Fiscal Year 2019 Annual Report
Thanks for making it all possible
To be an environmentalist, you’ve got to wrestle with a conundrum: We need bold action on a short timeline ... with broad public support.

We need to do a lot, quickly, to preserve a livable planet. But progress has to earn and sustain the support of the people in order to last—so progress doesn’t often come in one big swooping action. It usually comes one small-ish victory at a time.

At Environment Georgia, we acknowledge the conundrum—and we embrace it. We believe in bold action on a large scale. But we work every day at the local, state and national levels to build, step by step, the support this action demands. Each college, or city or state that deploys more renewable energy helps win more people over to the possibility of a world that runs on the sun and the wind. Each company or state that phases out a single-use plastic product shows more people a way to end harm to ocean wildlife from plastic pollution.

These victories are smaller than the challenges demand. But as their pace picks up, their summary effect grows. A year ago, California became the second state to commit to 100 percent zero-carbon electricity. Now, there are six states with such commitments, plus Puerto Rico and Washington, D.C. Back in 2016, California banned single-use plastic bags. In 2019, five more states banned plastic bags, and Maine, Maryland and Vermont banned plastic foam take-out containers. Like all social changes, environmental solutions have tipping points.

Our natural world faces serious problems, and we’ve got to solve them. Our strategy is to make sure that each victory opens a door to the next. Thanks for being with us on the journey.

Sincerely,

Jennette Gayer
State Director, Environment Georgia
Clean Water & Air

Through our Clean Water & Air program, our staff and members tackled problems ranging from the Trump administration’s attempts to roll back clean water standards, to industrial discharges that violate the Clean Water and Clean Air Acts. Below, you’ll find reports on our Get the Lead Out Campaign and on our work to protect Georgia’s water from coal ash waste.

The grades are in: Report finds states are failing to ensure safe drinking water for our children

**MARCH 21, 2019:** Lead contaminates the water coming out of drinking fountains and taps at schools across the country, and at least 22 states aren’t doing enough about it.

“Get the Lead Out,” a study published March 21 by our research partners Environment America Research & Policy Center and U.S. PIRG Education Fund, examined the policies of 31 states and Washington, D.C., and assigned grades based on how well they protect children from lead in drinking water at school. Twenty-two states earned an F grade, including Georgia, with only Illinois and D.C. grading above the C range.

“Waiting for more tests to confirm that our children are drinking water laced with lead is unconscionable,” said John Rumpler, senior director of our national network’s clean water campaign. “It’s time to get the lead out.”

Environment Georgia and our national network are working in Georgia and more than a dozen other states to protect drinking water for millions of children by advancing policies to proactively get the lead out.

Environment Georgia calls to protect waterways from coal ash

**DEC. 15, 2018:** What do arsenic, lithium and sulfate have in common? They shouldn’t be in Georgia’s groundwater, but they are.

On Dec. 13, Environment Georgia and our allies released a report exposing toxic pollution coming from coal ash ponds in Georgia’s underground water supplies at 11 of Georgia’s 12 coal-fired power plants. The key to this safe storage is a liner for coal ash landfills that will keep the toxins out of our waterways. Nearly 150 Georgians joined us at a Capitol Conservation Day to push for stronger protections.

“This report gives new energy to our efforts to ensure all coal ash in Georgia is stored in dry, lined and capped facilities,” said Environment Georgia State Director Jennette Gayer. “We call on Georgia Power, Gov. Kemp and the Georgia Legislature to prevent further contamination of our waterways by coal ash.”

Jennette also testified before the Georgia Public Service Commission in favor of stronger protections for Georgia’s waterways.
Above: Rob Sargent toured the nation’s first offshore wind farm at Block Island, R.I. (upper left). Below: Our national network campaigned for 100% renewable energy across the country, from California (left) to Florida (right).
Clean, Green & Renewable Energy

With support from Environment Georgia’s members, our national network promoted energy efficiency in our homes, educated city leaders about solar, and fostered the development of wind power. Here are updates on our network’s 100% Renewable Energy campaign and our research arm’s “Shining Cities” report.

**Athens commits to go 100% renewable**

**MAY 23, 2019:** Athens is the latest local government in Georgia to transition to clean and renewable energy.

On May 21, the Athens-Clarke County Commission unanimously voted to adopt a community-wide goal of 100 percent clean, renewable electricity by 2035 and 100 percent renewable energy by 2050. Athens joins Atlanta, Augusta and Clarkston in committing more of Georgia to 100 percent clean energy.

“Whether it’s increasingly severe droughts or extreme storms, the impacts of climate change are not just future threats—they’re already here,” said Cary Ritzler, director of Environment Georgia’s 100% Athens Project. “This bold goal will help ensure that Athens joins cities and states across the country in the drive for a cleaner and safer environment for generations to come.”

Across the country, our national network’s staff and members have been key advocates for 100 percent renewable electricity and energy policies, including statewide commitments in California, New Mexico and Washington state.

**Solar power is growing fast. These cities are shining the brightest.**

**APRIL 9, 2019:** Solar power is booming in dozens of major American cities.

“Shining Cities 2019,” researched by Environment America Research & Policy Center and released on April 9, found that solar energy capacity more than doubled in 45 of America’s 57 largest cities in the past six years. The report’s main event? The latest ranking of America’s top solar cities. Los Angeles topped the list for the second year in a row, and San Diego, Phoenix, Honolulu and San Jose rounded out the top five.

