

James River



Program Report

A recap of our work in 2014 for our members



To our members

"With your support, we'll keep working to translate our simple formula into positive change in our lives, in the quality of our environment, and in the world we leave to the next generation."



Margie Alt
Executive Director
Environment America

At Environment Virginia, we live by a simple formula: Mobilize grassroots action, build strong and diverse coalitions, and conduct tough-minded advocacy that yields tangible results for our environment and in our lives.

The past year was one full of action and signs of real progress. But we still have work to do to protect our environment and our families.

One of our top priorities this year has been restoring Clean Water Act protections to all our waters. In 2014, we celebrated when the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) proposed a rule to close loopholes in the law that have left the drinking water for 117 million Americans at risk for a decade. But lobbyists for major agribusinesses and their friends in Congress ramped up their efforts against it. We'll keep at it as long as it takes to ensure the Clean Water Act applies to all our waterways.



John Rumppler
Senior Attorney

Of course, nothing is more important than helping solve global warming. This past year, we've focused on limiting carbon pollution from dirty power plants—the nation's number one source of the pollution that leads to climate change. The EPA is on the case as well. But we need to organize more citizens, businesses, and elected officials to counter those who are fighting to block the Obama administration's plan.



Anna Aurilio
Federal Legislative
Director

In the year to come, we'll strive to make a difference on these and other issues. With your support, we'll keep working to translate our simple formula into positive change in our lives, in the quality of our environment, and in the world we leave to future generations. Thank you!

Sarah Bucci
Campaign Director

Margie Alt
Executive Director
Environment America

Go Solar Virginia

2014 was a breakout year for solar in Virginia and across the country. Another home or business goes solar every four minutes, and the rate keeps getting faster. By crafting and promoting strong policies, Environment Virginia has played a role in the clean energy boom and continues to work to defend and expand pro-solar initiatives.

Solar success relies on policy, not sunlight

Nationwide, the amount of solar power tripled between 2011 and 2013—and not because we’re getting more sunshine. In August, Environment Virginia Research & Policy Center released a report on the states driving the solar revolution. The report, “Lighting the Way: The Top Ten States that Helped Drive America’s Solar Energy Boom in 2013,” found:

- Virginia came in at 29 in our list of states with the most installed solar per capita. While we’ve made strong progress in recent years, most of our energy still comes from dirty sources such as coal and oil.
- The states with the most installed solar shared many policies, including net-metering programs, renewable energy standards, and creative financing options for solar.

In June, in response to Environment Virginia and our national federation’s outreach efforts, more than 17,000 people emailed President Obama urging him to put solar on federal buildings.

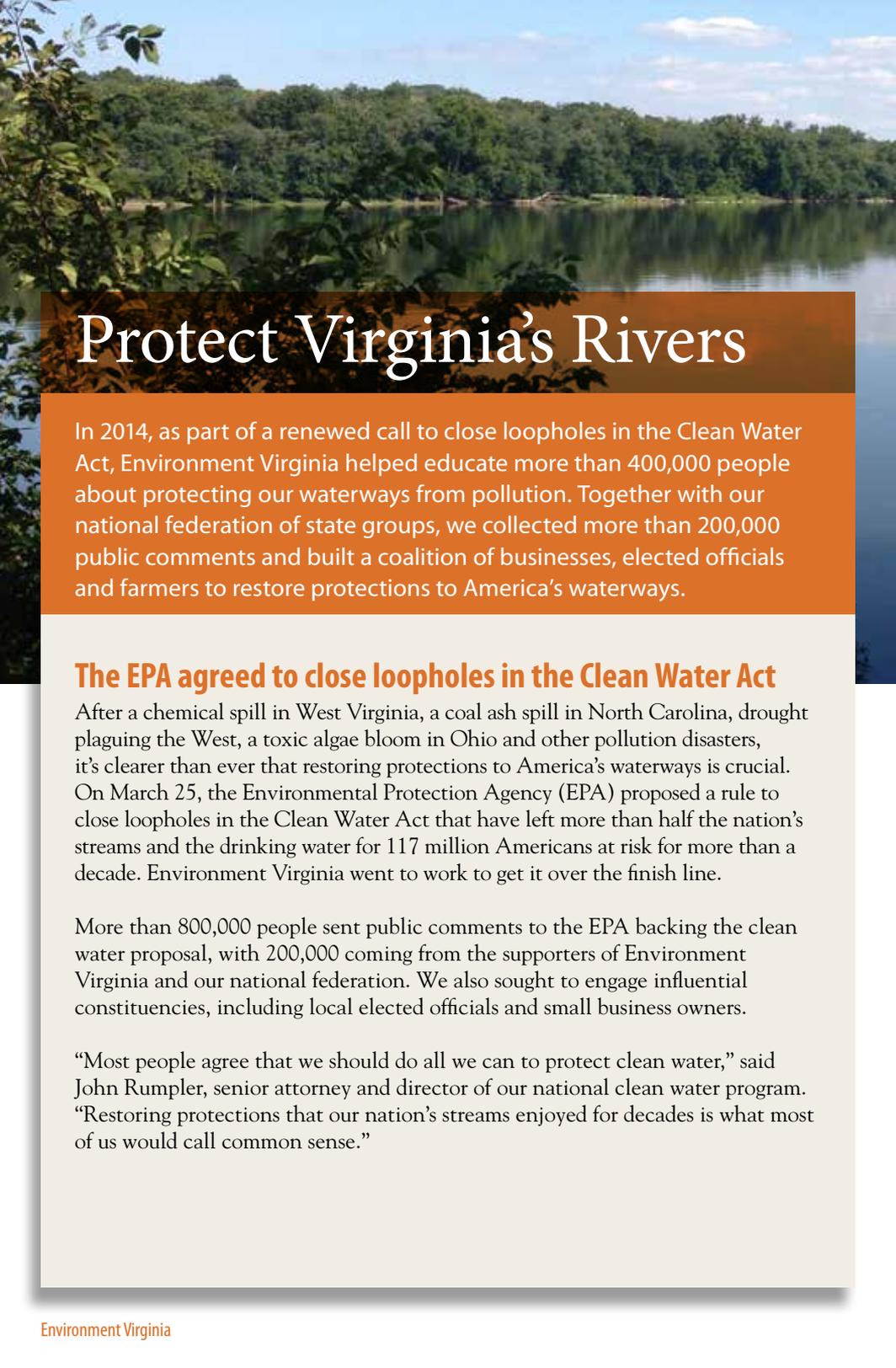
Top 10 States in Solar Electricity Capacity Installed During 2013 per Capita

