

6th Annual

Top Achievements of the Environmental Community in Southern California



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Environment Now®

Action. Results. Change.

Note from Environment Now's Executive Director

Environment Now is proud to present the 6th Annual *Top Achievements of the Environmental Community in Southern California (Top Achievements Report)*. The report highlights the successes of Southern California's nonprofit environmental organizations in 2009. We believe that closely examining the steps that led to success can enable activists to apply these models of change to future environmental challenges.

With the dual goals of creating an objective report and deepening the dialogue between public officials and the academic community, we enlisted distinguished experts in government and academia to serve as selection panelists. In each category, the panelists chose an achievement and a setback. In Land Use, Open Space, and Smart Growth, the panelists found that this year's setbacks far outweighed the achievement and chose to dedicate extra space to those setbacks.

We are pleased that Ken Cook, Co-founder of the Environmental Working Group, agreed to guest author a special section on how nonprofits can better utilize the changing media to achieve their goals.

We are certain you will find the stories highlighted in this year's *Top Achievements Report* as inspiring as we do.

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Environment Now is an activist nonprofit foundation created in Southern California by Frank and Luanne Wells in 1989. Our mission is to be an active leader in creating measurably effective programs to protect and restore California's environment.

In Appreciation

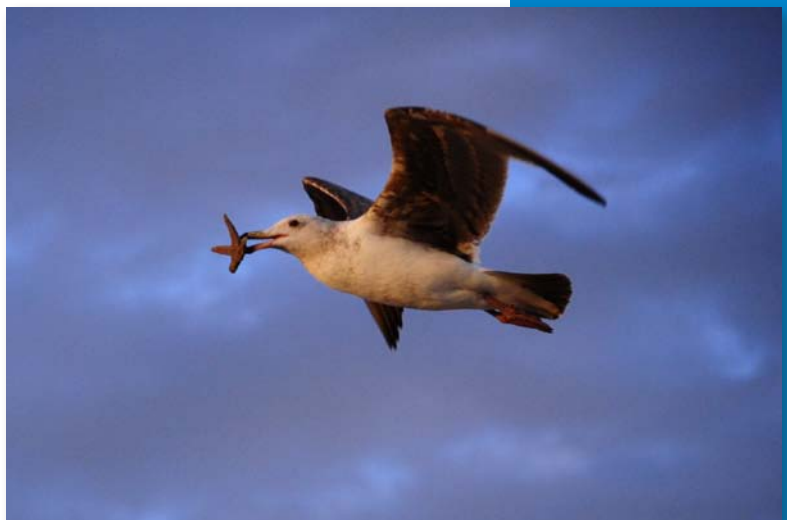
Environment Now sincerely thanks our distinguished selection panelists for providing their time and expertise to this report. We would also like to thank Ken Cook of the Environmental Working Group for highlighting how nonprofits can better utilize new media. Finally, Environment Now thanks The Better World Group for its vital contributions to every aspect of this report.

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Please [click here](#) to send your comments on this year's report.

Photo
courtesy of
[Suzanne Masterson Photography](#)



Air Quality



Photo
Clean Trucks
courtesy of the Port of Los Angeles

Dirty Truck Ban Delivers the Goods Ahead of Schedule

In the policy arena, getting results depends first on adopting the policy, then on implementing it. The Port of Los Angeles Clean Truck Program marked its one year anniversary in 2009 and its implementation is a significant achievement. Up until this point, the Ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach created 84 percent of all diesel emissions in the South Coast Air Basin.

The Achievement

The pre-1989 dirty truck ban of the Port of Los Angeles [Clean Truck Program](#) (CTP) realized tremendous success in improving air quality. Using a schedule based on model year and retrofit completion, the CTP progressively bans polluting trucks from entering the port. On October 1, 2008, all pre-1989 trucks were banned. When compared with 2007 data, the ban resulted in a 70 percent reduction in harmful emissions in the CTP's first year of implementation. Even taking into account the economic downturn, which decreased truck traffic at the port, the improvement in air quality achieved as a result of the truck ban is a significant accomplishment.

The CTP is an important component of the 2006 San Pedro Bay Ports Clean Air Action Plan, celebrated in the [2006 Top Achievements Report](#). This plan seeks to reduce port-related air pollution from trucks, ships, locomotives, and other cargo

Air Quality Panel:

Honorable Hector De La Torre
Assemblymember,
50th District of California

Manuel Pastor, Ph.D.
Director, Program for Environmental
and Regional Equity,
University of Southern California

handling equipment by 45 percent in the next five years. Following the first round of banned trucks, as of January 1, 2010, the CTP banned all 1989–1993 trucks and 1994–2003 trucks that had not been retrofitted. Within two years, all trucks that do not meet the 2007 federal clean truck emissions standards also will be banned from entering the port.

What Made the Difference?

“The turnover of trucks in such magnitude was key,” said Martin Schlageter of the [Coalition for Clean Air](#). The availability of various funding programs and the requirement that older trucks pay a fee led to the faster-than-anticipated turnover rate that made the first year of implementation so successful. The Port of Los Angeles has distributed approximately \$75 million in funding toward the purchase of new, cleaner trucks.

These incentives spurred more than \$500 million in private investments, helping to increase the total number of clean trucks now operating at the Port of Los Angeles to 6,246. “The Port of LA knew they had to leverage some public funds and give the program a jump start,” remarked Patricia Castellanos of the [Coalition for Clean and Safe Ports](#). And in return “they expected businesses to step up and internalize the cost of running cleaner operations instead of putting the burden on the drivers. The port took a bold step to achieve a sustainable solution instead of just throwing money at the problem.”

A strong coalition of stakeholders, spearheaded by the Coalition for Clean and Safe Ports, also led to the successful implementation. “We had a diverse group of environmentalists, community organizations, labor, and health advocates that could not be divided,” said Colleen Callahan of the [American Lung Association in California](#), a member of the coalition. Castellanos echoed this sentiment, “Our coalition was so unique—everyone contributed in their own way and brought their own expertise to the table. It was particularly interesting to have the drivers be part of the coalition and play a role in the solution.”

The Impact

Approximately 17,000 trucks service the Port of Los Angeles, and they are the largest source of diesel particulate matter (PM) at the port. Diesel PM is a toxic air contaminant and is a serious threat to public health, contributing to an estimated 3,500 premature deaths a year in California while increasing asthma attacks and respiratory illness. PM particularly affects neighborhoods that surround ports where the concentration is greatest. “The drivers wanted to see improvements in air quality not just because they are on the front lines but also because they live in the communities that are impacted,” noted Castellanos. The use of clean trucks will reduce an estimated 30 tons of diesel PM emissions per year at the port, which is equal to removing the PM emissions of close to 200,000 cars from local roadways in a year.

The first phase of implementation banned 2,000 of the dirtiest, oldest trucks from entering the port. The fleet of more than 6,200 clean trucks operating at the port today, including about 400 alternative fuel vehicles, moves nearly 70 percent of the cargo. At the current rate of new truck replacement, the CTP truck ban is on track to meet its goal of 80 percent reduction in diesel truck pollution two years ahead of its 2012 target. It is expected that a near-complete conversion to cleaner trucks will occur in early 2010.

“The Port of LA Clean Truck Program is an example of taking issues critical to environmental justice communities and aligning them with the economy, rather than using it as an excuse.”

Manuel Pastor
USC Professor

The program is being threatened by industry lawsuits, but the Port of Los Angeles is taking measures to ensure that essential features are able to move forward in order to sustain cleanup over the long term. The economic and environmental sustainability resulting from other aspects of the CTP remains to be seen.

