



Endorsed by:
American Rivers
Environment North Carolina
Environmental Defense Fund
NC Coastal Federation

NC Conservation Network
NC League of Conservation Voters
NC Warn
Neuse Riverkeepers
Western North Carolina Alliance

The Common Agenda represents the environmental legislative priorities that have been agreed upon by a collaboration of environmental groups in the state. While each group may have particular issues they focus on – energy, water, or transportation for example – they come together to work on a select number of priorities during the Legislative Session.

We set these priorities each legislative session and work to help North Carolina's leaders make a commitment to our state's future. Past leaders have made wise decisions to protect our way of life and adopted thoughtful safeguards to ensure we can enjoy nature's benefits while providing for our families.

We look forward to working with the General Assembly this year to continue investing in North Carolina's future.

Top priorities on the 2012 NC Common Agenda are:

- Reducing Energy Risks
- Preserving Natural Heritage with wise budgeting decisions and ensuring sound management of our natural resources by Mitigating Budget Rollbacks
- Encouraging Science-Based Hydraulic Fracturing Decisions

North Carolina's natural resources, landscapes, and the health of our communities make this a great place to live and do business. North Carolinians understand that we don't have to choose between clean air and safe water and jobs— We need all three. We need legislators to understand that our quality of life, inherently connected to our beautiful landscapes, is an integral component of growing our economy.

This summer state lawmakers may consider weakening environmental safeguards for North Carolina's land, air, and water by rolling back funding for the state agency tasked with managing and protecting our natural resources or reducing funding for land conservation. Simultaneously, a proposal in the Senate would continue the fast-tracking of natural gas drilling and the controversial process of hydraulic fracturing amidst scientific and economic uncertainty and growing evidence pointing towards harmful environmental and health effects of the process. Other potential legislation reduces the scientific expertise on numerous boards and commissions that are tasked with managing our natural resources and protecting public health. And still other legislation might continue to weaken existing safeguards NC has had in place for decades. Using the economy as cover, and repeating unfounded claims that "protecting the environment kills jobs," decision-makers are unraveling the protections that have made North Carolina a great place to live and do business. These wise policies have brought new businesses to our state because of the fairness of our regulatory system and our great quality of life. They have also expanded our tourism industry and improved the health of our communities.

The environmental community is committed to defending North Carolina's air, water, land, and public health. This year we will come together to urge science-based decision-making when considering hydraulic fracturing in North Carolina, reducing

energy costs and risks, and preserving our natural heritage and quality of life. We also commit to fighting against attacks on existing laws that pitch economy and jobs against sound environmental decisions; citizens know that policies that allow dirty air and polluted water are not a jobs plan for North Carolina.

The Top Priorities of the 2012 NC Common Agenda Include:

Science-Based Hydraulic Fracturing Decisions

There is a simple lesson to be learned from controversies surrounding the natural gas boom in other states: a rush to drilling is bad for communities, the environment, and public health. Waste water associated with natural gas drilling and hydraulic fracturing has caused water contamination and problems in water treatment facilities, methane has seeped into drinking water wells located near natural gas wells, small earthquakes have terrified residents, increased truck and heavy equipment traffic have overwhelmed local roads and budgets, and poor development practices have caused property values to plummet. North Carolina can avoid these problems by not rushing to drill. Policymakers should instead support the kinds of studies needed to know whether hydraulic fracturing and natural gas drilling can be done in a way that protects our unique natural places and preserves the special character of our small towns and communities. Extensive public and private research is underway on the effects of hydraulic fracturing, including an EPA ground water contamination study that will be completed in 2014.