1. Arizona
2. Hawaii
3. California
4. Massachusetts
5. North Carolina
6. New Jersey
7. New Mexico
8. Vermont
9. Nevada
10. Delaware

Virginia’s Ranking:



#29



Protect Virginia's Rivers

In 2014, as part of a renewed call to close loopholes in the Clean Water Act, Environment Virginia helped educate more than 400,000 people about protecting our waterways from pollution. Together with our national federation of state groups, we collected more than 200,000 public comments and built a coalition of businesses, elected officials and farmers to restore protections to America's waterways.

The EPA agreed to close loopholes in the Clean Water Act

After a chemical spill in West Virginia, a coal ash spill in North Carolina, drought plaguing the West, a toxic algae bloom in Ohio and other pollution disasters, it's clearer than ever that restoring protections to America's waterways is crucial. On March 25, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) proposed a rule to close loopholes in the Clean Water Act that have left more than half the nation's streams and the drinking water for 117 million Americans at risk for more than a decade. Environment Virginia went to work to get it over the finish line.

More than 800,000 people sent public comments to the EPA backing the clean water proposal, with 200,000 coming from the supporters of Environment Virginia and our national federation. We also sought to engage influential constituencies, including local elected officials and small business owners.

"Most people agree that we should do all we can to protect clean water," said John Rumpler, senior attorney and director of our national clean water program. "Restoring protections that our nation's streams enjoyed for decades is what most of us would call common sense."

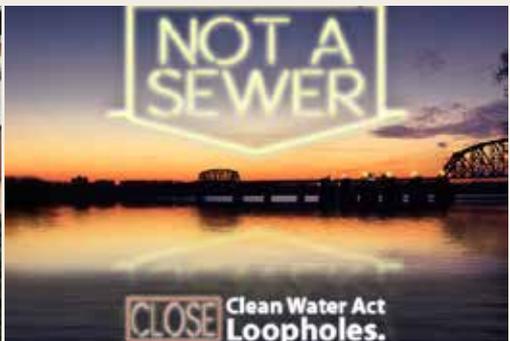


Wild exaggeration, outright falsehoods

On the heels of the EPA's announcement, opposition from polluters intensified. Some agribusinesses launched a "Ditch the Rule" campaign, based in part on wild claims that the EPA was engaged in a massive "land grab" designed to regulate "puddles in driveways." Though often false, these claims successfully convinced some members of Congress to block the EPA. As 2014 drew to a close, Environment Virginia worked to refute the industry's message and show senators who were on the fence that the public wants our country to move forward on clean water, not backward.

11.8 million pounds of toxic chemicals dumped

In 2014, Environment Virginia Research & Policy Center released "Wasting our Waterways," a report underscoring the urgent need for clean water action. Our report revealed that 11.8 million pounds of toxic chemicals were dumped into Virginia's waterways in 2012 alone, highlighting the urgent need to protect our rivers, lakes and streams. The report earned media coverage in more than 160 media outlets.



