



SIERRA  
CLUB

SUMMER 2022

# IMPACT REPORT



In July, I was dismayed by the Supreme Court decision in *West Virginia v. EPA*, which significantly narrows EPA's authority to set greenhouse gas emission limits from power plants. It is the most significant climate case in a decade, and this setback comes at a moment when bold ambition is needed to address the climate crisis and protect our communities and families.

But, despite this disappointment, I am hopeful. I'm heartened by the recent victories we've achieved in transforming our energy system away from coal and gas, some of which are featured below. The Sierra Club's Beyond Coal Campaign, with more than 15 years of measurable progress transitioning from fossil fuels to clean energy, will continue to retire coal power plants, stop gas plants, and transition to 100 percent clean electricity, and here's how:

- Close loopholes for coal plants and expose the volatility and vulnerability of gas power plants through federal rules, local organizing and litigation, and by showing up at public service commissions state-by-state alongside our coalition partners.
- Create the conditions for rapid clean energy growth to secure a modern, clean, more equitable electricity system while undoing decades of preferential treatment for fossil fuels.
- Organize at the federal, state, and local level with our members and partners, building power for durable wins that bring clean air, clean water, and healthy and safe communities where we can all thrive.

The climate benefits of the goal we're working toward—a 100 percent clean energy grid—reach far beyond the emissions from power plants, allowing us to eliminate pollution from cars, homes, buildings, and factories across the country.

Your support has helped us build an incredible campaign that won't slow down with just one court decision. We have a strategy to retire every one of the 173 remaining coal plants, stop more than 200 proposed new gas power plants, and transition fully to an equitable, clean energy economy. We couldn't do the vital work to protect our planet without you, and I'm optimistic about what we will accomplish as we work together.

Warmly,

Holly Bender  
Senior Director of Energy Campaigns



## TRANSFORM OUR ENERGY SYSTEM

### ARIZONA WIN: \$1 BILLION DOLLAR GAS PLANT HALTED

We did it! Sierra Club stopped Salt River Project's proposed 820 MW expansion of the gas-fired Coolidge Generation Station, an expansion that would have eviscerated the health of a small rural Black community in Randolph, Arizona. This town has a long history of environmental injustice.

Residents, including folks from the NAACP Pinal County, were already organizing when Sierra Club joined in a supportive nature to ensure community voices were heard. Our Environmental Law Program team retained outside counsel to work as intervenors to challenge the permit, and we helped elevate the community's concerns and increased public awareness of the issue through media coverage; NBC national news featured the issue the day before the Arizona Corporate Commission (ACC) vote in April. We bussed in over 20 residents to sit right in front of the commissioners, resulting with the ACC voting 4-1 to deny the project.



Photo: AZ Chapter staff

### 14 IDLE OIL WELLS LEAKING METHANE STOPPED

Due to outstanding organizing efforts, the California Dirty Fuels team and our partners have ensured that 14 idle oil wells leaking explosive amounts of methane near the Morningstar neighborhood in Bakersfield are being plugged, that regulators and fossil fuel companies are being held accountable, and that their communities are protected.

Sierra Club was alerted to a leaking well by a partner who was walking through an idle oil field, about 370 feet from homes and less than a mile from an elementary school. Our team immediately brought in community partners and reported the well to the local air control board. The inspector stated that the well maxed out the emissions reader at 50,000 ppm methane, a level that is considered explosive.

Sierra Club mobilized with VISIÓN and Last Chance Alliance coalition partners to put out a press release

and alert our state oil and gas agency CalGEM, the state air board, the EPA, the state legislature, and the local fire department. Our partners at the Central California Environmental Justice Network (CCEJN) immediately canvassed the neighborhood to alert the community.



Photo: Unsplash



## \$5 BILLION CLEAN SCHOOL BUS PROGRAM LAUNCHED

The Biden-Harris administration announced the Clean School Bus Program, which offers funding for school districts to move dirty diesel buses off their routes and transition to a cleaner school bus fleet. Currently, 95 percent of the nation's school buses are diesel. Diesel exhaust is a known carcinogen and can lead to or worsen respiratory illnesses like asthma.