“Cities are rapidly adopting solar energy and driving the renewable energy transition across the country, bringing pollution-free power to our homes, schools and workplaces,” said Emma Searson, director of our national network’s Go Solar campaign.

The report also found that solar is not just a Sun Belt phenomenon. Other leading cities include New York City; Indianapolis; Washington, D.C.; Trenton, New Jersey; and Ypsilanti, Michigan.
This year, Environment Georgia set out to ban drilling off Georgia’s coast (top). Environment Georgia State Director Jennette Gayer testified in support of phasing out single-use plastic (right).

Photo credits: (clockwise from top) Staff, Erik Voss, Cup Of Spring via Shutterstock, Lake Stein, Chris Holman via Shutterstock
Conservation

Our network’s staff and members sought to save the bees from toxic pesticides, and to spare Arctic wildlife from oil and gas exploration and drilling. Below, find more on our national network’s efforts to protect wildlife from plastic pollution and keep drilling of Georgia’s shores.

**Fulton County votes to phase out single-use plastics**

**JULY 12, 2019:** Fulton County has taken a big step to reduce plastic waste.

On July 10, the Fulton County Commission voted unanimously to phase out single-use plastics in county-owned, operated and leased buildings and facilities, becoming the first county in the state to do so. The action will reduce the amount of plastics that break down into smaller and smaller pieces and, too often, end up in our lakes, rivers and ocean.

“Nothing we use for 10 minutes should be allowed to pollute our environment for hundreds of years. This bill follows the lead of other cities and states across the country and makes Fulton County a leader in Georgia,” said Environment Georgia State Director Jennette Gayer, who testified in support of the resolution.

“Georgia’s precious natural areas and wildlife have been threatened for too long by single-use plastics, and we are thrilled that Fulton County is starting to respond to this threat.”

**Key Georgia committee approves resolution to block offshore drilling**

**APRIL 2, 2019:** Georgia legislators are signaling they favor clean beaches over more offshore drilling.

On March 20, the Environmental Quality Subcommittee in Georgia’s House of Representatives passed HR 48, a resolution to protect coastal communities by opposing exploration and drilling for oil and gas off the state’s coasts. The resolution is our response to the federal Bureau of Ocean Energy Management draft plan to lease waters off the Atlantic coast to oil and gas companies.

“Sacrificing our beaches and ocean wildlife is no longer, if it ever was, the price we must pay for progress,” said Environment Georgia State Director Jennette Gayer. “Unfortunately, a federal proposal threatens our coast and we need our Legislature and Gov. Brian Kemp to continue to stand up for the amazing natural resource Georgia has been blessed with.”

The resolution went on to pass the Georgia House of Representatives on April 2.
Above: Staff from our national research partner Environment America Research & Policy Center, along with their allies, delivered 350,000 public comments in support of federal Clean Car standards to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. Below: Andrea McGimsey and Environment America Research & Policy Center staff hosted a tour of an electric bus facility (upper middle and bottom right).
Global Warming Solutions

Environment Georgia worked with other state groups in our network to reduce carbon emissions from power plants, transportation and other sources. Here’s more on what our network did to promote state-level action across the country and defend strong pollution standards for cars and trucks.

Wrong way for the climate: 350,000 oppose rollback of Clean Cars Standards

OCT. 26, 2018: Given the alarming ways our climate is changing, doesn’t it make sense for automakers to focus on making cars that pollute far less, if at all?

On Oct. 26, our network’s national research partner showed the Trump administration that 350,000 Americans think so. Together with coalition partners, Environment America Research & Policy Center delivered that many public comments to the Environmental Protection Agency and the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration opposing plans to roll back federal Clean Car Standards. By freezing the standards at 2020 levels, the plan would lock in more dirty air and global warming pollution.

“With the latest research telling us we’ll have a climate catastrophe on our hands if we don’t significantly slash global warming emissions, we need to move forward, not pull a U-turn,” said Andrea.

Our network is also calling on state leaders to promote zero-emission electric vehicles.

Twelve ways a governor can start tackling climate change right now

JAN. 10, 2019: As 20 new governors took office in January, a new report outlined actions all governors could take to lead the way on climate solutions.

On Jan. 10, our national research partner Environment America Research & Policy Center released a report titled “Climate Solutions from Day One,” which detailed 12 executive actions that governors can take immediately to help solve the climate crisis. These range from updating building codes to improve energy efficiency—as Gov. Kate Brown has already done in Oregon—to collaborating in regional climate initiatives like the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative in the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic.

“With the stroke of a pen, governors can start cutting global warming pollution today by increasing renewable energy use, reducing transportation emissions and curbing energy waste,” said Andrea McGimsey, senior director of our national network’s Global Warming Solutions program.

Our network urged governors across the country to adopt these recommendations.
Our staff (partial list)

- Jennette Gayer
  State Director

- Channa Childs
  Associate

- Rob Sargent
  Senior Director, Campaign for 100% Renewable Energy

- Bronte Payne
  Director, Campaign for 100% Renewable Campuses

- John Rumpler
  Senior Director, Clean Water for America Campaign and Senior Attorney

- Andrea McGinsey
  Senior Director, Global Warming Solutions Campaign

- Steve Blackledge
  Senior Director, Conservation Campaign

- Jesse Torrence
  Senior Director, Climate Campaigns

- Emma Searson
  Director, Go Solar Campaign

- Morgan Folger
  Director, Clean Car Communities

- Bart Johnsen-Harris
  Environmental Defense: Our Water, Advocate

- Doug Casler
  Director, Membership