Environment Rhode Island helps win a new victory for Narragansett Bay this June, when a key Senate committee approved a bill introduced by Sen. Sheldon Whitehouse that would inject new funds and energy into efforts to restore the Bay.

Whether we're swimming, fishing or boating, Narragansett Bay is part of Rhode Island's rich natural heritage and part of the legacy that we want our kids to enjoy. But the health of the Bay is at risk, and efforts to protect it are falling short.

Pollution, sewage and fish kills
There were nearly 100 beach closures in Rhode Island in 2009 alone, and the Department of Health warns against swimming in the Upper Bay because of sewage pollution. In 2003, excess pollution created a dangerous lack of oxygen that killed more than 1 million fish. With our state's $2 billion tourism industry dependent on a healthy Narragansett Bay, we cannot wait another year to strengthen protections and improve restoration efforts for the Bay. This year we have a chance to do just that. Congress is considering legislation that would give a much-needed shot in the arm to efforts to protect and restore the Bay. Opportunities like this don't come along often, so Environment Rhode Island launched a statewide effort to build public support.

Building support in the state and in the Senate
This summer our staff went door to door in communities across Rhode Island, speaking with 40,000 people about the need to protect the Bay. Our staff also wrote and released a new report highlighting the steps needed to restore our country's great waterways, including Narragansett Bay.

In June, the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee unanimously passed Sen. Whitehouse's Clean Estuaries Act. This bill will reauthorize the National Estuary Program, a conservation program established by former Rhode Island Sen. John Chafee that has protected Narragansett Bay for more than 20 years. Environment Rhode Island applauds Sen. Whitehouse for spearheading this important legislation.

Our staff are building public support to overcome the opposition of polluters and pass the Clean Estuaries Act into law this year.

more online
Visit our website to read our “America’s Great Waters” report.

Links to additional content are posted in the online version of the newsletter: www.EnvironmentRhodeIsland.org/newsletters/fall10
BP’s Deepwater Horizon stopped gushing—but we don’t know what long-term damage the disaster will cause for the ecosystem and communities of the Gulf. There’s no better reason to push toward a future in which Americans use as little oil as possible, protecting our oceans and beaches and reducing global warming pollution, as well.

Our staff is working in Providence and Washington, D.C., to ensure BP is held fully responsible for the disaster, and to win a permanent ban on new drilling off our shores. But we must do more to prevent future tragedies.

Thus, Environment Rhode Island is launching a major program to reduce our dependence on oil. Our work with Rhode Island leaders, Congress, and with the Obama administration will slash oil consumption and move America toward a clean energy future.

Sincerely,

John Rumpler
For Environment Rhode Island

Defeating a handout for Big Oil

As oil flowed into the Gulf of Mexico in June, Sens. Jack Reed and Sheldon Whitehouse voted against a binding resolution that would have increased America’s dependence on oil and blocked Clean Air Act rules. It was defeated 47-53.

The measure, dubbed the “Dirty Air Act,” would have crippled future attempts to reduce our dependence on oil by blocking any regulation of global warming pollution—including new federal clean car standards. According to our analysis, by 2016 the resolution would have increased our state’s dependence on oil by at least 1 million gallons and cost Rhode Islanders $3 million at the gas pump.

“Now the Senate must pass a bill to lessen the extensive damage to the Gulf, cut our oil dependence, and prioritize energy efficiency and renewable energy,” said Emily Figdor, our federal global warming program director.

Thousands join call to protect America’s great outdoors

This summer, our national federation, Environment America, launched a campaign to protect and revitalize America’s national parks, bringing more than half a million people together nationwide to speak out for America’s most beautiful places.

While national parks are hailed as “America’s best idea,” many of them are threatened by development or pollution, including Maine’s Acadia—the only national park in the Northeast. Known for its mountain trails and stunning coastal views, Acadia is home to moose, bears and bald eagles. Yet development within the park threatens to spoil this beautiful place.

In April, President Obama launched the America’s Great Outdoors Initiative to strengthen protections for America’s best-loved national parks. As part of the initiative, we are urging Interior Secretary Ken Salazar to give Acadia and America’s other great national parks the resources they need to preserve their lands for future generations.

To our members

You can be remembered as someone who cared enough to keep up the fight for a cleaner, greener, healthier future by making a bequest to Environment Rhode Island.

For information, call 1-800-841-7299, or e-mail PlannedGiving@EnvironmentRhodeIsland.org.

How do you want to be remembered?

www.EnvironmentRhodeIsland.org/newsletters

Acadia National Park, Maine. Acadia, the only national park in the Northeast, is in need of protection.
Environment Rhode Island is joining our national federation, Environment America, to launch a major new program to free America from our dependence on oil.