Sierra Club is a founding member of the Alliance for Electric School Buses (AESB), a national network of advocates that have been urging the Biden administration to prioritize school bus electrification so that every child in the US has a clean commute to school. Now that the program has been announced, AESB will focus on ensuring that school districts, particularly those serving systemically underfunded communities and students of color, apply for electric school bus funding.

*“Too often, young people in our most vulnerable communities are exposed to poor air quality each day, an unjust reality that policies can and must fix. The EPA’s Clean School Bus Program can be a prime example of how we can improve the quality of life for millions across the country while tackling the climate crisis.”*

- Eric Willadsen, Campaign Representative, Clean Transportation for All

## VICTORY IN CT: KILLINGLY GAS PLANT DEFEATED

After a six year fight, we have finally halted the proposed 650 MW gas plant in Killingly, Connecticut!

The developer faced years of opposition at every turn that delayed the construction of the plant. We intervened at Siting Council proceedings and challenged every permit the plant required, adding months of delay to the timeline. In particular, Sierra Club challenged the permit required for a 2.8 mile pipeline to connect the proposed plant to the gas distribution system, hiring wetlands experts to conduct an analysis of the impacts to wetlands, streams, and wildlife in the proposed pipeline path. The expert analysis demonstrated that the proposed pipeline would tear through vital wetlands and streams, and destroy habitat for state-listed endangered species.



Photo: iStockphoto

## 357<sup>TH</sup> COAL PLANT RETIRED IN MICHIGAN

We secured the retirement date for Consumers Energy’s J.H Campbell coal plant (1,586 MW) for 2025, 15 years earlier than previously planned! Through our settlement, Consumers Energy dropped their plans to acquire three fossil gas plants, replaced most of that capacity with clean energy and battery storage, and will provide \$30 million in shareholder funds (not ratepayer funds) for low-income bill assistance. Sierra Club played a lead role in building and facilitating the public advocacy coalition, which combined with our technical intervention, helped make this groundbreaking settlement happen.

## PROTECTING 30% OF U.S. LANDS AND WATER

### COURT VACATES TRUMP ADMINISTRATION'S ROLLBACKS TO THE ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT

In July, the District Court for the Northern District of California vacated the sweeping 2019 Trump administration rollbacks to the Endangered Species Act (ESA) regulations. The court observed that the Fish and Wildlife Service and National Marine Fisheries Service had "made substantial concessions regarding the infirmity of the 2019 ESA Rules." Sierra Club was represented in this case by Environmental Law Program staff attorney Karimah Schoenhut and Earthjustice.

The decision will restore vital default protections from killing and harming species newly listed or reclassified as threatened. It will also wipe away changes that made it harder to list species and designate critical habitats, weakened the protections provided by the agency consultation requirement, and undermined the ability of the ESA to provide protections in the face of climate change.

### BEARS EARS CO-MANAGEMENT AGREEMENT BETWEEN FEDERAL GOVERNMENT AND TRIBAL NATIONS

In June, the Biden Administration announced a first-of-its-kind agreement with Tribal Nations to co-manage Bears Ears National Monument. The Bureau of Land Management, the U.S. Forest Service, the Hopi Tribe, Navajo Nation, Ute Mountain Ute Tribe, Ute Indian Tribe of the Uintah and Ouray Reservation, and the Pueblo of Zuni signed a cooperative agreement to strengthen the management and protection of the 1.36 million acre site.

*"We are hopeful that this agreement can serve as a framework for future co-management of public lands and waters by the federal government and Tribal Nations. In this critical moment of the climate crisis, it is crucial that we work together, guided by justice, to protect the lands, waters, and biodiversity we all need to thrive."*

- Chris Hill, Senior Director, Our Wild America campaign

## BUILDING POWER

### !GANAMOS! SINGLE-USE PLASTIC BAN IN PUERTO RICO

Governor Pedro Pierluisi signed a bill banning single-use plastic for all commerce on the island. This is a gigantic step forward in the fight to reach zero waste on the island, and will reduce plastic production and alleviate the burden of environmental justice communities dealing with the illegal use of landfills. This has been a dynamic effort that all began with a fight to stop a trash incinerator, and is a joint effort of the Healthy Communities campaign and Sierra Club Puerto Rico Chapter in coalition with local partners.



Photo: Sierra Club



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**THANK YOU**  
**YOUR GENEROUS SUPPORT HELPS**  
**PROTECT OUR FUTURE**