



Arizona Legislative Updates



**Sierra Club Releases 2021 Environmental Report Card
A Bad Session for Democracy, Water, Climate, and more**



SIERRA CLUB

GRAND CANYON

2021 Environmental Report Card for Arizona Legislature and Governor



July 20, 2021

July 23, 2021

Sierra Club released its 2021 Environmental Report Card for the Arizona Legislature and Governor earlier this week. The report card reflects a strong partisan break on environmental protection and democracy issues. There was continued inaction on the climate crisis and the associated water challenges our state faces. All bills to address climate resiliency, limit groundwater exploitation or sustain flowing rivers were stopped without a hearing by the gatekeepers and chairs of the House and Senate Natural Resources, Energy, and Water Committees, Representative Gail Griffin (R-14) and Senator Sine Kerr (R-13). House Speaker Rusty Bowers and Senate President Fann who assign these bills to the committees where the bills languish also showed no leadership on these important issues.

Sadly, the GOP majority was not satisfied with inaction, and actively passed numerous harmful environmental bills, including limiting the consideration of new hydrological

information for assured water supplies for development, a weak water quality program that fails to protect the majority of Arizona rivers and streams, a bill to protect large concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFOs) from legal challenges by neighbors, and a measure to deregulate plastics by allowing these facilities to engage in such activities as making plastics into fuel without being regulated as solid waste facilities.

Read the Report Card

“This legislative session was not only one of the longest sessions, it was one of the worst for environmental protection and for democracy measures,” said Sandy Bahr, chapter director for Sierra Club’s Grand Canyon Chapter. “Now it will be much more difficult to hold a factory farm accountable for harm to their neighbors, properly regulate plastics processes that convert plastics to fuels, further limit groundwater pumping, or protect water quality in our rivers, streams, and desert washes.”

The Fiscal Year 2022 budget was also loaded up with harmful policies, including a massive tax cut for the wealthiest Arizonans that will hurt our state in tough times; a new border wall fund to further vilify migrants and promote racist policies; \$200 million for water projects that include ways to import out of state water, potentially including from the Mississippi River; and a plethora of bad policies on elections. Republican legislators made blatantly partisan moves limiting the power of the Secretary of State through the end of her term, creating a committee to review the partisan assessment of the 2020 Maricopa County election, and giving outside entities authority to review the voter rolls, among many other anti-democratic actions.

“This session was characterized by attacks on the foundations of direct and representative democracy,” said Bahr. “The majority limited early voting by establishing an Election Day deadline to confirm ballots with those who forgot to sign their early ballot, created an early voter purge program and eliminated the Permanent Early Voting List (PEVL), and referred two measures to make it more difficult to put measures on the ballot and to blow a hole in the Voter Protection Act provisions in the Arizona Constitution. On these last two, we are optimistic the voters will say ‘no’ when they are on the ballot in 2022.”

There were a couple of small positive actions, including funding \$5 million for the State Parks Heritage Fund and \$250,000 for the Arizona Trail, and substantial funding for the Water Quality Assurance Revolving Fund to help clean up contaminated sites. The Legislature also passed an air quality bill to jump start the voluntary vehicle repair and retrofit program to help those with limited means to get their cars running cleaner.

This year’s report card reflects the strong partisan divide with all Republicans, including Governor Doug Ducey, earning a failing grade. Most of the Democratic caucus earned an “A” or an “A+.” The Governor was graded on 10 bills, the Senate on votes on 16 pieces of legislation, and the House on 18 Third or Final Read votes.

View the report in English [here](#) and in Spanish [here](#).

[You can see the list of bills we tracked this session here.](#)

Thank you!



Sandy Bahr
Chapter Director
Sierra Club - Grand Canyon Chapter