**Slow recovery for the Gulf**
The United States just suffered the greatest environmental disaster in our history. At least 120 million gallons of oil poured into the Gulf of Mexico after BP’s Deepwater Horizon drill rig exploded on April 20—the equivalent of more than 10 Exxon Valdez spills. Oil contaminated 580 miles of coastline from Texas to Florida, and the spill has already proven catastrophic for local wildlife—from oil-soaked pelicans, to dolphins choking on fumes, to the sea turtles who live in the Gulf’s warm waters. It has also been catastrophic for shrimpers, fishermen, and the men and women who work in the Gulf’s $20 billion tourism industry, all of whom now face a difficult and uncertain future. It may take decades for the ecology and the economy of the Gulf Coast to recover.

As we begin the long process of cleaning up this catastrophe, compensating those affected, and rebuilding the Gulf Coast, we must ensure that a crisis of this magnitude never happens again. We have known for decades that America’s dependence on oil is environmentally and economically unsustainable. Beyond the threat of catastrophe, our addiction to oil pollutes our air, endangers our climate, enriches our enemies, and robs our economy of billions of dollars every day.

**We can get off oil permanently**
Along with our national federation, Environment Rhode Island is launching a new campaign to get America off oil. We can have American-made electric cars instead of more air pollution, walkable communities and public transit instead of price shocks at the pump, and clean electricity instead of oil spills. The result will be more jobs, less pollution, improved public health and thousands of dollars in savings for Rhode Island families.

Environment Rhode Island is bringing together a coalition of environmental groups, public health organizations, consumer advocates and national security groups to build a sustained campaign to end America’s addiction to oil. Even with all this support, getting off oil will be no simple task. There is no easy solution, no silver-bullet legislation. It will require a sustained commitment from supporters and activists to change policy at every level of government, from the local zoning board to the president of the United States.

Right now, we are fighting to ensure that any climate or energy bill passed by Congress includes strong policies to reduce oil dependence. Sen. Jeff Merkley of Oregon recently proposed visionary legislation that could reduce our oil consumption by over 40 percent by 2030 through increased fuel efficiency, support for electric vehicles, and regulatory reform to ensure our tax dollars support public transit and smart growth instead of highways and sprawl. We call on Rhode Island’s senators to support Sen. Merkley’s oil savings legislation. Visit our website to write your congressional delegation and express your support for ending America’s addiction to oil.

**Gumbo for the Gulf**
Anthony Bourdain, author and chef, in an ad for our Gumbo for the Gulf events to raise money for oil spill cleanup. Visit our website to watch the video and contribute.

**Next step on clean cars**
The BP oil disaster in the Gulf demonstrated in heartbreaking terms why we need to move away from oil as quickly as possible. That’s why Environment Rhode Island is working to set aggressive new standards requiring cars and trucks to go farther on a gallon of gas.

In May, President Obama announced historic new clean car standards, which Environment Rhode Island and our national federation helped to secure. These new rules are expected to cut gasoline consumption by more than 11 billion gallons per year in 2016, nearly as much as all the vehicles in Texas use annually. This is a great start, but not nearly enough—especially since the standards are slated to expire in 2016.

The disaster in the Gulf demands that we go further after the current standards expire, so Environment Rhode Island is calling for even stronger rules requiring the average car and light truck to travel 60 miles on a gallon of gas by 2025. We know that car companies have the technological know-how to make it happen, so we’re working to convince the Obama administration to make this goal a reality. As our campaign kicks off, we’ll collect thousands of public comments and mobilize support from leaders within the national security community and from areas impacted by the Gulf oil catastrophe.
Environment Rhode Island

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400,000 strong against new offshore drilling

In the wake of the Gulf oil disaster, Environment Rhode Island helped in an effort to rally more than 400,000 people to speak out against expanded offshore drilling.

The impact of America’s dependence on oil became tragically apparent when BP’s Deepwater Horizon drill rig exploded in April, gushing more than 120 million gallons of oil into the Gulf. The spill devastated wildlife, coastal marshes, and the people who depend on the Gulf for their livelihoods—and the aftershocks will be felt for years.

The surest ways to prevent a catastrophe like this from happening again are to better regulate existing drilling and ban drilling in new areas. In June, Environment Rhode Island and our allies submitted more than 400,000 petition signatures asking the president to stop the rush to expand offshore drilling.

By regulating the expansion of drilling, we can prevent catastrophes like the Gulf spill from happening again.

Visit our website to learn more about how you can get involved:
www.EnvironmentRhodeIsland.org