Leading Organizations Involved:

- ▶ American Lung Association in California
- ▶ Coalition for Clean Air
- ▶ Coalition for Clean and Safe Ports
- ▶ Communities for Clean Ports
- ▶ East Yard Communities for Environmental Justice
- ▶ International Brotherhood of Teamsters
- ▶ Long Beach Alliance for Children with Asthma
- ▶ Los Angeles Alliance for a New Economy
- ▶ Natural Resources Defense Council
- ▶ San Pedro Democratic Club
- ▶ Sierra Club, Harbor Vision Task Force
- ▶ Teachers Association of Long Beach

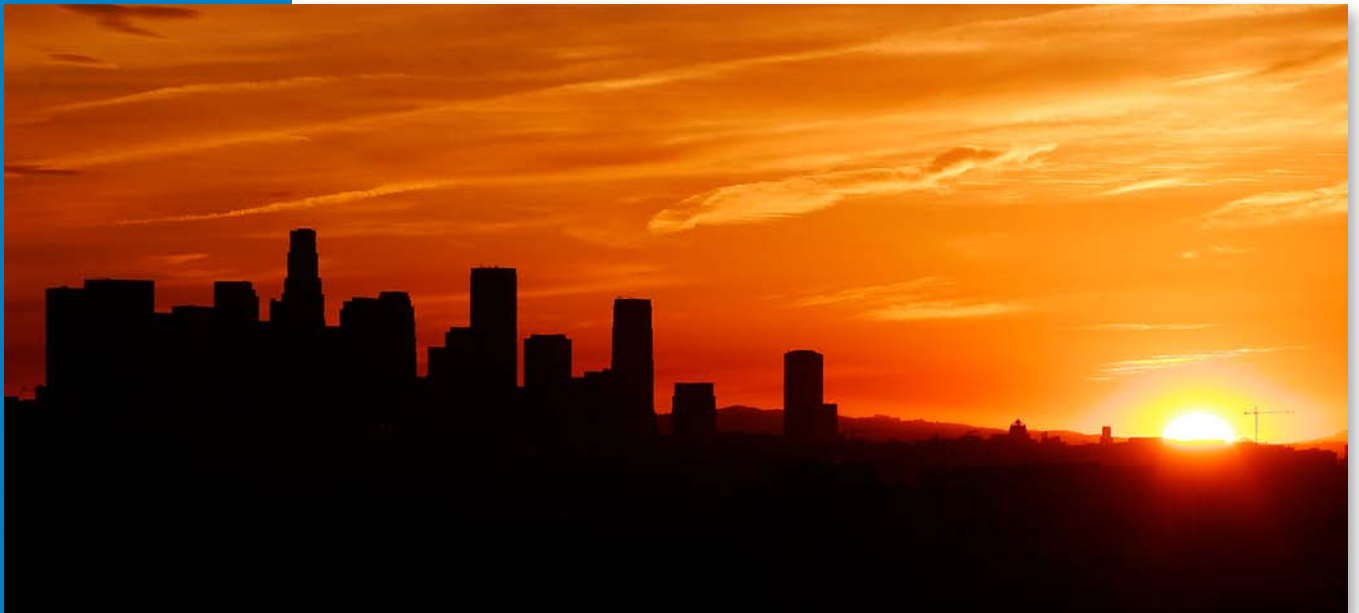


Photo
Los Angeles
[courtesy of Kevin Sharp](#)

Climate and Energy



Old Buildings, New Jobs, Energize Efficiency

California has led the nation in setting efficiency standards for new construction. But these standards will affect no more than 7 percent of all buildings over the next 10 years because three-quarters of California structures were built before the requirements. Since existing buildings use 69 percent of the state's electricity and 37 percent of its total energy, improving their efficiency is critical to reach climate goals. Over the years, attempts to require efficiency improvements in older buildings never succeeded—until 2009.

The Achievement

Assembly Bill 758, authored by Assemblymember Nancy Skinner (D-Berkeley) and Speaker Karen Bass (D-Los Angeles), sponsored by [Global Green USA](#) (GGUSA), and signed by Governor Schwarzenegger in October 2009, requires the California Energy Commission (CEC) to develop a comprehensive energy efficiency program for all existing buildings. The bill requires the CEC to launch its proceedings by March 1, 2010 and develop standards to achieve energy savings in buildings that fall significantly below current California Building Code Standards.

Energy use in buildings is the largest single source of global warming pollution in the United States, accounting for 40 percent of total emissions nationally. Even in California, with its moderate climate and long-standing commitment to energy

Photo
Retrofitting existing buildings
improve energy efficiency

Climate and Energy Panel:

Karen Douglas, J.D.
Chair, California Energy Commission

Ann E. Carlson, J.D.
Professor of Law and Co-director,
Frank G. Wells Environmental Law Clinic,
University of California, Los Angeles

efficiency, buildings account for almost 25 percent of global warming emissions. Yet, no other state has adopted efficiency standards for existing buildings. Given California's history of environmental leadership, AB 758 could become a national model with global impact.

What Made the Difference?

Earlier efforts to enact efficiency measures for existing buildings failed, often due to well organized opposition and little political support. With AB 758, Assemblymember Skinner and GGUSA worked with key stakeholders, including realtors, early in the legislative process.

"The realtors' real issue was requiring the upgrades to be done at the point of sale," explained GGUSA's David Fink. This could have been limiting because, "[b]uildings just don't change hands all that often. We thought there were other mechanisms that could be more effective." The bill was amended to assure that failure to complete retrofit work would not prevent the transfer of a property. If the language had been more prescriptive, it is likely the bill would have failed.

Skinner also recruited building industry representatives to actively support the bill and to be the public face of the advocacy effort. "I knew it would be tough if we had the usual suspects—a roomful of enviros—so we reached out to the building industry," said Skinner. She also credited Speaker Bass for her important contribution. "The Speaker understood not only the tremendous environmental benefits, but also the importance of energy retrofits as an avenue to our economic recovery by providing green jobs, improving property values, and making energy bills more affordable. AB 758 succeeded because it was a team effort from the beginning."

The Impact

California Building Industry Association's Bob Raymer noted that, in 2005, 200,000 new units were built in California. By 2009, that number dropped to 36,000, making it the slowest year for new construction since 1955. The decrease in the number of new houses being built makes improving the energy efficiency of existing buildings all the more important, according to Raymer.

"You can get 5–8 times the bang for the buck in efficiency improvements from a dollar invested into existing stock versus new stock because new homes have gotten so tight in terms of efficiency," said Raymer. "With the existing stock, you can see very measurable results in a short period of time."

AB 758 will not only deliver climate and energy benefits, it will save consumers money. Even renters and small businesses that lease space will save energy and money. Additionally, the measure will create jobs in the hard-hit building industry. GGUSA points out that one in five California workers who lost jobs in the past year came from the construction sector. This means many of the workers needed to retrofit and remodel homes to meet new standards will need little or no training.

Leading Organizations Involved:

- ▶ [Global Green USA](#)
- ▶ [Natural Resource Defense Council](#)
- ▶ [California Building Industry Association](#)
- ▶ [California Business Properties Association](#)

"The number one place to go to improve climate is energy efficiency, and this bill gives us the tools to do that."