Left – Across the country, people joined Environment Virginia's efforts to close loopholes in the Clean Water Act.
 Right – Environment Virginia's online outreach efforts helped gather thousands of comments to the EPA.



Global Warming Solutions

Together, we've made hard-won progress in the race to protect our children from global warming. In June, after 6 million Americans urged President Obama to limit carbon pollution from dirty power plants, the Environmental Protection Agency finally proposed a bold Clean Power Plan. Since this historic announcement, Environment Virginia has defended the EPA's plan from attacks by those in Congress who deny the science of climate change, as well as their fossil fuel industry backers.

A groundbreaking step to tackle global warming

On June 2, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) took a historic step in the fight against global warming by proposing the Clean Power Plan. America's power plants are the number one source of the dangerous carbon pollution that is fueling global warming, and cleaning up power plants is the most important step the United States can take to reduce this threat.

Environment Virginia enthusiastically applauded the proposal, would limit, for the first time, carbon pollution from power plants, reducing this pollution by 30 percent below 2005 levels by 2030.

"We're already paying the price for global warming in unusually extreme drought, storms, floods and wildfires," said Anna Aurilio, director of our national global warming program. "If we want to protect our children's future, we need to limit global warming pollution, and the EPA's Clean Power Plan does just that. Limiting global warming pollution from dirty power plants and transitioning to clean, renewable energy are exactly the actions we've been waiting for. Now, we're focused on making sure the proposal is as strong as it can be and polluters don't slow this critical step."



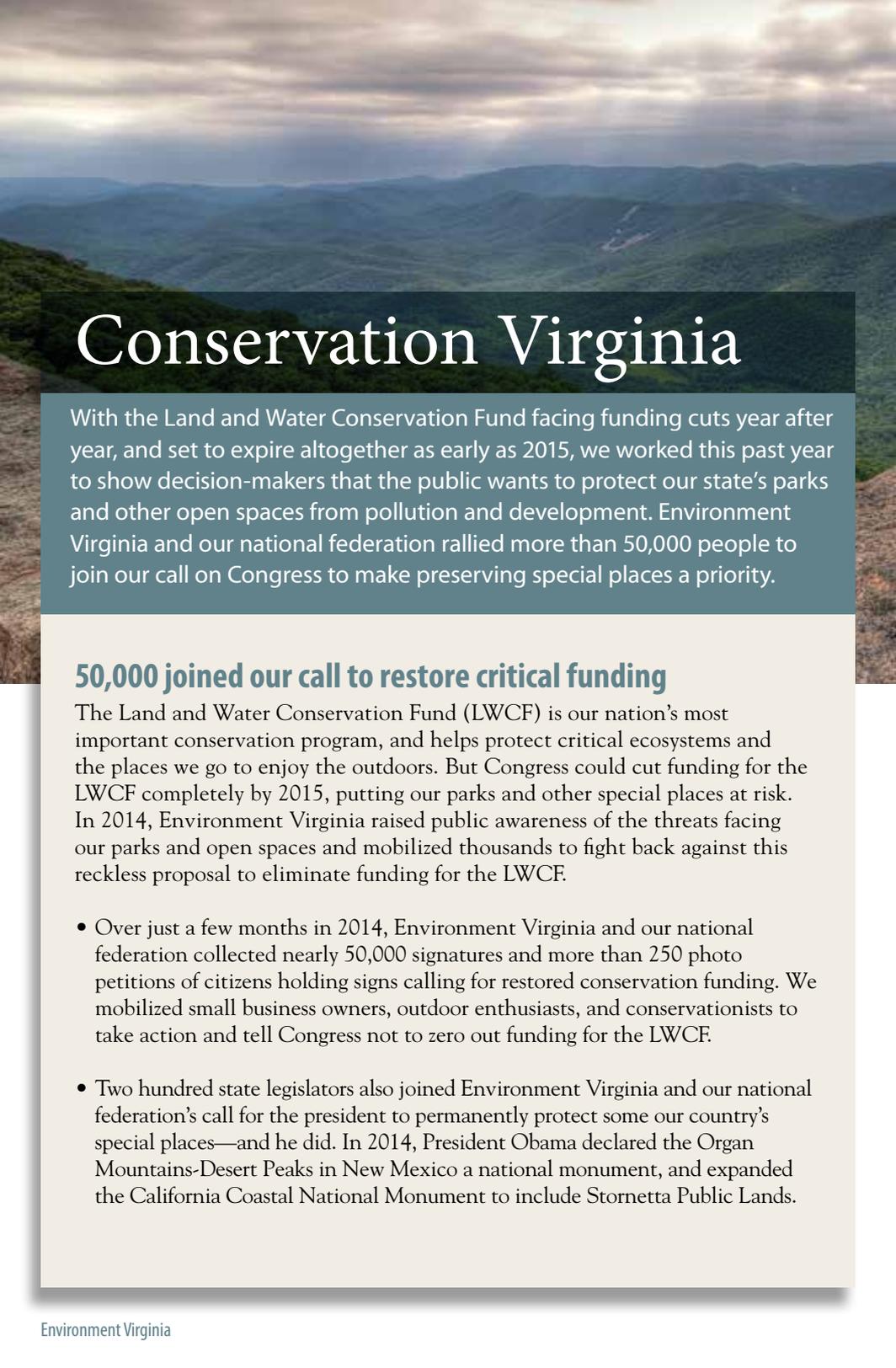
Staff, supporters turned out to back Clean Power Plan

