

ludischien*



Summer Report

Two parks reopen, but future is uncertain

Effort intensifies to protect state parks

This spring, two state parks held grand re-openings: McFarland State Historic Park and Homolovi Ruins State Park. Two parks are still closed—Oracle and Lyman Lake. Another 14 remain at risk of closure from budget cuts and limited funding.

We're pleased that people will once again be able to visit McFarland and Homolovi Ruins, but Arizona's state leaders need to re-open all our parks permanently and make sure they remain public.

Last year, communities across the state banded together to save their local parks. Many parks that have reopened are operating on band-aid funds that will run out soon, and with the recently passed budget that raided state parks of all funding—\$3.6 million—we could see more closures in the near future.

Force parks to privatize?

Gov. Jan Brewer's panel on privatization and efficiency recommended last fall that we lease our parks to private owners. We continue to oppose this move, as parks should not be "brought to you by Coca-Cola," as the governor's policy advisor on natural resources described it when he met with Environment Arizona Associate Bret Fanshaw.

And yet, in a move opposed by the governor, the state Senate passed a misguided budget in March that required some state parks to privatize. Leasing the most profitable parks that keep many others afloat could have caused the collapse of our state



▲ With 2.3 million visitors each year, our parks bring in \$233 million each year and cost only \$75 million to run.

park system as we know it. Fortunately, the House withdrew this requirement in its version of the budget sent to the governor.

Environment Arizona staff spoke with more than 12,000 Arizonans about the threats to our parks and the need to keep them open and in public hands. We also

worked with state Rep. Russ Jones (Yuma) to introduce the Sustainable State Parks bill, which would fund parks through a nominal vehicle license fee.

Though the bill didn't pass, we are looking ahead to put the issue on the 2012 ballot.



Matthew Straus*

more online

Read the full online version of this newsletter:

www.EnvironmentArizona.org/newsletters/summer11



To our members

Despite the heat (though, as we often try to claim, “it’s a dry 118 degrees”), the summer is my favorite time of year. For many, the summer is a time for vacation, for slowing down a little bit. But that’s not why we at Environment Arizona look forward to the summer.

Things get pretty busy here. We expand our staff dramatically, hiring dozens of college students to help expand our citizen outreach efforts. We’re able to talk to tens of thousands about the pressing environmental issues we face as a state, talking to people on the street, on the phone, at rallies and on doorsteps—possibly yours.

And all this extra mobilization and public education means that decision-makers listen. As a result of previous summer campaigns, we’ve helped set Arizona’s clean energy goal, cut pollution from power plants, protect wild forests and more.

Thanks again,

David Rogers
For Environment Arizona

Recent action

2010 was breakthrough year for solar

In an otherwise lackluster economy the solar industry shined brighter than ever before in 2010, with a 67 percent increase in the amount of solar energy projects installed across America compared to 2009.

That means hundreds of thousands more homes and businesses powered by pollution-free solar energy, an increase made possible by strong solar policies implemented at the urging of Environment America, Environment Arizona’s national federation. In December, Clean Energy Advocate Sean Garren led our charge in Congress to extend critical incentives for solar power, while Environment Arizona worked here in Arizona to advance state-level solar initiatives.

Environment America staff continue to strategize with entrepreneurs within the solar industry to hit a far more ambitious benchmark: getting 10 percent of our nation’s energy from solar by 2030.

President pushes for conservation funding

Margie Alt, the director of our national federation, joined President Obama at the White House in February for the announcement that he’d seek the renewal of the federal Land and Water Conservation Fund.

What’s the Land and Water Conservation Fund? For the past 45 years the federal government has put a fraction of the revenue from offshore drilling into a trust fund to expand national parks, protect hunting and fishing areas, and aid local conservation and recreation projects like city parks and playing fields.

In 2010, the Land and Water Conservation Fund spent money protecting important natural places in Arizona including Leslie Canyon and the Petrified Forest National Park. In February, the House voted to renew funding, and our staff continues to work to help the bill reach the president.

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ThreatenedThoughts

▲ Leslie Canyon.

Defending 40 years of progress on clean air

There's no doubt that the Clean Air Act, which turned 40 in 2010, has improved the health and well-being of millions of Americans. Its protections are credited with saving the lives of 160,000 Americans in 2010 alone.

