

Annual Report

A recap of our work for our members in 2012



To our members

“We are in a good place to continue our work to protect Shenandoah, the Chesapeake and everything in between.”



Anna Aurilio
Federal Legislative
Director

Dear member,

Here in Virginia, we're privileged to have a variety of environments to enjoy and experience—farms, rolling hills, the Blue Ridge Mountains and an amazing coastline.

As our staff traveled throughout the state visiting these diverse features, we listened to Virginians say why they appreciate these different wild places. Many told us that these landscapes simply represented home. We understand what that means. And that's why this year, we were determined in our work to protect them all.

As we make our way into 2013, I feel that we are in a good place to continue protecting Shenandoah, the Chesapeake and everything in between.

I hope you'll take a moment to read about our latest accomplishments. Thank you for being at our side.

Sincerely,



Elizabeth Ourts
Regional Program Director



Caroline Kory
State Associate



Sarah Buccì
Federal Field
Organizer



Clean Farms, Healthy Virginia

In 2012, we came one step closer to changing the way food is grown in our commonwealth. Strong support from Environment Virginia and more than 44,000 Virginians helped push the U.S. Senate to adopt a new Farm Bill that includes several amendments that help support sustainable farming.

Senate considers local food in Farm Bill

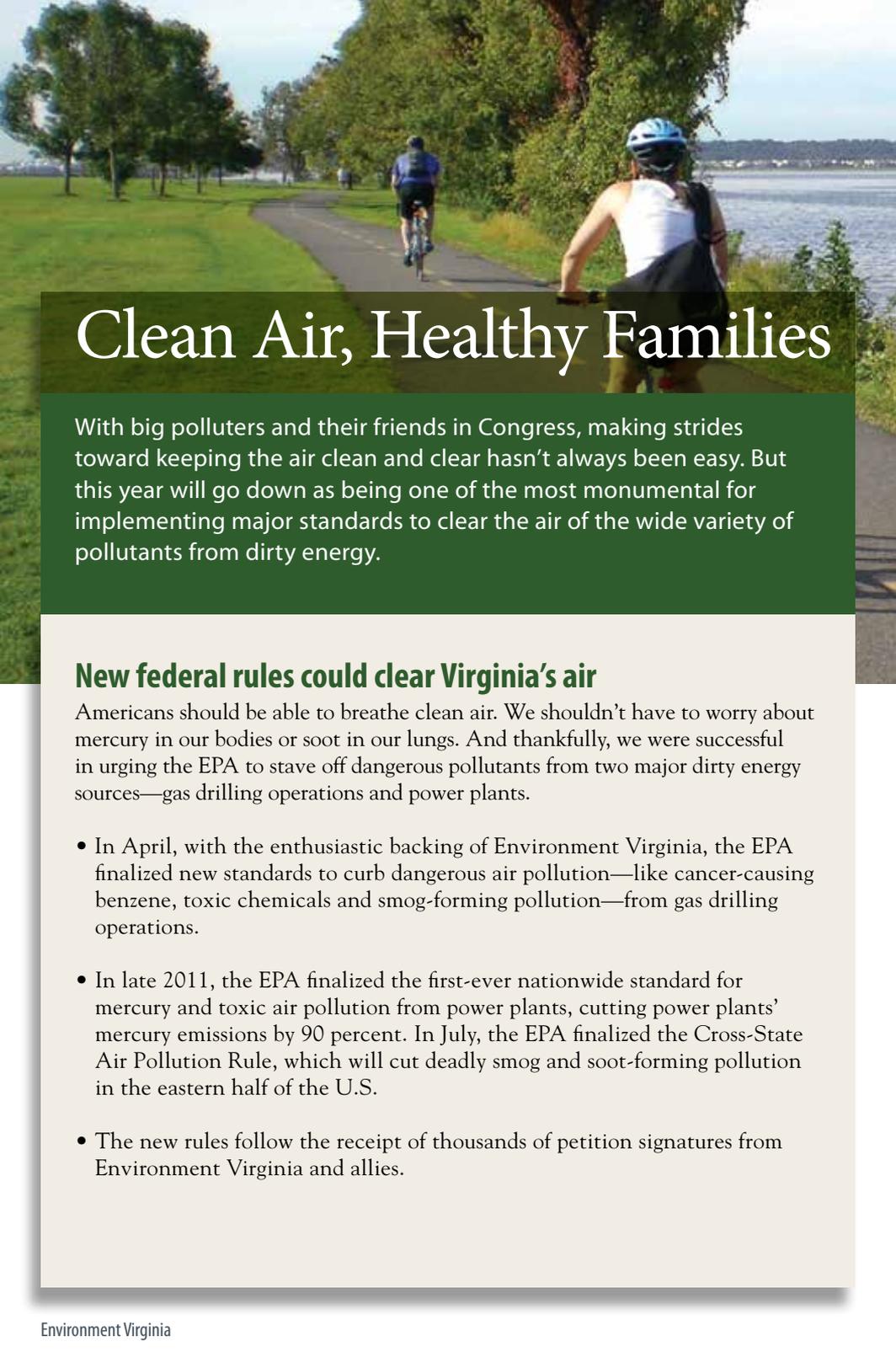
While industrialized monoculture and factory farms dominate contemporary American culture, we stood up to them by speaking to thousands of citizens about why we need a Farm Bill that doesn't put our environment or health in jeopardy.

