



NATURE'S VOICE

For the 3 million Members and online activists of the Natural Resources Defense Council



PHOTO: STEVE GETTLE/MINDEN PICTURES

Sandhill crane parent with chick

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FEDS BACK LEAD PIPE RULE

Call it cautious optimism with an emphasis on *cautious*. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has taken the first step to defend the Biden-era rule that set a 10-year deadline to replace nearly all lead pipes across America. NRDC has intervened to defend the historic rule from the same lawsuit, which was brought by water utilities. Says Erik D. Olson, NRDC senior strategic director for health: “We’ll continue this fight until every family in the country can turn on the tap and feel confident they have safe drinking water.”

Victory

LNG EXPORT TERMINAL CANCELED

U.S.-based energy giant Sempra has abandoned plans to build an export terminal for liquefied natural gas (LNG) on the Gulf of California, a major win for local fishing communities and their allies who are fighting to defend the UNESCO World Heritage site from being overrun by the fossil fuel industry. Sempra’s decision strengthens the opposition to two other proposed terminals in the Gulf, projects certain to endanger the astounding biodiversity that led renowned oceanographer Jacques Cousteau to dub the Gulf the “aquarium of the world.”

Victory

NYC CONGESTION PRICING WORKS

Defying naysayers (the most prominent of which was perhaps a certain former penthouse resident on Fifth Avenue now relocated to D.C.), New York City’s landmark congestion pricing program is a smash hit. The \$9 surcharge has led to 73,000 fewer cars entering Manhattan below 61st Street during peak hours every day. That, in turn, has made for safer streets, fewer vehicle-related noise complaints, and more than \$500 million a year for investments to rebuild and enhance the nation’s largest public transit network.

EPA TO US: “BURN, BABY, BURN”

In a move intended to gut core climate protections and derail federal efforts to fight climate change, the EPA under President Trump has repealed the “endangerment finding,” the agency’s own determination that climate pollution is a threat to human health and welfare. At the same time, the EPA eliminated greenhouse gas standards for vehicles, which were on track to deliver the single biggest cut to U.S. carbon pollution in history. An NRDC-led coalition of health and environmental groups has filed suit in federal court to block the EPA’s unlawful moves.

Were the EPA’s anti-climate actions to go unchallenged, the impacts would be felt for generations. Yet while the endangerment finding has been in the crosshairs of the fossil fuel industry since the agency made the determination in 2009, not even the support of such powerful special

interests could buy a legally defensible rationale, leaving the EPA’s action vulnerable to court challenge. “Undercutting the ability of the federal government to tackle the largest sources of climate pollution is deadly serious, but the administration’s slapdash legal arguments should be laughed out of court,” says Meredith Hankins, NRDC legal director for federal climate.

As NRDC litigators prepare for a long battle that many anticipate is likely to end up at the Supreme Court, our legal and scientific experts have fanned out across the media, countering the administration’s disinformation with the facts about what the EPA’s actions would mean for our climate, our health, and our pocketbooks. Directly rebutting the EPA’s announcement, NRDC President and CEO Manish Bapna told NBC News: “More and more people are suffering from man-made

disasters—from heartbreaking flooding in Texas and North Carolina, to the horrific fires around Los Angeles, to the record heat waves that now hit every summer. Eliminating the endangerment finding is denying these events and the existence of climate change writ large.” Bapna told NPR: “What this administration is doing is not about the Environmental Protection Agency. It’s about the Polluter Protection Agency.” *(Continued on page 4, right side)*



As more Americans demand climate action, NRDC is suing to beat back the Trump fossil fuel agenda.

PHOTO FROM TOP: RICK GERSON FOR NRDC/NRDC ACTION FUND; DAVID BUZZARD/SHUTTERSTOCK

LITIGATION WIN!

Court Orders Billions in EV Funds Restored

Siding with NRDC and our allies, a federal court has ruled that the Department of Transportation under the Trump administration acted illegally when it tried to freeze a \$5 billion federal initiative to build a nationwide network of reliable, high-speed electric-vehicle (EV) charging stations and ordered the funds restored. Known officially as the National Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (NEVI) Formula Program, the historic initiative was passed by Congress in 2021 as part of the larger infrastructure act. It aims to build EV charging stations every 50 miles on major highways across all 50 states, delivering good jobs



while providing more equitable access to high-quality charging stations. In an earlier legal win last year, the court ordered \$1 billion in NEVI funds restored for 14 states. The most-recent ruling restores the remaining funds and clears the way for the transformative project to resume nationwide. “Drivers who want to take a zero-emissions road trip should be able to do so no matter where they live,” says Tom Zimpleman, senior litigating counsel at NRDC. “The Trump administration tried to throw up a roadblock, but instead this bipartisan initiative now speeds ahead.”

