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# FIGHTING FOR OUR FUTURE

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An Update On Our 10-Year  
Action Plan To Protect  
North Carolina's Environment





## BRIAN BUZBY

NORTH CAROLINA  
CONSERVATION NETWORK  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

“With your help and support, we have spent the last four years working with environmental, public health, and other groups and citizens to stand up and fight for our beliefs. We believe in clean air. We believe in clean water. We believe in protecting our special places.

We’ve had a lot of practice standing up and fighting for what matters most, and finding opportunities to make progress. We’re smart, innovative, and reach hundreds of thousands of citizens.

We need you in the next chapter of our fight to protect North Carolina’s environment. *We need you to stand with us* so we can fight together in the years to come.

*It will take all of us to win.”*

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# HERE IS HOW WE MOVE *FORWARD*

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Join us as we continue to fight for the environment while working to rebuild our North Carolina.

## EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR LETTER

### WE'VE BEEN HERE BEFORE

Lately, we've been experiencing a lot of déjà vu. It seems our country is now going through what, we, in North Carolina did four years ago. In 2012, our state elected a 30-year Duke Energy employee to be our Governor. This move solidified an anti-environmental majority in both the legislative and executive branches. Now, our country is facing a similar reality with anti-environmental majorities in full control, while individuals and national groups work hard to figure out how to stop attacks on our environment and public health.

### WE KNOW WHAT WORKS

Five years ago, we saw the state-level change coming. We knew it would take all we had to fight to protect decades of environmental progress. With this in mind, NC Conservation Network developed a 10-year plan for fighting the day-to-day fights while building for a better North Carolina in the future. Since then, we've made some progress, stopped many rollbacks, lost some fights, and learned a lot.

### THE FIGHT ISN'T OVER

While North Carolina has turned the corner, we know the fight isn't over yet. Governor Cooper's administration presents opportunities to start rebuilding our state. However, the NC General Assembly is still controlled by an anti-environmental majority which will undoubtedly look to continue to rollback environmental protections.

In addition, we are working with our national partners to determine the best way for us to engage in fighting federal rollbacks.

### HERE'S HOW WE MOVE FORWARD

Here's the good news. By-in-large, our 10-year plan has worked. We have, with our affiliates and other partners, successfully stopped some terrible anti-environmental proposals in the past five years. We've stopped efforts to open our state to fracking and offshore drilling, and protected our state's Renewable Energy Portfolio Standard from



attacks. We've also, against great odds, made progress on coal ash by forcing Duke Energy to begin cleaning up their leaking coal ash ponds across the state.

None of this work was easy. It took all of us working together, over the past five years, to win these victories. Five years later, we continue to work to:

- *Find new leaders.* We are working to identify, train, and support the next generation of environmental leaders.
- *Make the environment a top issue for North Carolinians.* We want the environment to be on the short list of issues that North Carolinians believe are important and need action.
- *Grow, grow, grow, AND engage.* We have grown the largest base of environmental activists in the state and are engaging them to protect our environment.
- *Go local.* While we are unlikely to win anything meaningful at the national level, we are focusing our attention on new opportunities at the state and local levels.

*We need you in this fight. Stand with us to protect our environment and public health.*

Read on for our updated 10-year plan, including some of the successes we've had and how we will fight to make progress over the next five years.

## LEADERS MATTER

In 2013, more than 50% of the NC General Assembly was made up of freshman and sophomore legislators. In 2016, 1/3 of the state legislative races were uncontested. This wave of elected officials (who have easily held their seats due to the gerrymandered districts they drew) quickly proved themselves to be overwhelmingly anti-environmental by introducing environmental rollback after rollback.

To turn this around, we're going to need new leaders who care about environmental protection. For the past five years, we've worked to identify and train environmental leaders. Our goal was to help new leaders get placed on a local environmental board or commission. While we've helped a number of advocates get onto a board or commission, we're also identifying and elevating a set of local leaders who can move issues forward and whom we can move up the leadership ladder.

Developing the next generation of leaders will, undoubtedly, take time, and we are fully committed to this effort. Over the next five years, we will continue this work to develop our activists as leaders and support their efforts to make progress on local environmental issues.

# IT ALL STARTS WITH YOU

We need new leaders who value protecting our environment and public health.

## WINNING MATTERS

While we're building a set of environmental leaders for the future, we are also fighting the day-to-day fights.

To protect our environment from attacks now, we have and will continue to:

1. ***Fight the flood of rollback proposals.*** We stand ready to defend our national environmental protections, including attacks against: the Clean Water Act, the Clean Air Act, the Endangered Species Act, and even the Environmental Protection Agency. We will fight efforts to open North Carolina's coast to offshore drilling. We will also continue to fight rollbacks from the anti-environmental legislature on clean energy standards, and air and water protections.
2. ***Look for opportunities to rebuild at the state level.*** We will work with Governor Cooper's administration to rebuild some of our most important environmental protections – protections that were rolled back under former Governor McCrory. We will also look to build strategic relationships with legislators to support proactive measures to clean up polluting industries and push for greater clean energy standards, including energy efficiency and protecting and expanding solar and wind energy.
3. ***Make more progress at the local level.*** We will continue to work with our affiliate groups to win clean air, clean water, land conservation, and transportation victories.

### CASE-STUDY: WINNING

In 2012, the NC General Assembly passed a bill legalizing fracking. Since then, pro-fracking legislators have come no closer to bringing this polluting industry to our state. Our community worked together to turn up the volume of citizens opposed to fracking and educated the general public so that fracking became highly unpopular. Polls continue to show that 2/3 of North Carolinians are opposed to this dirty energy practice. In just a few years, fracking went from a highly popular idea to one legislators won't touch because they are fearful of educated voters.



