Jill Lang via Shutterstock

Let's put an end to plastic foam pollution

And choose wildlife over waste

Every day, people throw away tons of plastic "stuff"—cups, plates, bags, containers, forks, knives, spoons and more. Too often, this waste washes into our oceans, where it forms enormous garbage patches and harms marine wildlife.

For a bird or a fish or a turtle, it's easy to mistake a small piece of plastic for food—especially when there are millions of pieces of plastic floating in the ocean.

Scientists have found plastic fragments in literally hundreds of species, and sadly, ingesting these fragments is often fatal. Animals can starve when they eat too much plastic that they can't digest. Toxic chemicals in plastic can harm animals' health—and find their way into people as they make their way up the food chain.

Waste that never goes away

Experts are still documenting the scope of plastic pollution and investigating its effects. But for decades, we've known that one of the worst forms of plastic pollution is polystyrene, like the kind used in foam cups and take-out containers—what most of us call Styrofoam.

Polystyrene foam breaks apart easily, but it persists in the environment in tiny particles—and every bit of it ever made is still out there and could continue to threaten wildlife for hundreds of years to come.

Nothing we use for a few minutes should pollute our oceans for hundreds of years—especially when we don't need it. That's why we're calling for a statewide ban on take-out foam cups and containers.

Idreamphoto/Shutterstock

▲ *Marine wildlife like sea turtles, dolphins and whales are being harmed and even killed by ingesting plastic pollution.*

Let's ban polystyrene now

Of course, there are plastics companies that don't like this idea. Their opposition helped block a ban on plastic foam containers in California earlier this year. But across the country, more than 200 cities and communities have successfully passed bans on polystyrene foam.

Moving beyond polystyrene foam is something we can do right here, right now. With your support, we can convince our leaders in Virginia to ban polystyrene foam cups and take-out containers, and make a difference for our oceans and the animals that call them home. It's time to move beyond plastic and choose wildlife over waste.

JBFhoto/Shutterstock

take action

We need your help to protect the wildlife in our oceans from plastic waste. Take action online to urge our leaders to ban foam cups and take-out containers in Virginia.

www.EnvironmentVirginia.org

◀ *Every year, Americans throw away 25 billion foam cups. That's about 82 cups per person.*

Johnathan Comer

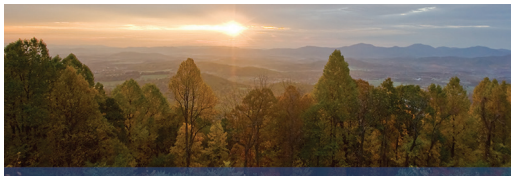
You make the difference

Here at Environment Virginia, we're all about protecting the air we breathe, the water we drink, the places we love, and the future our kids will inherit. Platitudes, however, are easy. Putting values into action is the hard part, especially when confronted by real choices.

What, for example, do we value more: the convenience of a plastic foam cup? Or the wildlife that will suffer if those cups end up in our oceans? What's more important: cheap, imported beef? Or the tropical forests that will be cleared if agricultural companies don't change their ways? Are we willing to pay a little more up front for solar and wind power if it means cleaner, healthier energy for the long run?

At Environment Virginia, you can trust that, no matter how tough the choice, we put the environment first on every campaign. Thank you for making it all possible.

Andrea McGimsey
Environment Virginia



Toward a greener future

Environment Virginia and Environment Virginia Research & Policy Center gratefully accept bequests, beneficiary designations of IRAs and life insurance, and gifts of securities to support our work to build a cleaner, greener, healthier future.

For more information, call 1-800-841-7299 or send an email to: PlannedGiving@EnvironmentVirginia.org.

Photo: Lou Taylor, Shutterstock

Your Impact

Here's how we can save tropical forests

What can Americans do to protect tropical forests? And why do they matter? Well, for one thing, tropical forests can play a critical role in slowing down climate change.

