



SIERRA  
CLUB

SPRING 2021

# IMPACT REPORT

Four years ago, we were presented with one of the biggest challenges in our history. We had to find a way to resist a toxic, racist, divisive president and continue to make meaningful progress on climate change. We fought the Trump administration on every front, and staved off staggering attacks on clean air, water, wildlife, and public lands.

But we never took our eyes off the 2020 Election. We knew that on November 3, we had to ensure an end to the Trump era. We left everything on the field: Throughout the summer and fall, through Sierra Club Independent Action, our political team recruited 35,000 volunteers, who made more than 5.5 million phone calls to voters in battleground states. It was the largest political mobilization in our organization's history. Our staff and volunteers worked around the clock organizing phone banks, writing letters, sending texts, and recruiting activists. Their work paid off. Immediately following inauguration, President Biden issued a series of executive orders that demonstrate a sincere commitment to environmental justice and climate action. Some of the boldest goals among these orders reflect conversations we had with President Biden and his staff leading up to the election.

Now it's time to deliver. The president's executive orders will in many cases hinge on the ability of states to pass strong climate and lands policies. Our state chapters are primed to lead this effort. At the federal level, with narrow control of all three branches of government, we have a rare chance to enact lasting laws to protect our environment. But it will require us to significantly ramp up the 501(c)4 political and advocacy resources we spent down during our fight against the Trump administration.

While our political program took center stage this past fall, we did not have the luxury of slowing down our work to protect clean air and water and defend public lands. Through all of the upheaval of the past six months, our campaign teams didn't skip a beat. They delivered some truly monumental wins—stopping dangerous fossil fuel projects and ensuring access to public lands for veterans and children. They proved once again that this country belongs to all of us, and when we fight, we win.

*Michael Baur*





Photo: Tyler Casey, Unsplash

# A COAL-FREE FUTURE

Last year, more than 26 gigawatts of coal power were proposed to retire — the largest one-year total in Beyond Coal campaign history — and we are carrying that momentum forward! With fewer than 200 coal plants remaining — one-third of where we started — we have the chance to end this decade coal-free.

We started 2021 with the retirement of coal plant #339, Kentucky Utilities (KU) and Louisville Gas & Electric’s (LG&E) Brown Unit 3, the last remaining coal unit at E. W. Brown Generating Station located on Lake Herrington in Kentucky. Sierra Club has been pushing for years for the retirements of the Brown and Mill Creek power plants (in Louisville, KY) on legal and regulatory fronts, exposing KU and LG&E for dumping coal ash into the Ohio River, and suing the companies in order to reduce illegal pollution.

## BEYOND COAL: BY THE NUMBERS



**COAL PLANTS  
PROPOSED FOR  
RETIREMENT**



**COAL CAPACITY  
PROPOSED FOR  
RETIREMENT (MW)**



**CLEAN CAPACITY  
INSTALLED (MW)**



**EQUIVALENT TO CARS  
TAKEN OFF THE ROAD<sup>1</sup>**

**SINCE CAMPAIGN  
LAUNCH (2010)**

**339**

**180,890**

**161,136**

**179,420,007**

# STOPPING PIPELINES

The past six months have been pivotal for the future of dirty pipelines. Pipelines not only threaten water, wildlife, and lands—they represent a key capital investment in the prolonged use of dirty energy at a time when we need to transition to clean energy. Thanks to three major successes in recent months, we are radically changing the conversation about fracked gas and pipeline infrastructure.

## MOUNTAIN VALLEY PIPELINE

The proposed Mountain Valley Pipeline—set to carry fracked gas 300 miles through Virginia and West Virginia—hit a series of significant roadblocks through the fall and winter. Thanks in large part to years of grassroots resistance and legal maneuvering, the pipeline is already three years behind schedule and \$3 billion over budget. In September, the Sierra Club helped mobilize 43,000 pipeline neighbors to demand that the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission not grant an extension for construction. Then, in January, following a series of challenges by our legal team, developers were forced to announce that they would be pursuing a much costlier and longer permit process for waterway crossings—resulting in more public scrutiny and delay.

## ENBRIDGE LINE 5 PIPELINE

In November, our activists in Michigan celebrated news that Governor Gretchen Whitmer had revoked a critical easement for the controversial Enbridge Line 5 oil and gas pipeline, which runs beneath the Straits of Mackinac. Together with local activists and Indigenous partners in the Anishinaabe community, the Sierra Club has spent many years working to shut down the pipeline. It's now set to cease operations by May 2021.

## KEYSTONE XL

After a decade-plus battle against the northern leg of the Keystone XL tar sands pipeline, we celebrated a major victory in January when the Biden administration revoked a key permit, stopping the project indefinitely. Our fight against the pipeline began more than a decade ago with a tiny coalition and expanded into a nationwide movement that captured global attention with massive protests and acts of peaceful civil disobedience. In recent years, we have used legal challenges, media outreach, and grassroots organizing to keep the pipeline in the spotlight—and ultimately, stop it.

The Keystone XL victory shows that no fossil fuel project is inevitable or unstoppable.



Photo: kodda, iStockphoto



*Photo: PamelaJoeMcFarlane, iStockphoto*

# PROTECTING PUBLIC LANDS AND ACCESS TO THE OUTDOORS

## ARCTIC REFUGE

Our Arctic team continued to fight alongside our Gwich'in partners to defend the coastal plain of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. A key part of our strategy has been a corporate campaign to secure commitments from major banks not to fund drilling. In December, the final outlier of the largest U.S. banks — Bank of America — agreed to reject drilling, heralding a major shift for the future of the Refuge's key caribou habitat. But the issue became a cliffhanger when the Trump administration rushed to hold a lease sale before leaving office. We are happy to report that the lease sale was a flop, with no major oil company bidding, and less than 0.1 percent of the anticipated revenue generated. News outlets credited our coalition's long divestment effort with the failure, and we celebrated a major victory in January when President Biden issued a moratorium on drilling. Our corporate campaign team will now focus on targeting insurance companies and other lenders, while our lawyers prepare to file challenges to drilling proposals, and our policy staff works to secure permanent protections through congress.

## EVERY KID OUTDOORS

Thanks to our coalition, the Department of Interior extended the Every Kid Outdoors park pass so children who missed out on using it this year due to COVID-19 will have another chance.

The 2019-2020 pass, which offers fourth graders and their families free access to public lands and waters, expired on August 31, and the Department of Interior initially refused to extend it. After our coalition gained significant attention from bipartisan members of Congress and the media, Interior reversed course and extended the pass.

## VETERANS OUTDOORS

Our Outdoors for All team secured two major legislative victories, first with the passage of the federal Accelerating Veterans Recovery Outdoors Act, as well as the Outdoors Rx Act in New York. These bills acknowledge the healing power of nature for veterans and commit government agencies to identifying barriers and solutions to expanding access to the outdoors for veterans. Our aim is to use the two bills as a model for legislation in other states.