Following the announcement, Environment Virginia's Global Warming Solutions campaign, waged together with our national federation, has been connecting the dots between the consequences of global warming that are already being felt across America and the meaningful impact of the Clean Power Plan.

- In June, the EPA held hearings on the Clean Power Plan in Denver, Pittsburgh, Atlanta and Washington, D.C. Environment Virginia's staff testified and helped turn out citizen climate defenders to show support for the plan.
- During the summer, we also distributed literature making the case for global warming solutions to nearly 1 million households across the country.
- In September, Environment Virginia Research & Policy Center released an update of a report entitled, "America's Dirtiest Power Plants," that found our country's coal-fired power plants produced more carbon pollution than the entire economies of Russia, India, Japan, or any other nation besides China.



Left – Environment America Executive Director Margie Alt (left) testified to the EPA on our behalf, alongside Hal Quinn, President & CEO of the National Mining Association. Right – EPA Administrator Gina McCarthy announced new limits on power plant pollution.



Conservation Virginia

With the Land and Water Conservation Fund facing funding cuts year after year, and set to expire altogether as early as 2015, we worked this past year to show decision-makers that the public wants to protect our state's parks and other open spaces from pollution and development. Environment Virginia and our national federation rallied more than 50,000 people to join our call on Congress to make preserving special places a priority.

50,000 joined our call to restore critical funding

The Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) is our nation's most important conservation program, and helps protect critical ecosystems and the places we go to enjoy the outdoors. But Congress could cut funding for the LWCF completely by 2015, putting our parks and other special places at risk. In 2014, Environment Virginia raised public awareness of the threats facing our parks and open spaces and mobilized thousands to fight back against this reckless proposal to eliminate funding for the LWCF.

- Over just a few months in 2014, Environment Virginia and our national federation collected nearly 50,000 signatures and more than 250 photo petitions of citizens holding signs calling for restored conservation funding. We mobilized small business owners, outdoor enthusiasts, and conservationists to take action and tell Congress not to zero out funding for the LWCF.
- Two hundred state legislators also joined Environment Virginia and our national federation's call for the president to permanently protect some of our country's special places—and he did. In 2014, President Obama declared the Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks in New Mexico a national monument, and expanded the California Coastal National Monument to include Stornetta Public Lands.

Don't Frack the GW

The dirty drilling process known as fracking has boomed across the country, contaminating water, tearing up landscapes, and threatening public health and the environment in its wake. Now the oil and gas industry is looking to frack in the George Washington National Forest. In 2014, we worked to urge our decision-makers to keep fracking out of our national forests for the sake of our environment and our families.

Momentum grew to keep fracking out of the GW

In the past year, Environment Virginia worked to ban fracking in the George Washington National Forest, a beautiful place to hike and enjoy the outdoors—and home to the headwaters of the James and Potomac Rivers, which provide drinking water to more than 4.5 million Virginians. As immediate steps to protect our health and environment from fracking, we worked to close the loopholes that exempt fracking from key provisions of our nation's environmental laws, and urged the president to step in and keep fracking out of our forests and away from our national parks.

- Last winter, Environment Virginia and our national federation collaborated with residents in Pennsylvania to release “Shalefield Stories,” a booklet of accounts of people living on the frontlines of drilling. From flammable tap water, to cancer-causing substances in the air, to severe illness, real people shared their stories and gave life to the alarming numbers that outline fracking's environmental impacts.
- We called on the Obama administration to better protect communities from fracking. More than 1,000 doctors, nurses and other health professionals signed letters to President Obama and other decision-makers verifying that fracking has real consequences for the health of nearby communities.
- In addition, 29,000 activists also joined our efforts to halt attempts by the oil and gas industry to ship toxic fracking waste in barges on our nation's rivers.