

Your Fall Report

What's being done to save the bees?

By Steve Blackledge, senior director of our national conservation program

One in 7 Americans now lives in a state that restricts the use of bee-killing pesticides. How did that happen?

Here's a quick look at the progress to date:

States banning bee-killing pesticides

Neonicotinoids (or neonics for short) are a class of pesticides that have been linked to bee die-offs. They're 1,000 times more toxic to bees than DDT, and even sublethal doses cause a lot of damage. These neurotoxic pesticides attack bees' brains, making it harder for them to sleep, forage, fly and even find their way home.

Fortunately, states are recognizing the threat these dangerous pesticides pose to bees, and they're taking action to limit their use and sale. These are the nine states that have already passed laws to that effect: Connecticut and Maryland in 2016; Vermont in 2019; Maine and Massachusetts in 2021; New Jersey, New York and Rhode Island in 2022; and Colorado in 2023.

Thanks to this progress, 1 in 7 Americans now lives in a state with some restriction on bee-killing pesticides.

Next up: Our sister group Environment California is working to build support for a bill currently under consideration in California that would address non-agricultural uses of neonics, such as on lawns, gardens and golf courses. If successful, it would boost that number to 1 in 4 Americans living in a state with a similar such law. And our national network is looking for more opportunities to advance legislation in more states.



Steve Blackledge, senior director of our national conservation program, with our canvassing team on our Save the Bees campaign.

Taking neonics off store shelves

When it comes to maintaining our lawns and gardens, there are plenty of safe products on the market. Too many garden centers, however, still sell pesticides that are harmful to bees.

Conservationists have already helped convince The Home Depot and Lowe's to commit to phasing out the sale of bee-killing neonics for consumer use. Now, we're calling on Amazon, the world's largest online retailer, to do the same.

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Thanks
for making it
all possible

Is your favorite beach safe for swimming?

Even though our water is cleaner than it used to be, runoff pollution and sewage overflows still can make swimmers sick. Scientists estimate 57 million instances of people getting sick each year from swimming in polluted waters in the U.S. Those illnesses can include nausea, diarrhea, ear infections and rashes.

Our research partners at Environment America Research & Policy Center released

NBC News Center Maine



John Rumpler, our national clean water director and senior attorney, spoke with local media about the threat sewage pollution poses to people enjoying popular summer destinations like Gooch's Beach in Kennebunk, Maine.

a new report, "Safe for Swimming?," which revealed that more than half of coastal and Great Lakes beaches surveyed had bacterial levels indicating potentially unsafe levels of fecal contamination on at least one day last year. As part of the report, we created a state-by-state map that allows the public to see which beaches were potentially unsafe for swimming on the greatest number of days last year.

"All of us want to enjoy a safe and healthy day at the beach," said John Rumpler, our national clean water director and senior attorney. "By calling attention to the dangers of water pollution, we can make a strong case for our elected representatives to invest in water infrastructure and stop sewage overflows."

To see if your favorite beach is safe for swimming, visit environmentoregoncenter.org.

Oregon to phase out polystyrene foam foodware by 2025

Our addiction to plastic is responsible for swirling, country-sized gyres of plastic waste in our oceans and overflowing landfills in our country's interior. This pollution is damaging ecosystems, endangering public health and worsening climate change.

The good news is Oregon adopted new laws this summer to phase out polystyrene foam foodware, packing peanuts and coolers and also ban toxic "forever chemicals" known as PFAS in food packaging; and make providing reusable container options easier for restaurants statewide. This new foam foodware ban is set to go into effect in 2025.

For years, we've knocked on doors to build support from Oregonians to help push our state to get rid of some of the most wasteful single-use plastic products that we really don't need. Tens of thousands of Oregonians made their voices heard with elected officials and urged state leaders to take action to put wildlife over waste.

All of this support, combined with the hard work of a big coalition of environmental and public health advocates and stellar legislative champs, made it possible for us to get to this point.

Gov. Kotek signs major clean energy bill package

In recent years, Oregon has become a national leader in the fight against climate change by passing ambitious policies, including setting goals to achieve 100% clean electricity by 2040, making renewable energy and clean transportation options more available and affordable for Oregonians, and more.