- The Bill will support larger, local food sales to a number of institutions. The Farm Bill allocates \$20 million in annual mandatory funding—double the present amount.
- An amendment to eliminate the organic cost-share assistance program was defeated. Organic farmers seeking national organic certification can receive help paying the high certification costs.
- Sen. Ron Wyden's Farm-to-School amendment will allow schools across the nation to more easily locate and purchase fresh, local produce.



Farmers' Markets in Alexandria (above) and Burke (below)



A photograph of two cyclists riding on a paved path. The cyclist in the foreground is wearing a white tank top, a blue helmet, and a black bag. The cyclist in the background is wearing a blue shirt and a dark helmet. The path is bordered by green grass and trees on the left, and a body of water on the right. The sky is clear and blue.

Clean Air, Healthy Families

With big polluters and their friends in Congress, making strides toward keeping the air clean and clear hasn't always been easy. But this year will go down as being one of the most monumental for implementing major standards to clear the air of the wide variety of pollutants from dirty energy.

New federal rules could clear Virginia's air

Americans should be able to breathe clean air. We shouldn't have to worry about mercury in our bodies or soot in our lungs. And thankfully, we were successful in urging the EPA to stave off dangerous pollutants from two major dirty energy sources—gas drilling operations and power plants.

- In April, with the enthusiastic backing of Environment Virginia, the EPA finalized new standards to curb dangerous air pollution—like cancer-causing benzene, toxic chemicals and smog-forming pollution—from gas drilling operations.
- In late 2011, the EPA finalized the first-ever nationwide standard for mercury and toxic air pollution from power plants, cutting power plants' mercury emissions by 90 percent. In July, the EPA finalized the Cross-State Air Pollution Rule, which will cut deadly smog and soot-forming pollution in the eastern half of the U.S.
- The new rules follow the receipt of thousands of petition signatures from Environment Virginia and allies.

Two huge moves to reduce carbon

Doctors, nurses and scientists warn that carbon pollution fuels global warming, worsens air quality, and contributes to thousands of asthma attacks, heart attacks and other fatal diseases. Knowing the dangers of carbon to our environment and health, we decided to tackle it from all angles. And ultimately, we were successful in urging for standards for two of the largest sources of this pollution.

- Environment Virginia, our affiliates around the country and a coalition of other environmental groups made history by delivering 3 million comments to the EPA in support of the new carbon standards for power plants. This was the largest number of comments ever submitted to the EPA during a public comment period.
- In August, the Obama administration finalized historic clean car standards that will double the fuel efficiency of today's vehicles by 2025. The standards, which require vehicles to meet a 54.5 miles-per-gallon standard, will cut carbon emissions by 270 million metric tons.



Dominion Power owned Clover Power Station (right) in Halifax County, Va.



Keeping Our Water Clean

Past shortsighted legal decisions have left millions of acres of wetlands and more than half of the nation's rivers and streams vulnerable to development and dumping—putting the drinking water for 117 million people across the country at risk. But in 2012, we fought to make sure that the Clean Water Act stays strong and applies to all our waterways and that toxic uranium mining stays out of Virginia.