Karen Douglas
California Energy
Commission Chair

Climate and Energy Honorable Mention:

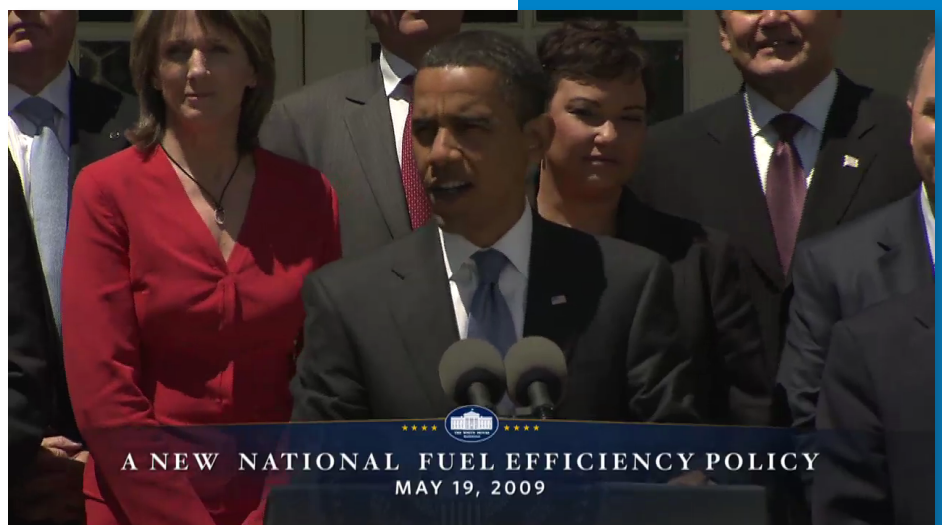
Nation Follows California's Lead, Clean Cars Standards Adopted

In 2002, the so-called Pavley Standards—strong regulations to reduce greenhouse gases from passenger cars—were enacted in California when a bill, sponsored by the [Coalition for Clean Air](#) and the [Bluewater Network](#) (now part of Friends of the Earth) and authored by then freshman Assemblymember Fran Pavley (now Senator), was signed into law. The environmental community rallied to get strong implementing regulations adopted, and eventually to convince another 13 states, the District of Columbia, and even some Canadian provinces to adopt them. Automakers fought the rules in any court that would listen, and appealed decisions all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court. Attorneys from the [Sierra Club](#), [Natural Resources Defense Council](#), and [Environmental Defense Fund](#) joined state lawyers to secure sweeping victories in court. Yet, hopes were dashed late in 2007 when the Bush Administration refused to grant the waiver needed for implementation—the first such denial in the history of the Clean Air Act.

Despite this setback, advocates continued to work behind the scenes to promote the program publicly and pursue legal remedies. Thanks to the advocates' efforts, Obama Administration officials quickly realized the program's value and embraced it as a top priority. Just days after his inauguration, President Obama directed his Environmental Protection Agency to reconsider the waiver denial, and it was granted in June 2009. The ultimate victory came in May 2009, when the president, flanked by environmentalists, automakers, and government officials, announced that the federal government would in fact adopt California's standards. Even automakers agreed to support the adoption and drop all their lawsuits. Today, the Pavley Standards represent the largest single greenhouse gas reduction measure in California's climate plan, and thanks to the determination and vision of the California advocates, people all over the country will be driving cleaner cars soon.

Photo
President Obama announces
national adoption of California standards
courtesy of the White House

[Click on the photo for video.](#)



Coastal Protection



Photo
Ventura County Coastline

Natural Approach Infiltrates Ventura County Stormwater Rules

Pollutants found in stormwater runoff include heavy metals, oil, grease, sediment, fertilizers, pesticides, herbicides, bacteria, and trash. Rain washes these pollutants from streets and storm drains directly into rivers and the ocean without treatment. In the past, municipalities have addressed this problem through public education, fixing drains, and other remedial measures. However, in 2009, Heal the Bay and the Natural Resources Defense Council convinced Ventura County to take one step closer to address the root of the problem.

The Achievement

[Heal the Bay](#) (HTB) and the [Natural Resources Defense Council](#) (NRDC) successfully negotiated with representatives of 12 stakeholders to establish a groundbreaking, enforceable [Ventura County Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System Permit](#). The permit was adopted by the Los Angeles Regional Water Quality Control Board in May 2009. For new and redevelopment projects, the permit shifts attention away from traditional stormwater infrastructure and treatment devices and toward onsite features that replicate natural hydrology.

The permit is the first in California to include aggressive numeric [low-impact development](#) (LID) requirements. It represents a holistic approach to water management by requiring that stormwater not merely be treated, but instead

Coastal Protection Panel:

Esther Sanchez, J.D.
California Coastal Commission

Gail Osherenko, J.D.
Marine Science Institute,
University of California, Santa Barbara

be retained onsite through infiltration, evapotranspiration, or harvest and reuse. The permit also sets a precedent by including enforceable numeric targets and waste load allocations that will help Ventura County to meet federal standards for total maximum daily loads (TMDLs). Some previous permits included specific TMDLs, but this permit marks the first time that all TMDLs for an entire county can be enforced through one permit. Moreover, by including performance-based standards for best management practices, the permit will demand the use of the most effective stormwater cleanup techniques.

The 10-hour May meeting of the regional board, in which the permit was adopted, was difficult for all stakeholders. In the end, the board showed courage by going against the recommendation of its staff and adopting the language environmentalists and local governments had agreed upon. The permit commits cities and the county to adopt unprecedented levels of stormwater control.

What made the Difference?

“It took courage on the part of the environmental groups, public agencies, and the regional board to adopt the most stringent standards ever imposed on stormwater runoff,” noted Rick Cole, Ventura City Manager. “But it also took a dose of common sense to find a fair and cost-effective way of achieving clean water goals.” Commitment and timing were important in coming to an agreement, but cost was also a consideration. “HTB and NRDC were superb in their willingness to make sure they achieved their goals while recognizing the public’s concern for costs,” noted Mike Sedell, Simi Valley City Manager.

As dozens of federal TMDL deadlines loomed, attitudes at the regional board began to favor a stronger permit. After the first draft was released for comments in 2006, HTB and NRDC met with the Ventura County public works director and the city managers of Ventura, Simi Valley, and Oxnard. Everyone had a common goal: clean water. How to get there was the subject of negotiations. The stakeholders held regular meetings to work through the second, third, and fourth drafts of the permit. “There were dozens of sticking points but we talked through them and came to the board hand in hand,” said Kirsten James of HTB. The majority of negotiation time was devoted to LID provisions, percent of water to be maintained on site, infill development standards, monitoring, costs, flow controls, and numeric affluent limits.

The Impact

Stormwater is the largest source of water pollution in California. It threatens human health, ecosystem functions, biological diversity, recreation, economic activity, and general community well being. “This permit will have a tremendous impact on protecting Ventura County’s watershed and coastal resources,” said Mark Gold of HTB. “It is a model for future stormwater controls for California and the nation.”

“The inclusion of numeric LID requirements is the most significant aspect of the permit,” noted David Beckman of NRDC. Not only will LID control runoff, but it also addresses drought, enhances local water supply and quality, mitigates the effects of climate change, and provides more green space. Moreover, LID is the most cost-effective solution to achieve compliance of TMDLs. Under the permit, 95 percent of potential runoff from new and redevelopment projects in Ventura County must be captured and recycled. If developers cannot meet performance

“It took courage on the part of the environmental groups, public agencies, and regional board to adopt the most stringent standards on stormwater runoff ever imposed.”

**Rick Cole
Ventura County Manager**



Photo
Beach Advisory, courtesy of
Suzanne Masterson Photography

standards, they must mitigate the effect offsite. The permit also states, “[i]f funding from state and federal sources is not available for beach water quality monitoring, the Principal Permittee shall conduct weekly year-round...sampling and analysis” for the ten most sensitive beaches in Southern California, including Rincon, Oil Piers, and Oxnard beaches.

The Ventura County permit sets a new high bar for stormwater requirements and enforceability. Now, implementation must live up to the spirit of the agreement. To that end, Wishtoyo Foundation’s Ventura Coastkeeper Program redesigned its [Watershed Monitoring Program](#) to

monitor both urban stormwater outfalls and receiving waters to ensure compliance.

