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ENVIRONMENT MINNESOTA

Clean air. Clean water. Open space.

Your Winter Report

Four lawsuits prod polluters to clean up

Companies agree to reduce toxic emissions

In 2017, attorneys representing members of our national network made progress on four major lawsuits against polluting companies.

The impact of the decisions made in these cases will likely be felt across industries, deterring companies from violating environmental laws in other parts of the country.

Given the deep cuts in enforcement funding at the federal level, we're researching more cases in which companies are jeopardizing the environment by violating the law—and we're ready to take legal action to stop the pollution when necessary.

1. Texas members v. ExxonMobil

When our sister group in Texas found evidence that ExxonMobil was releasing illegal air pollution at its Baytown, Texas, petrochemical complex, our network took Exxon to court.

In April 2017, a federal judge ordered Exxon to pay a $19.95 million penalty for violating the Clean Air Act on 16,386 days, releasing more than 10 million pounds of illegal air emissions, including carcinogens.

2. Fla. members v. Pilgrim's Pride

Our sister group filed suit against chicken producer Pilgrim's Pride over discharges of toxic wastewater into Florida's Suwannee River, which has been plagued by low dissolved oxygen levels and toxic algal blooms.

In November 2017, we reached a Clean Water Act settlement with the agribusiness to cease its pollution and pay a $1.42 million penalty for its violations—$1.3 million will be used to improve soil and water quality in the Suwannee Basin.

Credit: Jose Matos

▲ *Our national network made progress on a set of lawsuits against polluting companies in 2017, including one against Pilgrim's Pride in Florida over allegations that the chicken producer contaminated the Suwannee River with toxic wastewater.*

3. Pa. members v. ArcelorMittal

When residents of Monessen, Pa., complained of noxious odors, ill health effects and sootfall in their neighborhoods, our state affiliate filed suit against ArcelorMittal, the world's largest steel company, to address hundreds of ongoing violations of the Clean Air Act at the company's Pittsburgh-area coke plant.

4. Mass. members v. Casella

Our sister group in Massachusetts is in the midst of a lawsuit against Casella Waste Systems, a trash hauler with operations in 40 states, over contamination of drinking water wells and a nearby stream and wetlands. Eighty wells near a Casella-operated landfill in Southbridge, Mass., tested positive for lead and a suspected carcinogen.

Credit: Gashgeron via Shutterstock

Take action

We need your help to defend our environment. Take action online to urge our senators to protect our air, water and public lands.

www.EnvironmentMinnesota.org

◀ *We're working to stop pollution and hold polluters accountable when they violate the laws that protect our environment.*

Credit: Staff

You make the difference

As a member of Environment Minnesota, you're not only helping us defend our clean air, clean water and beautiful open spaces—you're winning real results for our environment in towns, cities, colleges and universities across our state.

Since our last update, we've made real progress in the face of unprecedented challenges. Your support has helped us not only defend the Clean Water Act, but call on local officials to remove lead from schoolchildren's drinking water. Our global warming team not only defended the Clean Power Plan, but did the research and advocacy it took to strengthen programs that cut carbon pollution from the Northeast to the West Coast.

In 2018, each campaign, each action and each small victory will help bring us another step closer to the greener, healthier world we want to live in. Thank you for making this vital work possible.

Timothy Schaefer
State Director

Your impact

Ten states act to reduce global warming pollution

Last year, we saw hurricanes batter our coasts and wildfires rage across the West. It was a stark reminder that climate change remains one of the most critical issues of our times. Despite inaction at the federal level, states worked together across party lines to cut pollution, clean up our air, and protect our future.

Nine states in the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic took action to strengthen limits on carbon pollution from power plants, which is a major contributor to climate change. As members of the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative, states from Maryland to Maine have already cut power plant pollution in half since 2005—the equivalent of retiring 22 coal-fired power plants. Now they're taking that progress even further.

And in California, our sister group Environment California supported a successful bipartisan effort to expand the Golden State's landmark cap-and-trade program—an important tool for meeting the state's ambitious goal for slashing global warming pollution. With your support, we'll continue to work with our governor to lead on climate.