Tropical forests work as Earth's lungs—they breathe in carbon dioxide and breathe out oxygen, reducing global warming and cleaning the air. But for years, agricultural companies considered deforestation to be the fastest, cheapest path to profit. Razing forests to make way for crops and cattle accounts for 10 to 15 percent of the pollution that's changing our climate, and it drives out orangutans, elephants, tigers, jaguars and other threatened or endangered animals.

With your support, Environment Virginia and our national network are calling on companies in the palm oil, soybean and beef industries to commit to zero deforestation. Already, 74 percent of palm oil refineries have taken action—now, we need to call on more companies to make the commitment.

Supporters stand for oceans over drilling

From the Atlantic to the Pacific, from the sunny Gulf of Mexico to the frigid Arctic, America's oceans are beautiful, wild and worthy of protection. But the Trump administration put them at risk when it vowed to open 90 percent of our coastal waters to expanded offshore oil and gas drilling.

Everyone who remembers the Deepwater Horizon disaster in the Gulf or the Exxon Valdez spill off Alaska's coast understands that drilling is a threat to the waters and wildlife we love. And across the country, millions of Americans have spoken out against these dangerous plans.

Thanks to the support and action of members like you, Environment Virginia and our national network held rallies and events, packed public hearings, and delivered more than 35,000 public comments to the Department of the Interior. Together, we can save our shores and coasts from offshore drilling.

Ricky Mackie Photography

▲ *Our national network held events across the country to oppose the Trump administration's plan to open our oceans to offshore drilling.*

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Electric cars are coming. Are we ready?

A revolution is beginning to happen on America's roads. And our cities need to be ready.

By 2030, an estimated 15 million electric cars, trucks and buses could be on the road. Most cities aren't ready for them, but now they have a roadmap, thanks to a March report by Environment Virginia Research & Policy Center.

"Plugging In: Readying America's Cities for the Arrival of Electric Vehicles" explores the rise of electric vehicles (EVs) and outlines some smart public policies that cities can adopt to help Virginia lead the electric vehicle revolution.

50 percent electric by 2040

Technological gains that allow electric vehicles to drive farther, charge faster and be produced more affordably are revolutionizing the vehicle market.

In 2017, sales of plug-in EVs increased by 32 percent, and with adequate policy and infrastructure investments, experts estimate that, globally, more than half of all new cars sold by 2040 will be electric.

This is good news for our environment and our health. EVs are far less polluting than gasoline-powered cars, with half the carbon footprint over their lifetime and fewer emissions that contribute to smog and particulate matter pollution.

But with more EVs on the road, and many more coming soon, cities face the challenge of where they will charge—particularly in city centers and neighborhoods without off-street residential parking.

Cities can take four steps now

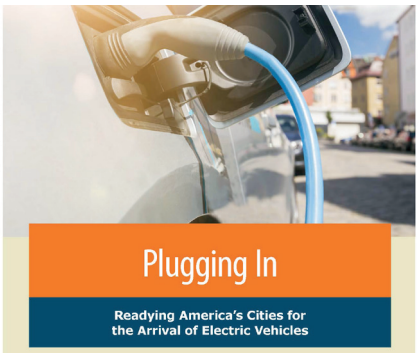
America's energy infrastructure will need to adapt to support these new electric vehicles. Instead of gas stations, EVs will need charging stations. And because most EVs are charged overnight, cities will need to ensure that people have access to charging near their home and work.

Only about half of all vehicles in the U.S. have a dedicated off-street parking space, such as a driveway or garage, so increased public access to EV charging stations will be critical.

Cities can lead the electric vehicle revolution by adopting policies and investing public funds to expand the availability of charging infrastructure. Some of the key policies our cities should enact include:

- Installing public EV charging stations on residential streets;
- Making off-street EV charging stations, like those in garages or parking lots, accessible to residents overnight;
- Offering EV charging at workplaces to complement residential charging; and
- Installing adequate public charging infrastructure at shopping centers and on city streets.