This year, the Oregon Legislature has continued to prioritize climate action with the passage of bills collectively known as the "Climate Resilience Package." House Bill 3409 was signed into law by Gov. Tina Kotek on July 27, and House Bill 3630 was signed into law on Aug. 1.

This policy package contains several key policies to help Oregon invest in clean energy, energy efficiency, clean transportation and other strategies to reduce climate pollution.

These policies will also help position Oregon to take the most advantage of the opportunities provided through the Inflation Reduction Act. They will strategically leverage an unprecedented amount of federal funding available for a variety of climate pollution reduction projects, bringing Oregon even closer to our pollution reduction goals.



Toward a greener future

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

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

Get more updates on our work online at <https://environmentoregon.org>.

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Members and supporters like you have helped deliver tens of thousands of messages to Amazon, urging it to take bee-killing pesticides off its virtual shelves.

Winning federal progress for the bees

Major progress is also being made at the national level:

- In 2021, we celebrated when we won protection for bees on 11 million acres of Department of Defense-owned land.
- The Inflation Reduction Act, passed in early 2023 and advocated for by our national network, included nearly \$20 billion in additional funding for the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) conservation programs. We're urging the USDA to use this funding to help pollinators, such as through its program to reimburse farmers for replanting prairie that provides native bees with much-needed habitat.

Now, our network is laying the groundwork for even bigger wins, as we urge the Biden administration to reinstate a ban on the use of bee-killing pesticides in wildlife refuges (the places bees should be safest) and call on the Environmental Protection Agency to restrict three of the most common types of neonics as they undergo a periodic review.

Of course, there's still a long way to go to save the bees. They face a triple threat of pesticide use, habitat loss and climate change. And the policies that have been passed so far have mainly addressed the consumer use of bee-killing pesticides, while still allowing for agricultural use.

Still, no one thought it was possible to ban DDT or any other pesticide until Rachel Carson wrote "Silent Spring" and sparked an environmental movement. Together, we can keep that movement burning bright as we work to win a ban on bee-killing neonics.

Farmers market-goers show their support for saving the bees.



Staff

Featured staff



Staff

Celeste Meiffren-Swango
State Director, Environment
Oregon

As director of Environment Oregon, Celeste develops and runs campaigns to win real results for Oregon's environment. She has worked on issues ranging from preventing plastic pollution, stopping global warming, defending clean water, and protecting our beautiful places. Celeste's organizing has helped to reduce kids' exposure to lead in drinking water at childcare facilities in Oregon, encourage transportation electrification, ban single-use plastic grocery bags, defend our bedrock environmental laws and more. She is also the author of the children's book, *Myrtle the Turtle*, empowering kids to prevent plastic pollution. Celeste lives in Portland, Ore., with her husband and two daughters, where they frequently enjoy the bounty of Oregon's natural beauty.



Environment Oregon and The Public Interest Network are celebrating 50 years of action for a change.

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Your 2023 Fall Report

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 Oregon, Inc., a project of Environment America, Inc. We focus on protecting Oregon'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 Oregon rallies to protect mature forests from logging

Holding signs that read "Save Oregon's Oldest Trees," Environment Oregon and Oregon Wild supporters rallied on June 27 near the Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) regional headquarters in downtown Portland.

Advocates showed their support for protecting mature and old-growth trees and forests on all federal lands by delivering more than 45,000 public comments to BLM on a proposed rule to protect these trees.

"Our forests, especially mature and old-growth forests, are part of what makes Oregon a special place to live," said Environment Oregon State Director Celeste Meiffren-Swango.

"They are a place for us to connect with nature, provide habitat for thousands of species, and are critical allies in the fight against climate change—one that we lose the moment we cut them down."

An estimated 100 million acres of old-growth and mature forests are still standing on public lands, according to an inventory ordered by President Biden on Earth Day 2022.

Whether these mature forests will be left alone to become old-growth, and whether these old-growth forests will be allowed to grow even older, has yet to be decided.

Environment Oregon staff and volunteers rally in support of protecting Oregon's oldest trees.



Staff