Report: EPA cuts will impact local water quality

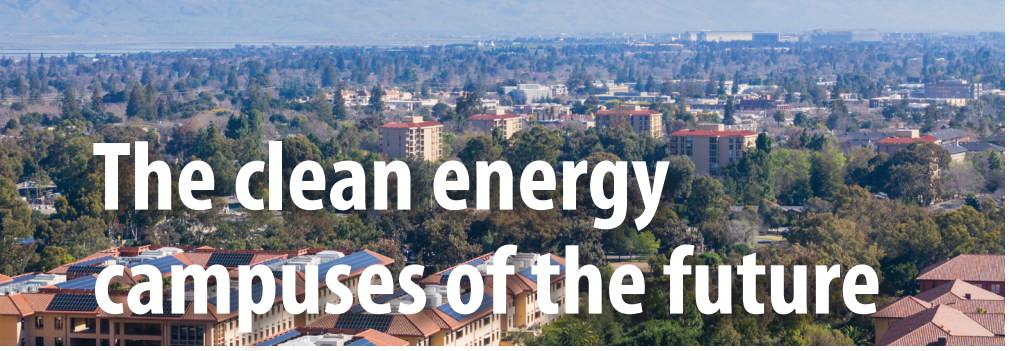
Our streams, rivers, lakes and wetlands are critical to our health and our quality of life. But when President Trump announced his federal budget, it included steep funding cuts to the programs and agencies charged with their protection.

A series of reports released by Environment America Research & Policy Center analyzed the proposed budget cuts and revealed how they would threaten coastal resiliency, remove protections for flood-absorbing wetlands, neglect funding for stormwater and sewage treatment, expose more Americans to toxic chemicals, and threaten the future health of important waterways, including Puget Sound, the Great Lakes and the Chesapeake Bay.

In the new year, Environment Minnesota will continue to call for fully funding the programs that clean up and protect the waters we love. And with your support, you can be sure that you're making a difference on clean water.

Credit: Lone Wolf Photography via Shutterstock

▲ *Federal budget cuts threaten the health of many of our nation's iconic waterways, including the Chesapeake Bay.*



The clean energy campuses of the future

Credit: Sundry Photography via Shutterstock

America's institutions of higher education lead the world in scientific breakthroughs. So, it's only natural for them to lead America's transition to clean energy.

Colleges and universities serve more than 20 million students and spend more than $15 billion per year on energy, making them the perfect place to drive big investments in clean energy solutions. At the same time, they can train the scientists, engineers, policy makers and civic leaders we need to move the nation toward a sustainable future.

In October, Environment Minnesota Research & Policy Center unveiled "Renewable Energy 101," a series of fact sheets highlighting 10 key tools to help students put their campuses on a path to 100 percent renewable energy.

A course to carbon-free campuses

Pollution-free, virtually inexhaustible, safe and efficient—solar and wind energy are key building blocks of a clean energy future.

Solar energy is so abundant that the U.S. could generate more than 100 times as much electricity from solar installations as it consumes each year. In 2016 alone, wind energy reduced greenhouse gas emissions in the U.S. by an amount equivalent to taking 33.7 million cars off the road.

Colleges and universities operate thousands of buildings across the country on campuses that are sometimes the size of small cities, and students and faculty require transportation between classes, dorms and offices. This makes college campuses ideal places for rapid adoption of 100 percent renewable energy.

Many campuses contain perfect locations for clean energy projects: rooftops, parking lots and even open fields can host solar panels, wind turbines and other clean energy technologies.

By transitioning to clean energy, many colleges and universities can save money while protecting the environment. Wind and solar installations have dropped in price by 85 percent and 66 percent over the last seven years, respectively.

Campus benefits from solar, wind

Many campuses are already reaping the benefits of solar and wind power.

Butte College in northern California became the first in the nation to go "grid positive" in 2011. And by 2016, Arizona State University had the most solar energy of any college nationwide.

Meanwhile, the University of Delaware campus boasts the only commercial-sized wind turbine in the state, allowing it to tap into the East Coast's immense wind energy potential.

In 2017, our national network won a commitment from Cornell University to achieve 100 percent renewable energy by 2035. Now, we're working with 50 campuses in 10 states to do the same. Higher education has long played a leading role in bringing technological changes to society. Colleges and universities can continue to lead by embarking on a path to 100 percent renewable energy.