The environmental campaigns and victories featured in *Nature’s Voice* are all made possible through your generous support.

You can help NRDC defend the environment by making a special contribution:

NRDC.ORG/GIVE

Join NRDC’s rapid-response Action Network to fight back in real time against the latest Trump administration attacks.

SIGN UP AT: nrdc.org/join-us

SICK OF NEONICS: NRDC FIGHTS TO REIN IN TOXIC PESTICIDES

Twenty-seven years. That's how long DDT was sold in the United States before the EPA banned it in 1972, a decade after Rachel Carson's landmark book *Silent Spring* brought widespread attention to the environmental devastation being wrought by the then-ubiquitous pesticide. It's a timeline that is a source of both hope and frustration to Dan Raichel. The director of NRDC's Pesticides & Pollinators program has spent 10 years at the forefront of the fight to stop the runaway use of the class of pesticides known as neonics. Even as scientific evidence has continued to mount that the neurotoxic chemicals are not only a primary culprit behind the precipitous declines of bees and other pollinators but are also tied to a cascade of environmental harms and human health threats, the very agency that was born in part out of the public outcry surrounding DDT more than 50 years ago has failed to stem the tide of toxic neonics.

"The law is very clear," says Raichel. "The EPA is charged with protecting our environment and health from dangerous chemicals like neonics, full stop. And Congress has underscored that the agency must pay particular attention to the impacts that pesticides have on the most vulnerable—children, of course, but also threatened and endangered wildlife. So, in light of the hard lessons we learned from DDT, am I frustrated that we have to sue the EPA to compel it to do its job? Yes. But am I hopeful that we can harness the power of law, science, and public advocacy to curb this toxic menace, similar to what happened with DDT? Absolutely."

It was in part a lawsuit brought by NRDC over the EPA's failure to comply with the Endangered Species Act that led to the agency's jaw-dropping



Clockwise from top left: Neonics pesticides have been linked to the devastating losses of honeybees as well as native pollinators such as struggling monarch butterflies (top right); as NRDC continues to press for federal action to curb neonic use, states such as Colorado are stepping up to address the neonic crisis; NRDC has sued the EPA to revoke its food tolerances for neonics.

determination that neonics likely harm more than 200 threatened and endangered species. Now NRDC has hauled the EPA back to court, this time because the agency failed to respond to our petition calling on it to revoke its "food tolerances" for neonics—the maximum levels of pesticide residues allowed on food—because the current tolerances fail to protect public health. That lawsuit comes as the EPA is in the midst of separate—and long overdue—safety reviews of neonics. Tens of thousands of NRDC supporters have called on the agency to take strong action to crack down on the overuse of the bee-killing chemicals, and NRDC stands ready to sue the agency again if it continues to shirk its legal

responsibility to ensure that ongoing use of the pesticides does not cause "unreasonable adverse effects on the environment."

The longer the EPA delays, it seems, the more damning the evidence that grows against neonics, which since the early 2000s have become the most heavily used class of insecticides in the United States, applied to upwards of 150 million acres of cropland each year. A bombshell study published in 2024 identified neonics as the number one stressor linked to the decline of butterflies in the Midwest, including already-imperiled monarchs. Two months later, another peer-reviewed study connected neonics use to the losses of thousands of species of wild bees across the country. And

a study published earlier this year found that declines in bird populations were accelerating fastest in areas where industrial agriculture was most intense.

Yet as Raichel points out, the vast majority of neonics used in U.S. agriculture are entirely wasteful. That's because most neonics are used not to target a specific pest but as a preventative coating for crop seeds, such as corn and soybeans. Upwards of 95 percent of that neonic coating ends up leaching into the soil and otherwise contaminating the environment, even as studies show the vast majority of these seed coatings fail to provide real-world economic benefits to farmers.

"Am I hopeful that we can harness the power of law, science, and public advocacy to curb this toxic menace? Absolutely."

