

ENVIRONMENT MICHIGAN Your Summer Report

Hope for our wild forests

On Inauguration Day, President Joe Biden wasted no time in taking action, signing 17 executive orders. For those of us who care deeply about our wild forests, one piece in particular got us clapping. Public Lands Campaign Director Len Montgomery explains.

President Biden directed the U.S. Department of Agriculture to immediately review restoring “roadless area” protections for our largest national forest: the vast, old-growth Tongass National Forest in southeast Alaska. It’s the world’s largest intact temperate rainforest, nicknamed “America’s Amazon” for its ancient trees and rich biodiversity.

What are “roadless area” protections? Twenty years ago, the Clinton administration finalized a key rule that protected wild areas in our national forests. Following public comments from 1.6 million Americans (many of which our national network’s advocates helped collect), the regulation, which protected still-wild areas of our national forests from “road construction, road reconstruction and timber harvesting,” safeguarded a whopping 58.5 million acres.

Known as the Roadless Rule, this important conservation tool has ensured that our wildest and most awe-inspiring spaces haven’t suffered from traffic, vehicle noise pollution, or water pollution from vehicle oil and grease. Beyond that, the Roadless Rule protects these acres from industrial timber harvesting, so our forests can grow naturally—allowing different-aged trees to grow near one another and undergrowth to thrive. The larger the roadless area, the more uninterrupted habitat there is for wildlife.

This is particularly important for species that need larger areas



In 2000, our national network’s staff held an event as part of our campaign to secure protections for 58.5 million acres of roadless national forest land.

to roam, such as wolverines and mountain lions. The Roadless Rule has also helped protect prime backcountry recreation land, much to the delight of hikers, climbers, fishing enthusiasts, snowshoers and cross-country skiers.

For people adjacent to these important areas, this protection is priceless. The U.S. Forest Service reported more than 149 million visits to national forests in their fiscal year 2019, and nearly half of all visitors came from within 50 miles of those public lands.

Continued on page 3 ▶

Thanks
for making it
all possible

Whole Foods earned an 'F' on plastic packaging. We're urging it to do better.

Whole Foods touts its commitment to “planet before profits.” But to live up to that claim, it’ll need to deal with its contribution to the plastic pollution crisis.

Right now, it’s not doing enough. A report by the environmental shareholder advocacy group As You Sow gave the grocer an “F” grade for its policies on single-use plastic

percent this year. Over the past decade, wind power generation has tripled and solar generation has grown 30-fold.

“America’s growth in clean energy is primarily the result of states taking action,” said Emma Searson, 100% Renewable Energy campaign director with Environment America Research & Policy Center. “Forward-looking policies designed to tap into each state’s vast renewable resources are creating a virtuous cycle of technological advancements, falling costs and greater deployment.”

According to the report, Michigan ranked among our nation’s renewable energy leaders, with the sixth-most improved electricity efficiency from 2010 to 2019. Environment Michigan will continue to champion progress toward renewable energy victories in our state.

Broken infrastructure is polluting our water. A report shows how to fix that.

The way America does water infrastructure is harming the waters we use for drinking, swimming and fishing, and that we visit with family and friends.

With runoff from roads and parking lots—along with outflow from aging or failing sewage systems—polluting our nation’s waterways and making us sick, our national research partners at Environment America Research & Policy Center published a Dec. 2 report on how we can fix our outdated water infrastructure. It summarizes nearly two dozen case studies on projects that are successfully stopping pollution—from “conventional” upgrades to “green” infrastructure such as rain gardens.

“Investing in water infrastructure works,” said Laura Miller, co-author of the report and clean water advocate with our national network. “Across America, sewage overflows and runoff pollution are threatening our favorite places to swim, paddle and find peace in nature. But when our nation applies the right resources, we can fix these problems.”

From the Kalamazoo River to Lake Superior, our national network is working to protect all of Michigan’s waterways from pollution.

Go paperless! Sign up for our email list at <http://environmentmichigan.org>.