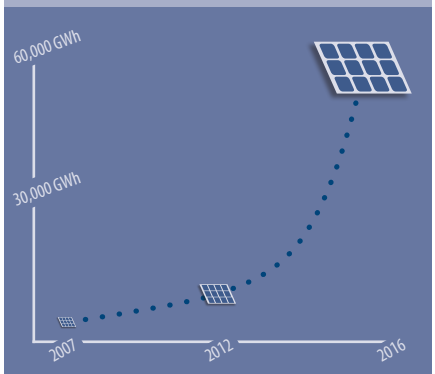
Credit: Staff

Explore more online

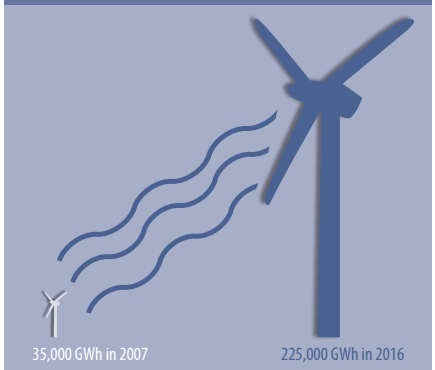
▲ *Our staff released our series of fact sheets, "Renewable Energy 101," on college campuses across the country. Above, State Director Sanders Moore speaks at the University of New Mexico in Albuquerque.*

Read the full series at: www.EnvironmentMinnesotaCenter.org

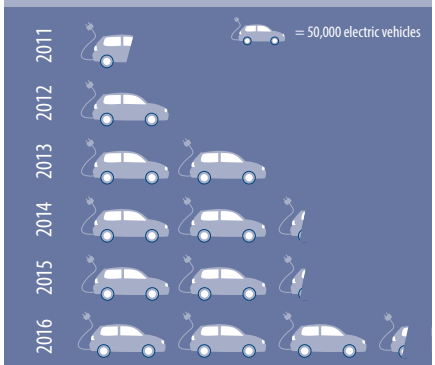
Renewables on the rise



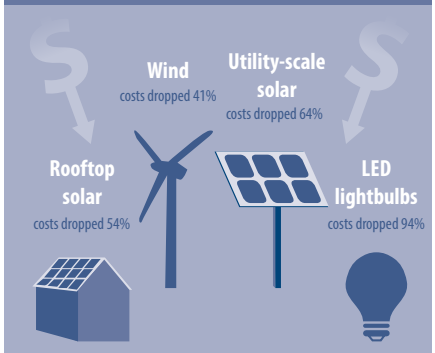
America now produces **43 times more solar power** than it did in 2007



Since 2007, wind power has **grown seven-fold**



160,000 electric vehicles were sold in the U.S. in 2016



The **cost of clean energy fell** between 2008 and 2015

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ENVIRONMENT
MINNESOTA
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Your Winter Report

VOLUME 9 | NO. 1 | 2018

Environment Minnesota

Our mission

We all want clean air, clean water and open spaces. But it takes independent research and tough-minded advocacy to win concrete results for our environment, especially when powerful interests stand in the way of environmental progress.

That's the idea behind Environment Minnesota: Clean Air, Clean Water, Open Space, Inc., a project of Environment America. We focus exclusively on protecting Minnesota's air, water and open spaces. We speak out and take action at the local, state and national levels to improve the quality of our environment and our lives.

Bee Friendly Food Alliance tops 240

We don't see many bees flying around in the winter, but we do see the fruits of their labor. Bees pollinate many of the world's most common crops—so when beekeepers in the U.S. reported losing 33 percent of their honeybee colonies last year, it was clear that losing the bees would have a devastating effect on our food supply.

Last year, Environment Minnesota and our national network launched the Bee Friendly Food Alliance, a coalition of chefs, restaurant owners and others in the restaurant industry, to make their voices heard to protect bees. After all, who knows better what we stand to lose without them? And by the end of 2017, more than 240 leaders in the restaurant industry had joined us.

This fall, chefs appeared alongside our staff at media events across the country to shine a spotlight on the Thanksgiving treats made possible by bees, including pumpkin pie, cranberry sauce and green bean casserole. With your support, we'll continue our work to ban the pesticides that are killing bees.

Credit: Ivan Volozhanin via Shutterstock

Support our efforts

Support our efforts to save the bees.

Donate online at:
www.EnvironmentMinnesota.org

A recent study found that three-quarters of all honey on Earth is contaminated with neonicotinoids, a widely used class of pesticides known to harm bees. Help us build momentum to ban these bee-killing pesticides.

Design: Public Interest GRFX, (215) 985-1113
Publications Director: Richard J. Hannigan | Contributors: Katrina Riley and Alex Ferraro | Layout: Chloe Coffman

Printed on recycled paper.