Over the past year, Americans have mourned the loss of hundreds of thousands of loved ones, neighbors and friends to COVID-19. As the crisis altered our daily lives in ways both profound and mundane, Environment Maryland continued to work, online and safely distant, for clean air, clean water, open spaces and a livable climate.

In this report, we share the stories of that work with you: stories of researchers, advocates, attorneys, organizers and citizens striving together to protect and preserve our natural world. We thank you for helping to make that work possible, in normal and not-so-normal times.

This year, our national network persuaded more cities and states to “go renewable” and to take steps to electrify their transportation systems. We also won more bans on single-use plastic items.

And, in a victory that was years in the making, we celebrated as America reaffirmed its commitment to public lands when the Environment Maryland-backed Great American Outdoors Act became law on Aug. 4, 2020. We also worked to ensure this popular and bipartisan law is correctly implemented.

Over the past four years, the Trump administration dismantled or weakened more than 100 critical protections for the environment. We have a chance to restore and strengthen those protections and we are working with the Biden-Harris team to see this process through.

Your action and support make it all possible. Thank you, as always, for standing with us.

From the Director

Kate Breimann
State Director
Clean Water & Air

In our view, we must fulfill the promise of the Clean Water Act by making all our waters fishable, swimmable and drinkable. The Trump administration took a different view. We took action in the courts and in Congress to defend our water, making progress on the chemical contaminants known as PFAS and on lead-contaminated drinking water.

A 2020 law requires the military to phase out its use of toxic PFAS

JANUARY 6, 2020: We helped win a new law compelling the military to phase out its use of toxic chemicals that have contaminated drinking water in communities across the country.

In December 2019, the U.S. Senate approved a bipartisan measure to phase out the military’s use of firefighting foams that contain toxic per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS). Our national partner, Environment America, led the effort to win support for the action.

“A year or two ago, it was hard to imagine a full military phaseout of PFAS,” said Bart Johnsen-Harris, director of federal government affairs for our national network. “But while this was a crucial step forward, more still needs to be done to fully address PFAS contamination.”

Environment Maryland and our national network worked with a coalition of groups on the issue, including the Natural Resources Defense Council and the Environmental Working Group.

The House approved $22.5 billion to ‘get the lead out’

JULY 17, 2020: The U.S. House of Representatives took a historic step toward protecting kids and communities from lead in drinking water last summer.

On July 1, the House approved $22.5 billion over five years to replace our country’s ubiquitous lead service lines—the single worst source of lead contamination in drinking water—as part of a House infrastructure package. Reps. Elissa Slotkin (Mich.), Dan Kildee (Mich.), Rashida Tlaib (Mich.), David Cicilline (R.I.) and Gwen Moore (Wis.) co-sponsored the amendment.

“We’ve long known that lead is a potent neurotoxin that is especially damaging to our children’s health,” said John Rumpler, clean water program director for our national network. “Yet it’s still getting into the drinking water in thousands of communities across America, including at our schools and child care centers.”

“We urge the Senate to adopt this ambitious measure so we can ensure safe drinking water for all Americans.”

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Susan Gordon once managed a 200-acre farm near Colorado Springs, CO. Now, that land sits idle and abandoned, after toxic “forever chemicals” leached into the water supply from firefighting foam used at a nearby Air Force base.
Our staff and members rallied support across the country for the historic Great American Outdoors Act. Clockwise from top left: U.S. Sen. Joe Manchin (W.V.), flanked by Environment America’s Jamie Lockwood and Wendy Wendlandt. An organizer distributes a pro-public lands lawn sign to a member. U.S. Rep. Joe Cunningham (S.C.), with Jamie. On another front, we also supported the Break Free from Plastic Pollution Act, sponsored by U.S. Sen. Tom Udall (N.M.), bottom left. Senior director of our conservation campaigns, Steve Blackledge, oversaw both efforts.
Conservation

Our country’s lands and waters are precious beyond measure. This year, Environment Maryland and Environment Maryland Research & Policy Center, along with our national network, worked to defend and expand protections for our special places and the wildlife that live in them, standing up for bees and other pollinators, national parks, and our oceans. In July, we celebrated a major victory for public lands.

Great American Outdoors Act dedicates $900 million per year to conservation

JULY 27, 2020: After years of tireless work, our advocates, members, supporters and allies celebrated a massive win for public lands.

On July 22, the U.S. House of Representatives followed the U.S. Senate in approving the Great American Outdoors Act, which will fully fund the long-neglected, but highly effective, Land and Water Conservation Fund. That means $900 million per year for our public lands, along with billions in short-term funding to clear a backlog of maintenance issues at our national parks.

“The Great American Outdoors Act embraces what we all know to be true: Protecting and enhancing our public lands is an essential part of the American ethos,” said Steve Blackledge, senior director of our national network’s Conservation America campaign. “By locking in $900 million a year for outdoor projects, plus providing a short-term infusion of money to address maintenance issues, the House is reaffirming that commitment to the natural world.”

Maryland fails to justify needless delay of foam ban implementation

JUNE 16, 2020: Last year, Maryland made history as one of the first states to pass a statewide ban on polystyrene food packaging, one of the worst forms of single-use plastic waste.

On June 16, however, the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) announced it was postponing the July 1 deadline for businesses to comply with this ban, citing COVID-19 as cause for its decision. Advocates argued that this reasoning was far from transparent, and the data Marylanders relied on when they decided to ban polystyrene has not changed: Plastic continues to threaten our health and wildlife, even in the midst of a global pandemic.