Since the Ventura County permit adoption, several municipalities, including north and south Orange County and the City of San Francisco, have passed their own versions of the LID provision. In 2010, San Bernardino and Riverside counties are scheduled to adopt similar provisions.

Building industry representatives appealed the permit’s LID provision to the State Water Resources Control Board. The board will likely take up the appeal and issue a decision in 2010.

Leading Environmental Groups Involved:

- ▶ [Natural Resources Defense Council](#)
- ▶ [Heal the Bay](#)

Honorable Mention:

Santa Monica Baykeeper Forces the City of LA to Reduce Sewage Spills

In 1998, [Santa Monica Baykeeper](#) filed suit over the City of Los Angeles’ 20,000 violations of the Clean Water Act. The city averaged two sewage spills a day and failed to report, clean up, or stop the spills. The [six-year legal battle](#) came to an end in 2004 when the parties settled. The city agreed to replace at least 488 miles of sewer lines, clean 2,800 miles of sewers every year, and increase the capacity of the system. The city also was required to spend \$8.5 million on restoration projects to improve water quality in Los Angeles. In 2009, the city was ahead of the implementation schedule and [reported a 77 percent reduction in sewage spills](#) since the case was initiated. “The results of this achievement are pretty significant and affect many underserved communities,” commented Coastal Commissioner Esther Sanchez.

Forest Protection



Lawsuits Increase Protections for Southern California National Forests

Two lawsuits brought by a coalition of environmental groups successfully challenged inadequate environmental protections in the new management plans for the four national forests of Southern California: Angeles, Cleveland, Los Padres, and San Bernardino.

The Achievement

On June 8, 2009, U.S. District Court Judge Marilyn Patel [ruled in favor](#) of five environmental groups in their lawsuit challenging the adequacy of the “biological opinions” that are supposed to assess the effects of new management plans on endangered species living in the Southern California national forests. Then, on September 29, 2009, in response to a [separate lawsuit filed](#) by a larger coalition of environmental groups, Judge Patel overturned significant parts of these new management plans, highlighting that the plans inadequately evaluate impacts of zoning many roadless areas in the four forests for resource extraction and development. Both rulings set the stage for improved environmental protection of Southern California’s national forests.

As *Top Achievements Report* panelist U.S. Rep. Lois Capps (D, CA-23) summarized, “Our national forests are a source of great regional pride, and as a result of these lawsuits, Southern Californians will get forest plans that reflect and fulfill that pride.”

Photo
San Bernardino Mountains
courtesy of Monica Bond

Forest Protection Panel:

Honorable Lois Capps
United States Representative,
23rd District of California

Dennis Odion, Ph.D.
Institute of Computation Earth
Systems Science, University of California,
Santa Barbara

What Made the Difference?

This achievement is a tribute to the perseverance of the environmental groups involved. Their campaign began in 1998 when the [Center for Biological Diversity](#) filed a lawsuit challenging the adequacy of the U.S. Forest Service's management plans for the four Southern California national forests. Under the resulting settlement, the Forest Service agreed to rewrite the plans to better address the needs of the endangered species living in these forests. From 2001 to 2004, the Center and other environmental groups participated in the management planning process, and together they produced a proposal describing ways that the [Forest Service could better protect the four forests](#). However, the new plans that the agency eventually produced in 2005 fell far short of those goals.

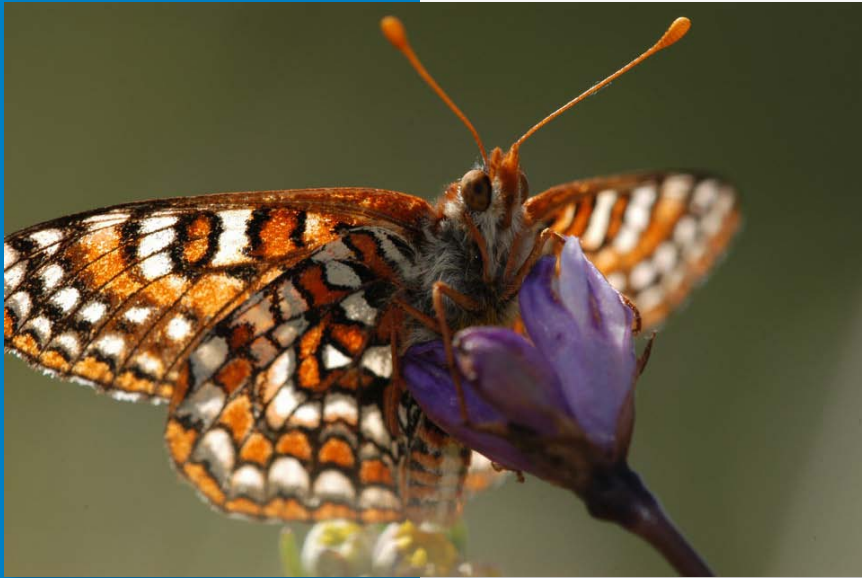


Photo
Quino checkerspot butterfly
courtesy of Douglas Aguillard

Meanwhile, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Marine Fisheries Service were required to produce “biological opinions” evaluating the effects of the revised forest plans on endangered species. Although the biological opinions acknowledged that the new plans would harm many endangered species living in these forests, the agencies failed to assess the actual impact of the plans or establish limits on how much harm these plans could cause. The Center, in coalition with four other environmental groups, filed a lawsuit challenging the adequacy of these biological opinions. These groups were joined by another three environmental organizations in

a separate lawsuit against the new management plans for the Southern California national forests. Ultimately, both of the suits prevailed in 2009—more than a decade after this campaign first started.

“The secret to our success is persistence,” said Brendan Cummings of the Center. “In light of these rulings, the Forest Service should realize that we are going to keep holding their feet to the fire until they follow the law.”

The Impact

The Angeles, Cleveland, Los Padres, and San Bernardino national forests encompass more than 3.5 million acres of land. They were first established to provide sources of clean drinking water for Southern California. They have become beloved places for outdoor recreation, with more than eight million visitors per year. And as these national forests have become surrounded by increasing urban development, they have become essential refuges for imperiled species of animals and plants.

There are more than 70 threatened and endangered species found in the Southern California national forests, including the [California condor](#), the [Peninsular bighorn sheep](#), and the [Quino checkerspot butterfly](#). The environmentalists' victory in the biological opinion case is prompting federal agencies to establish better standards for protecting imperiled wildlife.

“The secret to our success is persistence.”

Brendan Cummings, Center for Biological Diversity

“National forests provide some of the biggest remaining chunks of wildlife habitat in Southern California,” said Jeff Kuyper of [Los Padres ForestWatch](#), a plaintiff in that case. “For too long, federal land management agencies have emphasized development and resource extraction, exacting a heavy toll on our region’s wildlife. This ruling recognizes the important role that our national forests play in the survival and recovery of endangered plants and animals, giving them the attention they so desperately deserve.”

The four Southern California national forests also contain 974,000 acres of rare roadless lands, but the Forest Service’s management plans would have opened the door to road-building and development on more than 942,000 acres of these lands. Judge Patel cited the potential impact on roadless areas as a primary factor in her [decision to overturn the new plans](#).

Top Achievements Report panelist Dennis Odion, Ph.D. noted that “our roadless areas are intact remnants of disproportionately valuable habitat where ecological integrity remains best protected. This case is important to preventing these remaining, intact habitats from being degraded.”

Both cases have now entered the remedy phase in which the Forest Service is expected to prepare improved plans that comply with the law and provide better protection for the Southern California national forests. This remedy phase should be completed during 2010.