# WE'VE GROWN OUR REACH TO *FIGHT TODAY* AND IN THE *FUTURE*

**MORE PEOPLE  
EDUCATED.  
MORE PEOPLE  
MOBILIZED.**

*We are growing to fight today and in the future.*

For the last five years, we aggressively grew our Public Alert email activist base from 13,000 activists to over 150,000. We've also exponentially grown our Facebook following from 8,000 to over 175,000. We are regularly educating and mobilizing these individuals to contact their decision-makers on pressing environmental issues.

Given the significant threats we faced, we knew that growing our activist base wouldn't be enough. We needed to be able to reach and mobilize even more people. To do so, we built and grew a strategic communications program. We hired a Communications Director who is working with our affiliates and allies to generate news stories across the state.

Finally, we launched social media ads on our top issues, like coal ash and offshore drilling, which has been very successful in moving statewide public opinion to support our issues.

## **OVER THE NEXT FIVE YEARS, WE WILL:**

1. *Grow and engage.* We will continue to grow our grassroots activist base. We will also expand engaging these individuals offline.
2. *Diversify our traditional media coverage.* We will continue to reach beyond our base of supporters to educate and mobilize North Carolinians to speak up for our environment.
3. *Sway public opinion.* We want to ensure public opinion is on the side of environmental and public health protection and show that support to our decision-makers.
4. *Change people's habits.* We want to positively change North Carolinians' habits to use energy more efficiently, buy toxic-free products, and invest in solar.

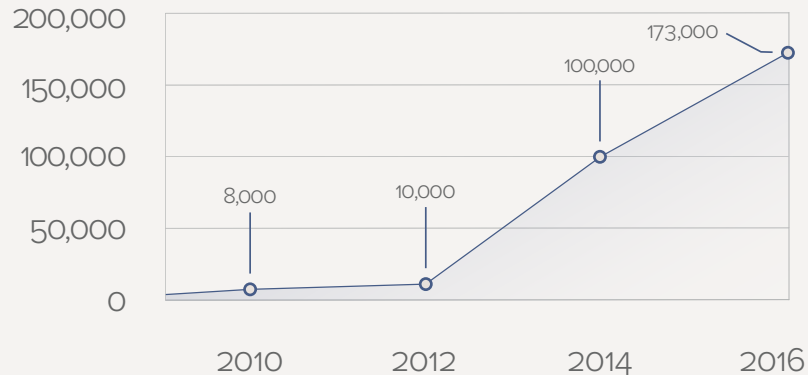


Here's a look at our growth over the past five years:

#### NUMBER OF ACTIVISTS OVER TIME



#### NUMBER OF FACEBOOK FOLLOWERS OVER TIME



#### WE'RE ALL IN THIS TOGETHER

Since the creation of NC Conservation Network in 1998 some of our strategies have changed, but our role of coordinating and building the capacity of our affiliates – nearly 100 environmental, community, and environmental justice organizations – has remained a constant and critical aspect of our work. Even though our community has grown stronger through our work, the need for capacity building and coordination remains important.

#### HERE'S HOW WE SUPPORT OUR AFFILIATES:

1. Coordinate with affiliates to create a complimentary, comprehensive strategy to work together on the community's biggest and most pressing issues.
2. Develop local campaigns to win environmental protections.
3. Build the capacity of affiliate groups to be more successful and sustainable.

#### CASE-STUDY: WORKING WITH AN AFFILIATE ON A LOCAL CAMPAIGN TO ACHIEVE SUCCESS

In 2016, we worked hand-in-hand with our affiliate, WakeUp Wake County, and a diverse coalition, including the Raleigh Chamber of Commerce and elected officials, to pass a county-wide transit referendum. In addition to helping develop the campaign strategy, we ran voter education and outreach. We talked to 200,000 voters, handed out over 110,000 pieces of literature, and staffed 84% of the early voting hours. Due, in part, to our efforts, Wake County voters passed the Wake County Transit Referendum in November 2016. This measure will provide improved connections within Wake County and across the Triangle region through expanded bus service and commuter rail from Garner to Durham.





## WE NEED YOU IN THIS FIGHT

We understand the battles that await us and we stand ready to fight. As we look forward to the next few years, we will help lead the charge at the state and local levels to ensure we aren't moving backwards. But, *we need you. With your help, we will continue to fight while working to rebuild our North Carolina.*

With your support, we'll protect North Carolina's environment together by:

1. Fighting rollbacks.
2. Building new leaders.
3. Growing our base of supporters and activating North Carolinians.
4. Communicating our stories across the state.
5. Coordinating the work of the North Carolina environmental community and strengthening our affiliate organizations.

It is our goal that in 2023, diverse groups will be engaged in environmental policy decision-making at all levels of government – creating a North Carolina committed to improving and protecting the state's vast natural resources, fostering environmental justice, and ensuring healthy, sustainable communities with a high quality of life.

With the support of people like you – our donors, affiliates, and activists – *we can move forward.* Together, we will continue working towards a just future, for people and the environment.

*Join us in this fight!*



**KAREN RINDGE**

**WAKEUP WAKE COUNTY**  
*EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR*

“We could not have won the transit referendum in Wake County without NC Conservation Network! NCCN played a key role in the collaborative campaign team providing wise guidance and communication and strategic expertise. NCCN's staff and volunteers ensured we reached Wake County voters digitally and at the polls. Together, we ensured a major step forward in expanding public transit in North Carolina.”

For our most recent Annual Report, visit:  
[nccconservationnetwork.org/annualreport](https://nccconservationnetwork.org/annualreport)



[ncconservationnetwork.org](https://ncconservationnetwork.org)