Staff



On Jan. 12, our national research partners at Environment America Research & Policy Center held a virtual press conference launching their campaign to get Whole Foods to move beyond plastic.

packaging. On setting goals to reduce its unnecessary plastic waste, as well as transparency on those efforts, Whole Foods fell behind Target, Kroger and Walmart.

“Our wildlife, oceans and communities are choking on plastics and deserve better,” said Kelsey Lamp, director of our national research partner Environment America Research & Policy Center’s Protect Our Oceans campaign. “We must prioritize wildlife over waste, and we should expect more from a grocer known for its environmental vision.”

Environment Michigan Research & Policy Center is calling on Whole Foods to lead by example by eliminating single-use plastic packaging from store shelves.

Report: Renewable energy is surging across US, Michigan

In 2001, it was predicted that by 2020 America would be generating just 1 percent of our electricity from renewable energies.

Fast forward to the present: According to “Renewables on the Rise 2020,” a report by our national research partners at Environment America Research & Policy Center, we’ve beaten that prediction, reaching 10



Toward a greener future

Support our work to build a cleaner, greener, healthier future by including a gift to Environment Michigan or Environment Michigan Research & Policy Center in your will, trust or retirement accounts.

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



Page 1 story continued: Hope for our wild forests

That means locals' full enjoyment of these natural spaces are, in part, dependent on this rule. Whether you're heading off with fishing poles, hiking gear or a backcountry permit, this regulation means you can truly and fully lose yourself in nature for a couple hours or a few days.

But the full application of the Roadless Rule was put into question in October 2020. The Trump administration finalized a decision that removed these protections from the Tongass National Forest, often called the "crown jewel" of the national forest system.

Now, President Biden has started the process of rectifying that ill-conceived decision. With the president's executive order, the Forest Service will review the previous administration's decision. Assuming that agency decides the rollback was a bad call, it will likely need to begin a new rulemaking process to reinstate the rule.

To avoid the yo-yo effect of one president rescinding and another reinstating protections for wild areas in our national forests, Congress must pass the Roadless Area Conservation Act. Doing so would upgrade the Roadless Rule from an agency regulation into an enshrined law. This would protect it from political winds and ensure that it, along with the Clean Air Act and Clean Water Act, serves as a staple of America's commitment to protecting our health and wild places.

The Roadless Rule has saved wildlife, preserved clean water sources, and provided the stage for thousands of hours of recreation and outdoor endeavors for the last 20 years. We must keep it that way for generations to come.

By Ellen Montgomery, Director, Public Lands Campaign



Kimball Nelson

Thank you for supporting our work to take on the vast environmental challenges we face and to create a greener, healthier, more sustainable world. In these pages, you'll find the stories of the advocacy you made possible.

Your action and support allow us to keep working for a better world. Thank you.

Wendy Wendlandt
Acting Director

In a video our national network released in February, former staff, canvassers and advocates talked about their work on our 2000 campaign to save the Tongass and millions more acres of national forest.



Staff

2531 Jackson Ave., Suite 303
Ann Arbor, MI 48103
(734) 221-3206

Environment Michigan

NON-PROFIT
ORG
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
BROCKTON, MA
PERMIT NO. 430



Your Summer Report

VOLUME 14 | NO. 3 | 2021

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

Environment Michigan calls on Amazon to stop the sale of bee-killing pesticides

To save the bees, we're asking one of the world's biggest retailers to stop selling the pesticides that kill them.

In March, Environment Michigan, along with our national network, kicked off our campaign to call on Amazon to take neonicotinoid pesticides (or "neonics")—the substances most closely linked to a troubling decline in bee populations over the past two decades—off their (virtual)

shelves. Our ask is far from unprecedented: Home Depot and Lowe's have already pledged to phase out the use of neonics on their live plants, and Lowe's has committed to taking the pesticides off its shelves altogether.

"We need to reduce the use of this pesticide that's contributing to the collapse of our most important pollinators," said Malia Libby, Save the Bees campaign associate with our national partner, Environment America. "Amazon should join other retailers in doing the right thing and taking it off its shelves."

Our national network will be gathering petition signatures from thousands of people this summer calling on Amazon to act.

Studies show that dangerous herbicide use plays a significant role in bee die-offs.



Marek Malica via Shutterstock