Leading Environmental Groups Involved:

- ▶ [Center for Biological Diversity](#) (both cases)
- ▶ [Los Padres ForestWatch](#) (both cases)
- ▶ [Sierra Club](#) (both cases)
- ▶ [Defenders of Wildlife](#) (both cases)
- ▶ [California Native Plant Society](#) (both cases)
- ▶ [Earthjustice](#) (second case)
- ▶ [California Wilderness Coalition](#) (second case)
- ▶ [The Wilderness Society](#) (second case)



Photo
San Bernardino National Forest
courtesy of Monica Bond

Freshwater Protection and Restoration



Photo

New River contaminated with non-biodegradable detergent from the Zaragoza Treatment Plant, courtesy of Calexico New River Committee

!Apesta! New River Cleanup Tackles Environmental Injustice

When the Colorado River flooded its banks in 1906, it carved a valley for the New River across the desert region of the California-Mexico border. The New River flows north nearly 75 miles from Baja California through the border cities of Mexicali and Calexico and helps form California's Salton Sea. Over the last century, farming and development on both sides of the border have contributed to unimaginable pollution of the New River, which water quality officials described as "[the most severely polluted river of its size in the United States](#)" in a 1998 report.

The Achievement

The New River and its community have endured years of neglect and contamination, causing their health and quality of life to decline. After a decade of organizing, political leaders are heeding the calls of this underserved community. Because of the community's efforts, in October 2009, Assemblymember V. Manuel Perez (D-Coachella), an Imperial County native, [secured an \\$800,000 matching state grant](#) to clean up the New River. The Perez law matches the \$4 million federal appropriation secured by U.S. Rep. Bob Filner (D, CA-51) in 2005.

Freshwater Protection and Restoration Panel:

Martha Davis

Executive Manager for Policy Development, Inland Empire Utility District

Sean B. Hecht, J.D.

Executive Director, Frank G. Wells Environmental Law Clinic, UCLA

The campaign started in 2008, when the [Comité Civico del Valle](#) hosted the first regional environmental health leadership summit. There the [Alliance for a Better Community](#) was formed with environmental and social justice activists, public health officials, and community economic development organizers. The Alliance used the research of the [City of Calexico New River Committee](#) to urge passage of Perez’s Law, Assembly Bill 1079. The law requires the [Cal-Mexico Border Relations Council](#), which includes the state secretaries of the Environmental Protection Agency, the Resources Agency, the Health and Human Services Agency, and others, to work with the activists to devise a strategic plan to finally clean up the New River.

What Made the Difference?

Ten years of civic leadership and grassroots organizing made the cleanup plan possible. In 1999, a consortium of irrigation district directors, county and city officials, and Indian tribes formed the Calexico New River Committee (CNRC) to restore a healthy and safe environment. CNRC assessed the impacts of the fast-growing region and approached institutions and agencies for support.

First, CNRC identified the sources of pollution alongside the river: generations of farmers growing alfalfa and vegetables across 500,000 acres, populations growing to more than 150,000 in Calexico and a million in Mexicali, as well as numerous maquiladoras (factories) to employ the workforces. These factors led to high concentrations of contaminants from fertilizers, pesticides, sewage, and trash.

Then in 2005, CNRC, with the University of California, Riverside, [conducted a survey](#) to assess the New River’s health impacts on Calexico’s residents. Seventy percent of respondents reported runny noses or itchy eyes; 40 percent reported chronic coughing, headache, nausea, wheezing, nosebleeds, skin irritation, or asthma; and 70 percent stated that the stench of the river affected their daily lives. The odor is so foul that residents are forced to keep their windows shut—even when temperatures reach 120 degrees—to avoid nausea and sickness. Ema Rosa Silva, a community organizer with CNRC, explained that her grandchildren do not want to visit because “*apesta*” (it stinks).

CNRC’s efforts over the past 10 years encouraged the Colorado River Basin Regional Water Quality Control Board to regulate polluted runoff more rigorously. In 2000, the board began to publicly monitor and control local polluters. The agency issued 23 discharge permits to municipal wastewater and geothermal facilities, irrigation districts, and a corrections department. Over the decade, these facilities violated their permits nearly 800 times. The board also conducted water quality tests, which yielded signs of the following contaminants:

1. Volatile organic compounds, including atrazine and toluene
2. Bacteria, including threats of pathogens like tuberculosis and typhoid
3. Heavy metals, including arsenic and mercury

The Impact

After suffering for years from pollution and poor land-use decisions, Calexico residents—who do not want to or are not financially able to move to a healthier environment—will finally see the New River cleaned up. With funding in place, over the next two years community and state leaders will embark on a clear path to improve water quality and public health.

“I applaud these types of community partnerships that help our most vulnerable populations. The New River is one of the most polluted rivers in the country and it will take a collaborative effort to thoroughly clean up.”

Linda Adams,
Secretary for California
Environmental Protection

The Cal-Mexico Border Relations Council and the Alliance for a Better Environment will take the following actions pursuant to their strategic cleanup plan:

1. Quantify the water quality impairments and threat to public health
2. Prioritize actions for public health, river water quality objectives, and flows to the Salton Sea
3. Identify funds for implementation
4. Select lead agencies to implement the cleanup efforts

“Cleaning the Salton Sea’s tributary waters will help address some of these regions’ ongoing environmental challenges,” noted UCLA environmental law professor Sean Hecht. The plan will help relieve the contaminants’ respiratory, epidermal, and digestive effects on the New River community. Moreover, as the Salton Sea becomes dewatered, the plan will reduce the toxic dust blowing from the dry lake bed.

Leading Groups Involved:

- ▶ [City of Calexico New River Committee](#)
- ▶ [Comité Civico del Valle](#)
- ▶ Seeley United
- ▶ [Imperial Valley Asthma Coalition](#)
- ▶ Institute for Socioeconomic Justice
- ▶ [Clean Air Initiative](#)
- ▶ [Environmental Justice Coalition for Water](#)



Photo

Warning sign on the New River
courtesy of the Calexico
New River Committee

Land Use, Open Space, and Smart Growth



For the first time ever, our expert Land Use, Smart Growth, and Open Space panelists found that this year the top setbacks outweighed the top achievement in this category. Panelists preferred to use the majority of the publication space, typically dedicated to the achievement, to instead draw attention to two setbacks that were especially noteworthy. The top achievement for this category is honored first.

Achievement

Mid County Parkway Halved; Homes and Habitat Spared

A large coalition, led by the [San Geronio Chapter of the Sierra Club](#), [San Bernardino Valley Audubon Society](#), and [Center for Biological Diversity](#), joined by the [Endangered Habitats League](#), blocked the most harmful portion—the western route—of the proposed [Mid County Parkway](#) in Riverside County. The highway would have affected sensitive habitat conservation areas and existing homes for 32 miles between the cities of San Jacinto and Corona. However, in July the Riverside County Transportation Commission noted the 3,100 comments received and voted to withdraw plans for most of the western route. The eastern portion is still proceeding and Cajalco Road is proposed to be widened to alleviate traffic congestion between Corona and Interstate 215. The coalition will continue to monitor the project to ensure that environmental impacts are mitigated.