Turning the tide against toxic pollution

Virginia and five other states accounted for 40 percent of the total amount of toxic discharges to U.S. waterways in 2012, according to a report released by Environment Virginia in March. After discovering Virginia was ranked second in the nation for toxic discharge into waterways in 2010, we quickly stepped up our support of federal protections to prevent this from continuing.

- The New River saw the most toxic pollution in the state, with over 12 million pounds dumped into its waters. More than 1.1 million pounds were discharged into the James River.
- During 2012, Environment Virginia urged the Obama administration to finalize guidelines and conduct a rulemaking to clarify that the Clean Water Act applies to the 33,778 miles of streams in Virginia. We also fought to finalize protection for 2.3 million Virginians' drinking water for which jurisdiction under the Clean Water Act has been called into question as a result of two polluter-driven Supreme Court decisions in the last decade.
- In 2012, we also continued pressuring the General Assembly not to lift its 30-year moratorium on uranium mining. Should Virginia's leaders lift this ban, rivers, streams and groundwater could be significantly contaminated.

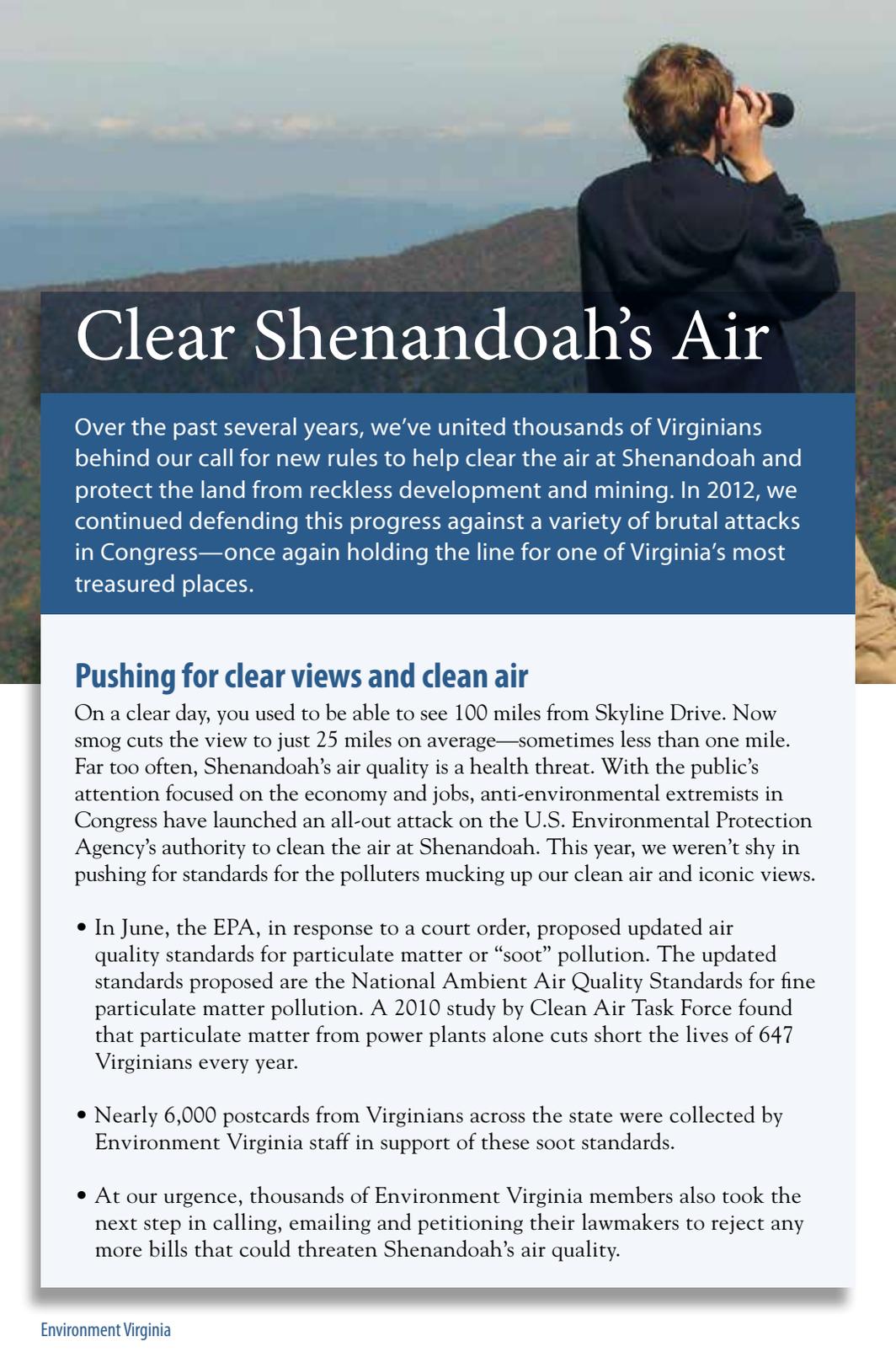
Blocking special interests and dirty water bills