"That's the kicker," says Raichel. "For some of the biggest and most-widespread uses of neonics, you're hard-pressed to find anyone who's benefiting beyond the big agrochemical companies."

The Big Ag lobby has long been a force to be reckoned with. Now, with the EPA and other federal agencies under the sway of an administration dominated by industry insiders, watchdogging these agencies' every move and being prepared to take legal action when they skirt the law is more important than ever. But the story doesn't stop there. As Raichel and his team work to counter the outsize influence of the agrochemical industry in Washington, they're making impressive progress targeting neonics at the state level, notching wins that could pave the way for similar victories in

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other states across the country.

With the passage of the NRDC-championed Birds and Bees Protection Act in 2024, New York is poised to eliminate 80–90 percent of the neonics entering the state’s environment, in part by becoming the first state to regulate neonic-coated crop seed. Thanks to settlements reached in NRDC lawsuits in California and Minnesota, both states are now also on a path to potentially regulate neonic-coated seeds. Meanwhile, last summer Colorado finalized the first-in-the-nation state tax incentive for farmers to switch away from using neonic treatments on corn, soy, and wheat seeds.

“You look at the evidence that neonics increasingly appear to be the most ecologically destructive pesticides since DDT, and it’s like, ‘*Do something about these toxic chemicals now!*’” says Raichel. “I imagine that’s what a lot of folks thought after reading *Silent Spring*, but remember, it still took another decade after the book was published for the government to act. That’s why it’s so important that we’re in this for the long haul, and that folks who care about pollinators, who care about protecting our kids and our communities from these dangerous chemicals, continue to make their voices heard. The tide is turning.”

TAKE ACTION

nrdc.org/stopneonics



Boreal caribou

New P&G CEO Gets an Earful from Members

More than 30,000 NRDC supporters have made their voices heard in defense of Canada’s magnificent—and imperiled—boreal forest. The outpouring of citizen advocacy was directed toward Shailesh Jejurikar, who in January took over as president and CEO of consumer goods behemoth Procter & Gamble. Each year more than a million acres of the Canadian boreal forest is logged, in part to supply pulp to companies like P&G to manufacture throw-away tissue products. Members called on Jejurikar to put P&G—the maker of flagship brands Charmin,

Puffs, and Bounty—on course to end this “tree-to-toilet” pipeline.

“As P&G’s former executive sponsor for global sustainability, [Jejurikar] should understand the stakes,” says Ashley Jordan, NRDC corporate campaign advocate. “Continuing to flush irreplaceable forests for disposable products is a choice.” So is buying those products. As NRDC continues to work with our coalition partners to build pressure on P&G, the seventh edition of our “Issue with Tissue” score-card offers consumers dozens of forest-friendlier alternatives to P&G’s boreal-trashing brands. *Want to do your part to shut down the tree-to-toilet pipeline? Visit nrdc.org/tissue.*

Coal “Champion” Faces Fierce Legal Pushback

If you dove into this issue of *Nature’s Voice* starting on the front page, you know NRDC is in court fighting the Trump EPA’s attempt to torpedo our core climate protections. No surprise, then, that the day before the EPA announced its move—which was at the top of the fossil fuel industry’s wish list for Trump’s second term—the president was given an award by the coal lobby lauding him as the “Undisputed Champion of Beautiful Clean Coal.” Yet as the Trump administration tries to ignite a resurgence of the dirtiest of fossil fuels, NRDC is fighting back at every turn.

As *Nature’s Voice* goes to press, NRDC and our allies have filed no fewer than four separate lawsuits targeting the administration’s giveaways to the coal industry. Those include suits challenging the EPA’s efforts to roll back life-saving protections from toxic air pollutants, such as those that cause soot and smog. The stakes couldn’t be higher. According to an NRDC analysis, since Trump unlawfully gave some of the country’s dirtiest coal plants free passes to pollute last year, emissions of sulfur dioxide have increased 18 percent and neurotoxic mercury 9 percent from coal plants nationwide.

NRDC Leads Charge to Save Climate Protections

(Continued from page 2) In the weeks that followed, that message was amplified by NRDC advocates in news outlets big and small, from the *New York Times* and Associated Press to local networks coast to coast. NRDC health scientist Dr. Vijay Limaye told one radio show in New Mexico: “Climate change is physics. It doesn’t care if you believe in it or not . . . health and climate problems are continuing to stack up. You can think of that as another tax, the Trump climate tax.”