Photo

Tejon Ranch
courtesy of Ilene Anderson

Land Use, Open Space and Smart Growth Panel:

Richard Katz
Board of Directors, Los Angeles County
Metropolitan Transportation Authority

Michael Woo
Dean, College of Environmental Design,
Cal Poly Pomona

Land Use, Open Space, and Smart Growth Setback

Tejon, where the wild things were... Kern County Approves Sprawl



Photo
Tejon Ranch
courtesy of Erin Hickey

Photo
Peninsular Bighorn Sheep
courtesy of Steve Elkins

As proposed, Tejon Mountain Village would be a community of 3,450 new houses, golf courses, commercial sites, hotels, and recreational facilities located on over 26,000 acres approximately 60 miles north of Los Angeles, just off Interstate 5. Tejon Mountain Village will be part of Tejon Ranch, which at 270,000 acres is the largest contiguous tract of private land in California and home to an impressive array of wildlife and natural scenery. Despite public interest groups' objections, the Kern County Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors approved the project's environmental review documents. "The approvals are embarrassing," commented Richard Katz of the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation

Authority. "It's a massive habitat setback."

Tejon Mountain Village is the worst kind of leapfrog sprawl development—disconnected from existing infrastructure and jobs. It would be completely dependent on automobiles, adding to traffic, further polluting two of the country's worst air districts, and further exacerbating the global warming crisis. The project's expectation of [nonexistent water](#) from the State Water Project will burden all of California while further depriving the San Joaquin River Delta ecosystem of much-needed freshwater. Tejon Ranch Company has ignored [Native American concerns](#) and proposes to pave over sacred cultural sites. To make matters worse, the project would destroy some of the most critical foraging habitat left for the endangered [California condor](#).



The [Center for Biological Diversity](#), [Center on Race, Poverty, and the Environment](#), [TriCounty Watchdogs](#), and the [Wishtoyo Foundation](#) filed a California Environmental Quality Act lawsuit to overturn the county's approvals. The environmental review documents for a second proposed development on Tejon Ranch, Centennial—the largest development ever proposed in California—is expected to be released in the first half of 2010. As proposed, Centennial

would be a community of 23,000 new houses and 14 million square feet of commercial development.

Land Use, Open Space, and Smart Growth Setback

CEQA Sacked, NFL Stadium Catches a Pass

In October 2009, the proposed National Football League (NFL) stadium and adjacent 3 million-square-foot entertainment and retail complex in the City of Industry was escorted past the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) through the passage of [Assembly Bill 81 x3](#), authored by Isadore Hall (D-Compton). Introduced only 48 hours before the final day of the session, the bill exempts the proposed 75,000-seat stadium from environmental review and from pending and future CEQA lawsuits. Before the bill's passage, a local activist group that had filed suit against the project, Citizens for Community Preservation Inc., refused to settle its case; they believed that updating the environmental review documents was a reasonable request because the original analysis was for a shopping center, not a stadium.

Proponents claimed the project would provide 18,000 jobs, gaining support from labor unions. Yet, professional sports stadiums [do not bolster local economies](#), and an [economic analysis](#) found that this stadium would produce only part-time and low-wage positions. Governor Schwarzenegger [touts the project](#) for cutting red tape and boosting California's economy: however, a healthy environment and laws to protect it create the foundation for a strong economy and job creation.

Never before has a private project of this magnitude been specifically exempt from CEQA. "This setback epitomizes everything wrong with the Legislature today," summarized Katz, CEQA is California's best tool for fundamental environmental protection. It enables decision makers to understand the consequences of proposed projects and allows the public to participate in the planning process. More importantly, it requires that all reasonably feasible mitigation of adverse effects be imposed.

Circumventing the state's environmental laws blurs the separation of power between the Legislature and the judicial system. The result will likely be poor planning and significant environmental impacts. "This type of exemption could undermine CEQA, AB 32, SB 375, and other environmental protections," noted Doug Carstens, a prominent CEQA attorney. It has already set a disturbing precedent: in January 2010, the Governor proposed more than [100 new projects](#) to be exempt from CEQA.

Photo

Protest near the site of proposed stadium courtesy of Citizens Against the Stadium



Environmental Setbacks and Failures of 2009

In addition to the two Land Use, Open Space, and Smart Growth failures highlighted on the previous page, each of the other *Top Achievements Report* panels selected setbacks for 2009. They had lively discussions on the California Air Resources Board's adoption of forestry protocols that could allow carbon offset credits for clear-cutting, and the Legislature's failure to get widespread adoption of solar panels, discourage home-building in fire-prone areas, or pass bills to reduce marine debris. However, in the end, panelists chose the following setbacks; many will need attention in the coming years.

Air Quality

Rollback of Heavy-Duty Vehicle Diesel Rules



Photo
Off-Road Diesel Equipment

The Legislature and the California Air Resources Board cited the budget crisis and the sluggish economy as the rationale for rolling back the off-road diesel rule and for considering amendments to the on-road diesel truck/bus rule, which was celebrated as last year's [top air quality achievement](#). Numerous [studies](#) have established diesel soot as a public health threat, so these rollbacks, which delay implementation for certain fleets, will increase exposure to toxic air pollution—particularly for Californians in underserved communities. Rolling back these rules will cost lives, clean air attainment, and potentially federal transportation funding.

Climate and Energy

Time to Renew Support for Renewable Energy

California's officials continue to proclaim their support for ambitious renewable programs, but 2009 was a year when many of the challenges to actually implementing such programs took center stage. A great deal of time was invested in developing and passing legislation to require the state's largest utilities to acquire 33 percent of their electricity from renewable sources by 2020. Most acknowledged that the final bill was not perfect, but environmental advocates still were disheartened when the governor vetoed it. When Schwarzenegger then announced an executive order to implement the 33 percent goal, legislators questioned his authority to do so, claiming that only a statutory requirement would hold utilities' feet to the fire.



Photo
Wind turbines, courtesy of [Bonnie Flamer](#)

Additionally, transmission lines needed to bring renewable energy from the desert to urban areas touched off local opposition, and some proposed projects triggered concerns about land and species protection. Financing for projects also came under strain from the stress of the credit crunch and regulatory uncertainty.

Coastal Protection

\$350 Million Subsidy Approved for Private Desalination

In November, Metropolitan Water District approved a \$250 per acre-foot subsidy for water from Poseidon Resource's proposed Carlsbad desalination plant. Despite the claim that it will be "**developed at no expense to the region's taxpayers,**" ratepayers will pay as much as **\$350 million over 25 years** for this subsidy. Poseidon has also requested that the state allow it to sell **\$530 million in tax-exempt bonds** to pay for construction, costing the public an estimated \$159 million more and bringing the grand total public subsidy for the project above \$500 million. The company also claims a "**zero-carbon footprint,**" yet ocean desalination is known to be one of the most energy intensive ways to provide freshwater.



Photo
Protest Before MWD Hearing, courtesy of [Art Sweatman](#)

Responsible water desalination technology may be part of the answer to long-term water shortages, but only after the cheaper, proven methods of conservation and reuse have maximized their potential. By relying on antiquated once-through cooling, false claims, political clout, and public money, Poseidon could set a dangerous precedent for California.

Forest Protection

Supreme Court Ruling Reduces Public Oversight of National Forest Management

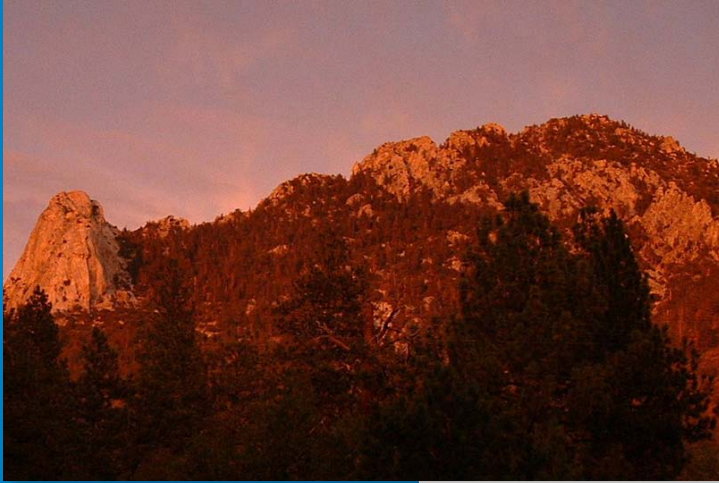


Photo
Mount San Jacinto
courtesy of Daniel Patterson

On March 3, 2009, the [U.S. Supreme Court](#) ruled against environmentalists in the case of [Summers v. Earth Island Institute](#). This case began as a lawsuit against a logging project in the Sierra Nevada, but ultimately challenged nationwide Bush-era regulations that curtailed the ability of the public to comment on and appeal activities on national forests that are done under a categorical exclusion from environmental review. While lower courts had determined that the new regulations were illegal, the Supreme Court ruled that plaintiffs did not have legal standing to challenge those regulations, thus voiding the lower courts' ruling and reinstating the regulations.