Of course, air pollution remains a pressing health threat in this country, a stark reminder of the work still left to do. An estimated 13,200 Americans lost their lives as a result of heart attacks, strokes, asthma attacks and other fatal conditions brought on or exacerbated by air pollution from power plants in 2010.

It's estimated that one in six women of childbearing age has enough mercury in her bloodstream (a byproduct of coal power production) to put her child at risk should she become pregnant.

Thankfully, the Obama administration has announced it will seek to strengthen and update portions of the Clean Air Act in the coming months.

Clean air, healthy families

With some vocal opponents of the Clean Air Act throwing their weight around in Congress, Environment Arizona, along with our national federation Environment America, the American Lung Association and other public health organizations are building support to make sure the administration's proposals go through.

In January, we released a hard-hitting examination of one of the most dangerous air pollutants: mercury. That report, "Dirty Energy's Assault on our Health," documented waterways across the country that carry advisories warning against fish consumption due to mercury pollution. According to the report, power plants in Arizona emitted 3,146 pounds of mercury pollution in 2009.

A taste of things to come?

The Obama administration's updates to the Clean Air Act face great uncer-

tainty, with polluting industries and their allies in Congress having launched an all-out assault on the Clean Air Act.

In February, the House of Representatives attached a provision to a federal funding bill that would have blocked the EPA from cutting mercury pollution from cement plants, cleaning up soot pollution, and reducing carbon dioxide from coal-fired plants.

After this setback, our coalition worked to convince dozens of newspapers across the country to editorialize in support of the Clean Air Act, and held rallies outside of the offices of those representatives that voted for the bill.

Less than a month later, the Senate rejected the funding bill, with many senators citing the environmental and public health attacks within the bill as one of the reasons for their opposition.



research

"Dirty Energy's Assault on our Health," a report written in partnership with Environment America, our national federation, found that power plants in Arizona emitted 3,146 pounds of mercury pollution in 2009.

Progress for drinking water threatened

While Environment Arizona made significant progress for our drinking water over the last year, we might need to overcome resistance in Congress before achieving lasting results.

Over the last decade, polluters have used litigation to strip Clean Water Act protections from thousands of streams and millions of acres of wetlands across the country. These waterways not only feed and protect larger waterways like the Colorado and Santa Cruz rivers, but also help provide drinking water for 800,000 Arizonans.

Last fall, when polluters stymied our efforts to fix this loophole in Congress, we urged the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to use its own authority to do so. In response, the agency began drafting formal instructions for its attorneys to apply clean water protections to the fullest extent allowed by law.

Unfortunately, one of the provisions in the first version of the House's funding bill would have specifically blocked the EPA from setting new rules to address this gap in Clean Water Act protections. We spoke out against this dangerous provision. On March 9, the Senate rejected the budget package containing these anti-clean water amendments by a margin of 44-56. There is little doubt polluters will try again, so we'll continue to build support for drinking water protections.



Take action to support the EPA's work to increase drinking water protections:
www.EnvironmentArizona.org

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Environment Arizona

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 Arizona. We focus exclusively on protecting Arizona'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.

Protecting the Grand Canyon

Over the last decade, Canadian and British mining companies have staked over 1,100 claims to mine for uranium within five miles of Grand Canyon National Park. This is a serious threat to one of our most precious and iconic landscapes—not to mention our drinking water supply. Mining for uranium uses toxic chemicals like cyanide that can cause irreversible damage to the Colorado River watershed, which provides drinking water to millions across the West.

In 2009, we helped convince Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar to temporarily withdraw 1 million acres of land adjacent to the park from uranium mining. Those protections end this year, so Environment Arizona once again took up the fight to push Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar for a full 20 years of protections on these lands—the most allowed by law.

Hundreds of you wrote in and attended public meetings. We will continue our work to ensure that Secretary Salazar protects the Grand Canyon.



◀ *Environment Arizona campaign staff at the March public hearing on extending the moratorium on uranium drilling.*

Find out more about what you can do to help protect the Grand Canyon from mining companies on our website: www.EnvironmentArizona.org