Indeed, NRDC analysis was at the forefront in debunking perhaps the most prominent claim made by Trump about his EPA’s axing of the endangerment finding, which a Bloomberg headline summed up as “Trump Says Climate Repeal Saves \$1.3 Trillion. The EPA’s Math Differs.” NRDC Clean Vehicles Director Kathy Harris and Amanda Levin, director of policy analysis in our Science Office, took a deep dive into the EPA’s numbers and discovered the supposed savings touted by Trump entirely evaporated under scrutiny. They found that the agency’s own analysis showed the elimination of the clean car standards would cost the public a net of \$180 billion, stemming from additional costs for such things as fuel and maintenance. “And that doesn’t even include the health and climate impacts, which the EPA didn’t even calculate at all,” Harris says. “They’re totally cooking the book. It’s been rewarding to expose their funny math and bring it to public attention.”



Agricultural workers worldwide are among those on the front lines of climate change.



In a World Awash in Microplastics, You Don't Have to Be

As any fan of horror flicks can tell you, there's a lot of fear to be found in the unknown. What you can't see most definitely can hurt you. (Cue the ominous music.) When it comes to microplastics, "What we do know is already scary enough," says Renée Sharp, NRDC's director of plastics and petrochemical advocacy. "We wanted to empower folks with the best advice for how they can reduce their exposure to these 'micro-monsters' today while we press forward with our longer-term fight for stronger protections."

Sharp is referring to NRDC's recently launched public service campaign, which casts the miniscule plastic particles that permeate our environment as impish ne'er-do-wells while directing people to our online hub for information and advocacy, including NRDC's top 10 science-backed recommendations for keeping these micromonsters at bay in your day-to-day. (#1: Choose tap over bottled water—for more, check out the link below.) Meanwhile, thousands of NRDC Members and online activists have called on the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to step up and safeguard us from microplastics. "Ultimately, it shouldn't fall on consumers to

figure out which products are safe," says Sharp, who points out there are currently no laws regulating microplastics in our food or water. "That's the job of agencies like the FDA."

The United Nations Environment Programme has estimated that there are between 15 trillion and 51 trillion microplastic particles in our oceans—as much as 500 times the number of stars in our galaxy. Alarming, some research suggests that microplastics contamination could be even greater on land. A mounting body of scientific evidence has linked microplastics

to a number of human health harms—in particular to the digestive, reproductive, and respiratory systems—as well as threats to wildlife.

"It can feel like a daunting issue," Sharp admits. "But as the science advances and public awareness grows, it generates momentum. First, folks want to know the best ways to protect their families. Then they want to know why the agencies responsible are failing to address the crisis. Then they demand action."

LEARN MORE AT
StopMicromonsters.org



FIGHTING FOR WILDLIFE

NRDC Sues to Stop Attack on Gulf Wildlife



Florida manatees

Less than 48 hours after a committee stacked with allies of the fossil fuel industry voted to strip endangered species in the Gulf of Mexico of their federal protections, NRDC filed suit to challenge the unlawful move. The committee, known as the "God Squad" for its ability to decide the fate of imperiled species, is rarely convened—the last time it met was more than

30 years ago. Yet it took less than 20 minutes for members to vote unanimously to exempt the Gulf's imperiled wildlife from life-saving protections under the Endangered Species Act, all for the sake of expanding offshore drilling in response to so-called "national security" concerns raised by the Trump administration.

"The national security rationale

is bogus, plain and simple," says NRDC Senior Vice President for Nature Andrew Wetzler. "This administration gutted renewable energy programs and then manufactured an energy crisis to justify sacrificing endangered wildlife." At risk are an extraordinary array of animals that have already borne the brunt of heavy oil-and-gas exploitation of the Gulf, from manatees and shorebirds to endangered corals. Five species of endangered sea turtles call the Gulf home. Stripping the Rice's whale of federal protection to benefit the oil industry is particularly heartless: The only large whale to live in the Gulf year-round, nearly 20 percent of its population was killed by the catastrophic Deepwater Horizon oil spill in 2010. Fewer than 100 individuals are estimated to remain.



★★★★

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Sandhill crane parent with chick

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