Freshwater Protection

Nonprofit Organizations Walk on Thin Ice During Bond Freeze



Photo
Los Angeles River, San Gabriel
Watershed, courtesy of Robert Wells

Governor Schwarzenegger [halted hundreds of land and water conservation and pollution prevention projects](#) by freezing \$42 billion in bond fund disbursements as 2009 got underway. Nonprofit organizations were hit hard by the freeze. A survey conducted by the [Planning and Conservation League](#) and the [Los Angeles and San Gabriel Rivers Watershed Council](#) found that 25 percent of organizations were forced to lay off up to four employees each and 6 percent were forced to shut down entirely. Additionally, nearly 20 percent of organizations were forced to suspend up to 10 contracts. Despite the state's inability to disburse funds from past bonds, the governor demanded that legislators pass a [new water bond for \\$11 billion](#).

New Media and the Environment

Contributed by Ken Cook, Co-founder, Environmental Working Group



Once upon a time when my colleagues and I at Environmental Working Group (EWG) needed to publicize one of our trademark research reports, we would go over to the National Press Club and unveil it to a room packed with reporters, many of whom had experience in the topic. Our stories would air that night or run in the papers the following morning.

I'm not saying it was easy, but we worked hard and invested heavily in an aggressive media operation that forged strong connections to journalists.

News in the 21st Century

That system doesn't work anymore. If you plan a traditional press conference today, you'd better pack the room with interns and supporters because you'll likely be selling your wares to empty chairs.

Plummeting advertising revenues and an explosion of alternative online information sources have dramatically reduced the ranks of reporters through layoffs and buyouts. Beats have been eliminated or combined, daily news cycles have emulsified into an ambient churn of infotainment, and investigative journalists have become an exotic species. Reporters have a fraction of the time they used to have and many are just freelancers without a deep grounding in any subject.

The Internet news cycle has put an end to late afternoon/early evening deadlines. Today, it's all about eyeballs—readers on the web. Reporters must post their stories between 10 a.m. and 3 p.m., when the eyeball count peaks. After 4 p.m.—forget about it.

Here's how we at EWG have adjusted to the disruption in media. It may be instructive for your organization.

Deliver Your Own News

Deliver Your Own News

Five years ago, we concluded we had to communicate about our work not just by mass media but also by *amassing* media. People now acquire news and information through a multitude of new, instant, increasingly popular (if ephemeral) channels, virtually all of them online—and online increasingly means “on the mobile device.” Among the new paths to reach an audience are social media—[Twitter](#), [Facebook](#), [Digg](#), and RSS Feeds.

Content is still king

Content is still king. We publish a steady stream of unique material and disseminate it along multiple tracks. We headline our web page with detailed research reports aimed at journalists, experts, and policy makers. We also offer a fast, smart read to people scanning the news via their browsers. More of our content will be available as feeds to mobile devices in 2010.

It's Google's world

It's Google's world. EWG has become much smarter about using “keywords” to attract web browsers to our online content. The vast majority of people find information through searching. We've made it easier for them to find us by threading search terms most people use through our content.

We discuss the issues we care about where the people are. For example, [The Huffington Post](#) gets more traffic than our site (and most others), so we write regular comments for [HuffPost's Green channel](#).

EWG's online trove of reports, searchable databases, and consumer tips has always drawn significant traffic to our web properties. We put much more emphasis now on building its direct audience.

In 2009, 8.4 million “absolute unique” visitors came to our sites and they viewed just under 100 million pages. Our email subscriber list is on track to top 1 million people in 2010. These folks are intensely engaged in the issues on our agenda. We operate three online blogs: our award-winning [Enviroblog](#), a new food and agriculture blog called [AgMag](#), and a blog on toxic chemicals policy reform called [Kid-Safe](#).

The Pitch is Still Key

The Pitch is Still Key

Pitch every niche.

Pitch every niche. Our press team pitches major reports in advance of the publication date, not just to mainstream media journalists, but also to blogs and online publications.

Start early.

Start early. It's crucial to give those interested in covering our research advance time.

Take prospective coverage seriously.

Take prospective coverage seriously. We have great respect for the online community of citizen journalists, commentators, and activists. Though often unpaid, these writers have produced some of the most thoughtful and consistent coverage of—and feedback on—our work.

Late last year, *The Huffington Post* nominated ten environmental advocates from around the world for the title of “[Ultimate Green Game Changer](#)” and asked its readers to vote. HuffPost selected the candidates based solely on their ability to harness “the power of the new media to reshape their fields and change the world.”

I am honored to have won. The credit really goes to my creative, tireless staff. The win has inspired us all to try to be even nimbler and more inventive online, all to advance the public interest.



Ken Cook
President and Co-founder, Environmental Working Group

Biographies of Selection Panelists

Air Quality

Honorable Hector De La Torre

Assemblymember, 50th District of California

Hector De La Torre represents the 50th Assembly District, which includes communities in southeast Los Angeles County. He chairs the Assembly Accountability and Administrative Review Committee to ensure efficient government and identify savings in government programs. De La Torre has worked to enhance the quality of life in his district by ensuring funding to build new parks, investing in local infrastructure, attracting economic development, and improving the delivery and quality of healthcare services.



Manuel Pastor, Ph.D.

Director, Program for Environmental and Regional Equity, University of Southern California

Manuel Pastor is professor of Geography as well as American Studies and Ethnicity at the University of Southern California. Pastor currently directs the Program for Environmental and Regional Equity at USC and is co-director, with Dowell Myers, of USC's Center for the Study of Immigrant Integration. Pastor's research has generally focused on issues of environmental justice, regional inclusion, and the economic and social conditions facing low-income urban communities. Pastor is currently working on environmental justice projects such as Environmental Justice and Climate Change, the Cumulative Impacts Screening Method, and Air Pollution and the Environment.



Climate and Energy

Karen Douglas, J.D.

Chair, California Energy Commission

Karen Douglas was appointed to the CEC in 2008 and became chair in 2009. From 2005 until her appointment, she served as director of the California Climate Initiative at the Environmental Defense Fund. Prior to that, she spent four years at the Planning and Conservation League as the natural resources director, general counsel, and most recently, as acting executive director. Commissioner Douglas has worked on a wide range of California natural resource and environmental protection issues, including the Imperial Irrigation District/San Diego water transfer, forest policy, and CEQA.



Ann E. Carlson, J.D.

Professor of Law and Co-director, Frank G. Wells Environmental Law Clinic, University of California, Los Angeles

Ann Carlson is the Shirley Shapiro Chair in Environmental Law and the inaugural faculty director of the Emmett Center on Climate Change and the Environment at UCLA School of Law. She is one of the country's leading scholars on climate change law and policy, and is a frequent commentator, blogger, and speaker on environmental issues. She currently serves as a panelist for the National Academies of Science on America's Climate Choices: Limiting the Magnitude of Future Climate Change and is co-author (with Daniel Farber and Jody Freeman) of Environmental Law (7th Ed.).