“Bans on foam food packaging and other single-use plastics are a proven effective way to reduce waste and litter, protect the natural world, and protect ourselves,” said Environment Maryland State Director Kate Breimann. Following sustained advocacy efforts, Maryland’s foam ban went into effect on Oct. 1, 2020.
Above: Morgan Folger (left), director of our Destination: Zero Carbon campaign, is joined by Pennsylvania State Rep. Malcolm Kenyatta (center) and PennEnvironment Climate Defender Organizer Alex Lola at a January 2020 media event. Top right: As New Jersey Gov. Phil Murphy signs a bill into law promoting electric vehicles, Doug O’Malley, state director of our sister group Environment New Jersey, speaks on behalf of the coalition that supported the bill. Bottom right and below: Our staff and members rally opposition to the Trump administration’s rollback of Clean Car standards.
Global Warming Solutions

Global warming is the most profound symptom of our unhealthy relationship with the Earth. Thanks to our advocates and members, many states have committed to major action to reduce their carbon pollution. As power generation gets cleaner, we focused this year on the transportation sector, America’s number one source of global warming pollution.

**We filed a lawsuit to protect Clean Car standards**

**JUNE 2, 2020:** In May, we took the Trump administration to court for clean air.

On May 27, our national partner Environment America and 10 other public interest organizations filed a lawsuit opposing the Trump administration’s action to weaken federal Clean Car standards. The petition challenges a rule by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and Department of Transportation’s National Highway Traffic Safety Administration that violates several federal statutes.

“The EPA’s own analysis shows that this will reverse climate progress. The Clean Car standards should protect our climate, our health and the future of our children and grandchildren,” said Environment America’s Clean Cars Associate Eleanor Reynolds. “This plan is unacceptable. Not only does it fail to adequately address the climate crisis—it sets us back years when we have no time to lose.”

**Environment America Research & Policy Center’s report provides a roadmap to ‘Destination Zero Carbon’**

**MARCH 3, 2020:** Transportation is the largest source of global warming pollution in the U.S., making it climate enemy number one. A report describes how we can build a zero-carbon transportation future—all while making our air cleaner and creating safer, healthier communities.

“Destination: Zero Carbon,” released Feb. 25 by Frontier Group and our national research partner Environment America Research & Policy Center, looks at the factors underlying high transportation emissions. It also proposes solutions to expand electric vehicle use and double by 2030 the number of people who travel by foot, bike or transit.

“Climate change is the most urgent challenge of our generation,” said Morgan Folger, Clean Car Communities campaign director with Environment America Research & Policy Center. “While there’s no excuse for waiting to act in any sector, this is especially true with transportation.”

Along with policy recommendations, the report also highlights state and local governments around the country that are already taking action to create a more sustainable transportation system.
Bottom, left: Caribou in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. In August 2020, after the Trump administration approved the beginning of oil and gas leasing in this special place, Environment Maryland and our national network joined a lawsuit opposing the plans. Bottom, center: On August 27, John Rumpler, senior director of our clean water campaigns, participates in a virtual panel on the environmental and health impacts of the Trump administration’s “pause” on enforcement of clean air and water protections.

Photo credits: (clockwise from top): Mr. James Kelley via Shutterstock, Felix Lipov via Shutterstock, Staff, Malkolm Boothroyd
Environmental Defense

The price of a clean and healthy environment is eternal vigilance—especially as President Trump pushed to dismantle protections for our rivers, our public lands, our oceans and our climate. This year, our national partners Environment America and Environment America Research and Policy Center bolstered our green firewall in defense of America’s environmental protections.

After advocates took action, the Trump EPA backed down on suspending enforcement

APRIL 14, 2020: By suspending enforcement during the COVID-19 pandemic, the Trump administration’s Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) risked putting Americans’ health at further risk. So Environment Maryland Research & Policy Center spoke out until it reversed its decision.

On March 26, the EPA released a policy that stopped enforcement of key provisions of our nation’s environmental laws during the COVID-19 pandemic. The decision came on the heels of requests from the oil and gas industry and others seeking exemptions at this time.

“Refineries release millions of pounds of air pollution—including fugitive emissions or leaks—that would go undetected without stringent monitoring requirements,” John Rumpler, senior attorney for our national network, told USA Today at the time.

After months of advocacy, during which thousands of Americans called on Congress or the courts to compel the EPA to do its duty and protect communities, the agency terminated its pandemic polluter loophole.

We went to court to defend clean water protections

MAY 5, 2020: Environment Maryland and our national network went to court to stop the Trump administration’s Dirty Water Rule, which puts rivers and drinking water at risk.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and Army Corps of Engineers have revoked federal protections for thousands of waterways across the country. On April 29, Environment America, with the Southern Environmental Law Center, filed suit to challenge the Dirty Water Rule in court. From the Great Lakes to the Chesapeake Bay, the streams and wetlands that lost protections under the rule are crucial to the health of the nation’s most iconic waterways—providing habitat for wildlife, filtering pollutants and absorbing floodwaters.

“As surely as water flows downstream, the Dirty Water Rule endangers the waterways where millions of Americans swim, fish, boat and draw their drinking water,” said John Rumpler, senior director of our national network’s Clean Water for America campaign. “We will not allow it to stand.”
Our staff (partial list)

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