The Chesapeake Bay is the most productive estuary in the world, and it's right in our backyard. Despite its rare importance, the Bay and other critical, state waterways continue to be polluted year after year. And we know who's responsible. Polluter-driven court decisions and special interests are blocking critical protections.

- Long-overdue protections have yet to be finalized, due to partisan politics and polluters like ExxonMobil and Big Agriculture, which in July launched a major campaign to stop the proposed guidelines. These special interests are forming new front groups like the U.S. Farmers & Ranchers Alliance with the intention of striking down all of our critical environmental safeguards, in addition to simply weakening them.
- Despite several attempts to block clean water efforts in Congress, our efforts paid off. Our work demonstrated enough public support this summer to help convince leadership in the Senate to stop one of the dirty water bills from even coming up. In the months to come, we'll continue to block bills that threaten the water that's vital to Virginians and our environment.



At left: Virginia's waterways provide habitat for wildlife such as the great blue heron; Right: Federal Clean Water Advocate Shelley Vinyard releases a report on threats facing our nation's waters.



Clear Shenandoah's Air

Over the past several years, we've united thousands of Virginians behind our call for new rules to help clear the air at Shenandoah and protect the land from reckless development and mining. In 2012, we continued defending this progress against a variety of brutal attacks in Congress—once again holding the line for one of Virginia's most treasured places.

Pushing for clear views and clean air

On a clear day, you used to be able to see 100 miles from Skyline Drive. Now smog cuts the view to just 25 miles on average—sometimes less than one mile. Far too often, Shenandoah's air quality is a health threat. With the public's attention focused on the economy and jobs, anti-environmental extremists in Congress have launched an all-out attack on the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's authority to clean the air at Shenandoah. This year, we weren't shy in pushing for standards for the polluters mucking up our clean air and iconic views.

- In June, the EPA, in response to a court order, proposed updated air quality standards for particulate matter or “soot” pollution. The updated standards proposed are the National Ambient Air Quality Standards for fine particulate matter pollution. A 2010 study by Clean Air Task Force found that particulate matter from power plants alone cuts short the lives of 647 Virginians every year.
- Nearly 6,000 postcards from Virginians across the state were collected by Environment Virginia staff in support of these soot standards.
- At our urgence, thousands of Environment Virginia members also took the next step in calling, emailing and petitioning their lawmakers to reject any more bills that could threaten Shenandoah's air quality.

Don't trash our treasures

This year, three bills moved through Congress that threaten cherished lands—from George Washington National Forest to Shenandoah—with drilling, mining, logging and development. As a strong comeback, we documented and shared the effect these bills would have on our state's natural beauty, our waterways and the air we breathe. This year, we held the line for these special places and simply said: Not in our backyard.

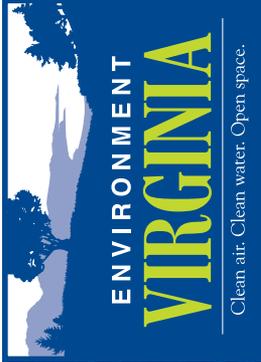
- The three bills moved to: open roadless areas in national forests, leaving some of the nation's most sensitive lands vulnerable to habitat destruction and pollution, permit widespread vehicle access and logging through pristine natural areas, and permit the government to sell 8 percent of federal land to private interests every year.

In the weeks and months ahead, Environment Virginia will be joining with allied environmental groups across the country to shine an even brighter spotlight on these attacks—and protect land that's not only precious to Virginia but to our country.



Left: Bills in Congress would open Shenandoah National Forest to clear cut logging like this in Oregon.
Right: Environment Virginia staff release "Trashing our Treasures" report.

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