Coastal Protection

Esther Sanchez, J.D.

California Coastal Commission Councilmember, City of Oceanside

Esther Sanchez is part of a five-generation Oceanside family, with a B.A. in Urban Studies from Brown University and J.D. from Hastings College of Law. A community activist, she worked as a deputy public defender for 20 years and now has her own law practice. Sanchez has been on the Oceanside City Council since 2000. Committed to the preservation of our coastal resources, she was appointed to the California Coastal Commission by Assembly Speaker Karen Bass in August 2009.



Gail Osherenko, J.D.

Marine Science Institute University of California, Santa Barbara

Gail Osherenko is a project scientist in law and policy at the Marine Science Institute of the University of California, Santa Barbara. She teaches courses in coastal and ocean law and policy in the Bren School of Environmental Science and Management. Her research focuses on property rights and sea tenure, the role of marine spatial planning and ocean zoning, and the effectiveness of the California coastal management regime. She chairs the board of the Environmental Defense Center in Santa Barbara. She also makes documentary films, most recently [Dark Side of the Loon](#).



Forest Protection



Honorable Lois Capps
U.S. Representative, 23rd District

Lois Capps served as the representative of California's 22nd District from 1998 to 2002. Since 2003, Capps has served as the representative of the 23rd District, which includes portions of San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara, and Ventura counties. Capps is committed to helping people through better schools, quality health care, and a cleaner environment. She is a respected leader on issues of public health, energy, and the environment. She also serves on the Energy and Commerce Committee and the Natural Resources Committee.



Dennis Odion, Ph.D.
*Institute of Computation Earth Systems Science
University of California, Santa Barbara*

Dennis Odion is an ecologist and researcher with the Institute of Computation Earth Systems Science, University of California, Santa Barbara, and the Department of Environmental Studies at Southern Oregon University. He investigates patterns of wildfire severity and the response of vegetation as well as disturbance and species diversity relationships. He has published a variety of papers on this subject, ranging from the establishment of local patterns in chaparral after fire to the landscape patterns of conifer forests that have burned in the Sierra Nevada and Klamath regions.

Freshwater Protection and Restoration



Martha Davis
Executive Manager for Policy Development, Inland Empire Utility District

Martha Davis oversees the Planning and Water Resources Department at the Inland Empire Utilities Agency (IEUA), a municipal water district serving 800,000 people in the western portion of San Bernardino County. IEUA provides regional sewage treatment services, distributes imported water and recycled water supplies, and provides other utility services for the Chino Basin. Martha also is co-chair of the CalFed Watershed Subcommittee, a member of the CALFED Bay Delta Public Advisory Committee, co-chair of the State Watershed Council, and chair of the Association of California Water Agencies' Energy Committee. Previously, Davis served as the executive director for the Mono Lake Committee.



Sean B. Hecht, J.D.
*Co-director, Frank G. Wells Environmental Law Clinic
University of California, Los Angeles*

Sean B. Hecht is the executive director of the UCLA Environmental Law Center at UCLA School of Law. Through his teaching, law practice, and research, he works on many environmental **issues**, including water quality, environmental analysis of government decisions, alternative energy development, and institutional responses to climate change. He has served as a convener and facilitator for various governmental and multi-stakeholder meetings and conferences. He currently serves on a state expert advisory committee on oil and gas platform decommissioning.

Land Use, Open Space, and Smart Growth



Richard Katz
Board of Directors, Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority

Richard Katz was first elected to the California State Assembly in 1980 and served continuously for 16 years—ten as chair of the Assembly Transportation Committee. He authored Proposition 111, a 10-year transportation blueprint, which raised more money for mass transit and highways than any other effort in the history of California. He created the Congestion Management Plan, which requires cities and counties to mitigate impacts of land use decisions on their streets, highways, and transit systems. In June 2005, Los Angeles Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa appointed Katz to serve on the Governing Board of the Metropolitan Transportation Authority.



Michael Woo
Dean, College of Environmental Design, Cal Poly Pomona

Michael Woo is dean of the College of Environmental Design at Cal Poly Pomona, the only public university in the Los Angeles area combining undergraduate and graduate programs in architecture, landscape architecture, urban and regional planning, and art. He was previously a member of the Los Angeles City Council representing Hollywood and surrounding neighborhoods, and was the first trained urban planner and the first Asian American elected to the city's governing body. For the last five years, Woo has been a mayoral appointee to the Los Angeles City Planning Commission.

Methodology

Environment Now launched the process by sending out a survey to almost 600 Southern California environmental organizations requesting nominations for the top achievements and setbacks of 2009. Through a series of discussions, panelists evaluated the nominations with the intent to choose a single top achievement and setback for each category. However, this year panelists for both the Climate and Energy and Coastal Protection categories felt that an additional project deserved an honorable mention for success. In addition, the Land Use, Open Space, and Smart Growth panel could not decide between two important setbacks, and chose both to be highlighted.

In this report, Southern California is defined as all of Ventura, Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Diego, and Imperial counties as well as portions of Santa Barbara, Kern, and San Bernardino counties (south of “the Grapevine”).

Category Definitions

In all categories, panelists considered statewide projects if significant effects were seen in Southern California. Environmental justice and education projects were also eligible.

- ▶ **Air Quality:** Panelists considered achievements that reduced Southern California’s six common “criteria” air pollutants, including air toxins, from stationary or mobile sources. Panelists also considered studies of human health effects that produced quantifiable results and studies that examined disproportionate social or regional impacts of air pollution. Eligible achievements were limited to those that affect outdoor air quality.
- ▶ **Climate and Energy:** Panelists considered achievements that addressed transportation, energy generation or use, greenhouse gas emissions, and climate change. Eligible projects included studies of energy conservation, fuel efficiency, renewable energy, alternative fuels, clean or energy-efficient technologies, trip reduction, and transit.
- ▶ **Coastal Protection:** Panelists considered achievements that had a direct effect on Southern California’s coastal ecosystem. Eligible projects addressed restoration, protection, water quality, biodiversity, ecosystem functionality, habitat, and preservation of coasts and wetlands. Projects on islands off the coast of Southern California were also eligible.
- ▶ **Forest Protection:** Panelists considered achievements that reformed logging practices or prevented harmful practices such as over-grazing or poor development. Panelists also considered projects that addressed restoration and species protection in both public and private forests. Eligible projects included those in the Sierra Nevada and other regions of the state because healthy forests are critical to Southern California’s water supply.
- ▶ **Freshwater Protection and Restoration:** Panelists considered achievements that addressed contamination, runoff, mitigation measures and technologies, conservation, groundwater recharge, and protection and restoration of inland waterways and habitats.
- ▶ **Land Use, Smart Growth, and Open Space:** Panelists considered achievements that improved sustainability by preserving sensitive open spaces, wildlands, and wildlife corridors. Also considered were projects that created or improved urban parks, improved efficiency of human development patterns and land use, or reduced urban sprawl.

Environmental nonprofit organizations must have led or been actively involved in each achievement. Eight criteria were used to evaluate the nominations:

- ▶ Significant and Measurable Environmental Improvement
- ▶ Permanent Change
- ▶ Precedent-setting
- ▶ Collaborative Effort
- ▶ Impact or Potential Impact Beyond Southern California
- ▶ Innovative Approach
- ▶ Environmental Justice Issues Addressed
- ▶ Occurred During 2009



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In memory of Luke Cole

*“Two types of power exist: the power
of money and the power of people.”*