coming, and had already begun building a campaign to defend the EPA’s clean water initiatives:

- Our field organizers have talked face to face with hundreds of thousands of people across the country about the attacks on clean water.
- We worked with our allies to mobilize 170,000 people nationwide to send comments to Washington, D.C., urging action for clean water.

Sewage pollution leads to hundreds of beach closings or warnings in New York each year (left). Federal Clean Water Advocate Shelley Vinyard (right).
Clean Air, Healthy Families

New Yorkers should be able to breathe clean air without worrying about mercury in our bloodstream or soot in our lungs. Yet coal-fired power plants spew hundreds of thousands of tons of lead, mercury, soot and other dangerous pollutants into our atmosphere every year. We need to protect our families’ health by requiring polluters to clean up their act.

EPA to cut mercury, save 25,000 lives

In 2011, the Environmental Protection Agency moved ahead with efforts to significantly reduce mercury, soot and smog pollution from power plants and other industrial polluters. Research shows that these standards could save more than 25,000 lives nationwide every year. Environment New York joined forces with our sister groups across the country to ensure these rules were adopted:

- Our staff released reports on the health impacts of smog and mercury pollution, detailing how much pollution is emitted by power plants nationwide. According to our report, “Danger in the Air,” New York City and Long Island both rank among the top 20 smoggiest large metropolitan areas in the country.

- Thanks to our efforts, together with those of the Sierra Club and other allies, more than 800,000 people sent comments to the EPA in support of strong action on mercury—no other single EPA rule has ever received so much public support.

Congressional attacks voted down

Unfortunately, polluters and their allies in Congress launched a coordinated attack to block these critical safeguards for our air. But after working closely with our allies in the public health community, lobbying key senators and rallying thousands of our online activists to speak out, we held the line against some of the worst attacks:

- In March, the U.S. Senate rejected a bill that would have blocked standards for soot, mercury and global warming pollution.
- In April, the Senate defeated four more bills that would have blocked the EPA from reducing pollution that causes global warming.

Number of smog days in 2010*

<table>
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<th>Number of Smog Days</th>
<th>Location</th>
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<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>New York City</td>
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<tr>
<td>25</td>
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<td>Jamestown</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>Albany-Schenectady-Troy</td>
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<td>6</td>
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<td>Rochester</td>
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<td>Utica-Rome</td>
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* Number includes additional days the air was unhealthy to breathe according to a more protective standard.

Thanks to our efforts, together with those of the Sierra Club and other allies, more than 800,000 people sent comments to the EPA in support of strong action on mercury—no other single EPA rule has ever received so much public support.

At left: Concerned citizens sent in photo petitions in support of clean air. At right: EPA Administrator Lisa Jackson (left) with Margie Alt (right), director of our national federation.