Expanding access to residential and public EV charging will reduce barriers and allow more Americans to own and operate EVs. By doing so, cities can position themselves to reap the air quality and climate benefits of growing electric vehicle use, and pave the way toward an electric vehicle future.



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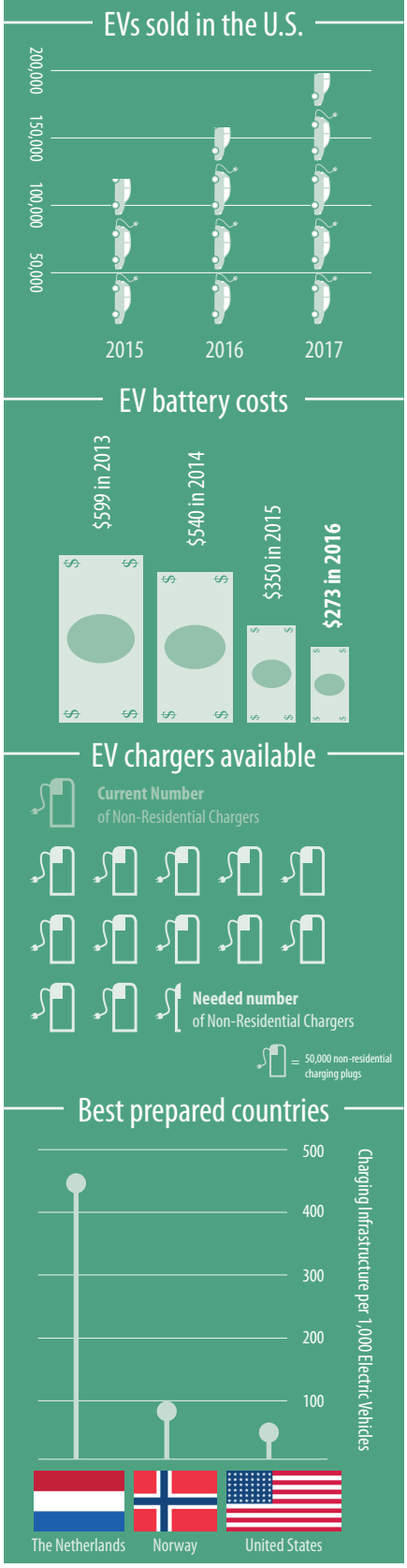
Explore more online

"Plugging In" found that the number of electric vehicles on America's streets is at an all-time high—and more are expected in the near future.

Read the full report at: www.EnvironmentVirginiaCenter.org

ELECTRIC VEHICLES BY THE NUMBERS



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Environment Virginia

ENVIRONMENT VIRGINIA
Clean air. Clean water. Open space.

Your Summer Report

VOLUME 9 | NO. 2 | 2018

Environment Virginia

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 Virginia, Inc., a project of Environment America, Inc. We focus exclusively on protecting Virginia'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.

180 mayors see the light, commit to solar

What do the Democratic mayor of Berkeley, Calif., and the Republican mayor of Abita Springs, La., have in common? They're among the 180 mayors who, upon our urging, resolved to make solar energy a key element of their communities' energy plans.

We have the potential to generate 100 times more energy from the sun than the total amount of energy we consume each year—and cities can be primary drivers of that growth by making it easier for Americans to go solar. Cities can set ambitious goals and enact policies to ensure homeowners receive a fair price for the solar energy they produce, and make installing panels hassle-free.

"Cities everywhere should take steps to switch to solar energy," said Emma Searson, campaign co-ordinator for Environment Virginia. "By tapping into the power of the sun, cities can benefit from cleaner air and improved public health, while simultaneously tackling climate change."

Photo by Karen Elliott Greisdorf

Support our efforts

Support efforts to promote solar energy.

Donate online at:
www.EnvironmentVirginia.org

Mayor Allison Silberberg of Alexandria is one of more than 180 mayors from across the country who are embracing clean energy from the sun.

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