In a recent study ordered by the General Assembly, DENR concluded that numerous safeguards need to be in place before any drilling begins in North Carolina. This year, many

legislators still seem poised to ignore health and safety concerns in exchange for perceived short term economic benefits that have not been proven. Lessons from the experiences of other states clearly show that North Carolina should avoid rushing to drill: we must carefully consider the concerns raised by DENR and the Commerce Department, and make sound, science-based decisions that protect the health of our families, communities, and environment. Once we have these answers, we may very well determine that natural gas drilling and hydraulic fracturing is not right for North Carolina. We need a strong, effective regulatory framework to manage the impacts before considering legalizing hydraulic fracturing. We need to ensure that oversight of this industry remains in the hands of the state agency tasked with protecting North Carolina's natural resources and public health, not the industries which stand to profit from the resource.

There's no reason to legalize hydraulic fracturing this year, and every reason not to: Oppose any legislation that promotes a rush to drilling before the research is in.

Reducing Energy Risks

Our coalition agrees with the 70% of North Carolina voters who do not want to see electric utilities empowered to make environmentally and financially risky investments while forcing rate payers to foot the bill. More than 80% of North Carolinians support clean, homegrown energy sources, such as solar and offshore wind. Instead of promoting these clean energy sources, which reduce pollution and create jobs, too many legislators remain focused on the dirty energy sources of the past without considering the long-term impacts: high cost nuclear power plants, potentially damaging biofuels, and offshore drilling.

In 2007 Duke and Progress Energy were granted the right to force customers to pay in advance for new power plants they call "construction work in progress," with review and approval from the Utilities Commission. Since 2009, Duke has raised rates every year despite making record profits. Now Duke and Progress are lobbying for an Annual Rate Hikes bill that would give them the power to automatically raise rates years into the future. Duke and Progress want rate payers' advance payments to go towards projects that the free market won't support: several nuclear power reactors with estimated costs of around \$10 billion each.

Biofuels are currently being discussed by the legislature as a profitable energy alternative. A proposal to allow highly invasive species and application of hog waste at levels that threaten water supplies needs critical review. Banning the use of kudzu-like invasive species for biofuels and finding a reasonable scientific limit for fertilizing with hog waste will allow us to protect our water and environment while developing cheaper and safer alternative sources of energy.

The North Carolina coast supports a \$2.5+ billion tourism and travel industry with 40,000 jobs, and a \$115+ million commercial and recreational fisheries industry with 27,000 jobs. Opening up our coast to offshore drilling could negatively impact our coastal economy in ways that don't add up, and continue our reliance on dirty energy.

Investing in energy efficiency and cheaper, less dangerous clean energy sources such as solar and offshore wind means more money and less environmental and financial risk for North Carolinians.

Support Smart, Clean Energy Investment in North Carolina

Preserving Natural Heritage by Mitigating Budget Rollbacks

As we begin to emerge from the worst economic recession in several decades, we must continue to value North Carolina's unique natural heritage.

This heritage is now threatened by budget rollbacks. State services vital to land conservation efforts including Clean Water Management Trust Fund, the Farmland Preservation Trust Fund, soil testing services, the Land Loss Policy Project, and agricultural cost-sharing funds have all been significantly defunded or removed from the budget entirely. North Carolina's waterways also stand to lose from budget rollbacks. A new policy restricts the Clean Water Management Trust Fund from acquiring land—one of the most effective ways to preserve water quality. Resources devoted to sound management of fisheries as well as the Clean Water State Revolving Loan Fund have been targeted for removal in the next state budget.

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources' (DENR) budget was disproportionately slashed by the General Assembly last year. Sweeping reforms included in the budget cut staff critical to monitoring air and water pollution, issuing permits, and enforcing rules that protect public health, as well as limiting North Carolina protective standards.

These protections, the budget to enforce those protections, and the benefits afforded by strong land conservation initiatives are critical to our economy. North Carolina has been consistently rated one of the best places to live and do business in no small part due to our state's consistent effort to maintain and protect our cultural and natural heritage. We are committed to defending this long-standing heritage from the current wave of short-sighted anti-conservation sentiment now threatening to upend our proud tradition of strong environmental stewardship.

Invest now, before it's too late.