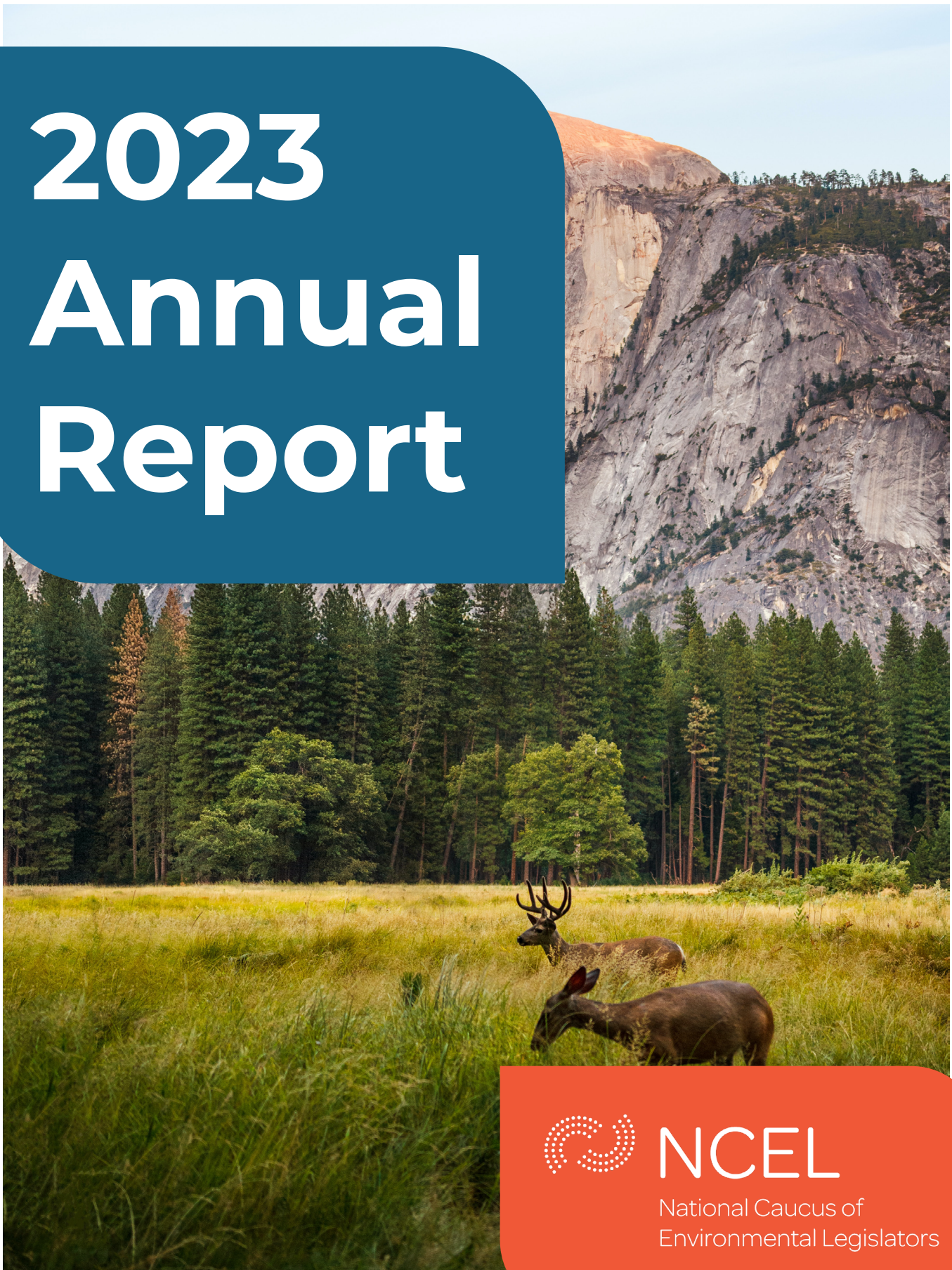


# 2023 Annual Report



**NCEL**

National Caucus of  
Environmental Legislators

# A Message From NCEL's President

National Caucus of Environmental Legislators - 2023 Annual Report



**Chris Lee**

NCEL President  
State Senator, Hawaii

*“We hold the power to transcend the legislative gridlock often seen at the federal level and implement innovative policies to safeguard our environment for future generations.”*

Our nation is at a crossroads when it comes to environmental policy. The consequences of climate change, biodiversity loss, and environmental injustice are becoming more evident with each passing day. These are realities that threaten not only the health of our planet but also the well-being of our communities.

During my first few months as NCEL President, I am proud to see how our caucus, comprised of dedicated legislators like you, is taking direct action to address these challenges. Operating at the state level, we hold the power to transcend the legislative gridlock often seen at the federal level and implement innovative policies to safeguard our environment for future generations. Time and again, we see that what happens in one state does not happen in isolation. The high-impact policies passed by states in 2023 can serve as a framework for other states, localities, and countries seeking to address environmental challenges.

Our Caucus knows that the cost of inaction is too great, and that we simply cannot afford to stand by and watch our environment deteriorate further. I look forward to working alongside NCEL members in 2024 to increase the impact of our Caucus further. Thank you for your work in ensuring a healthy environment for all this year!

## Board of Directors

**The Honorable Chris Lee**  
State Senator, Hawaii  
*President*

**The Honorable Devin Carney**  
State Representative, Connecticut  
*Treasurer*

**The Honorable Jackie Dingfelder**  
Former State Senator, Oregon

**The Honorable David Fraser-Hidalgo**  
State Delegate, Maryland

**The Honorable Pricey Harrison**  
State Representative, North Carolina

**David Hochschild**  
Chair, California Energy Commission

**The Honorable Stephanie Howse**  
Cleveland City Council Member  
*Secretary*

**The Honorable Brian Kavanagh**  
State Senator, New York

**The Honorable Alissa Keny-Guyer**  
Former State Representative, Oregon  
*Vice President*

**The Honorable Beth Kerttula**  
Former State Representative, Alaska

**The Honorable Debra Lekanoff**  
State Representative, Washington

**The Honorable Nan Orrock**  
State Senator, Georgia

**The Honorable Chris Rabb**  
State Representative, Pennsylvania

**John R. Seydel**  
Sustainability Director, City of Atlanta

**The Honorable Alex Valdez**  
State Representative, Colorado



# A Message From the Executive Director

National Caucus of Environmental Legislators - 2023 Annual Report



**Dylan McDowell**  
Executive Director

*“We strengthened our position as the go-to organization for state lawmakers seeking to learn and collaborate on environmental policy.”*

Throughout 2023, NCEL saw growth and internal change as we strengthened our position as the go-to organization for state lawmakers seeking to learn and collaborate on environmental policy. After serving as NCEL’s Deputy Director for the past five years, I officially took over as [Executive Director](#) in April. Since the transition, I have been working closely with the NCEL board and staff to develop new systems and processes that can prepare our organization for the future.

In addition to leadership changes, NCEL staff have worked throughout 2023 to grow our organization’s impact. We launched a [partnership](#) with Native Americans in Philanthropy (NAP) to enhance collaboration between philanthropic funders, Tribal leaders, and state officials. NCEL staff developed new resources to aid our members in their policy efforts such as the [Zero Waste Policy Roadmap](#), [Outdoor Opportunity Toolkit](#), [Utility Briefing Book](#), and more. We held 62 in-person and virtual events covering a range of trending environmental topics, with an increase in regional convenings to promote cross-state collaboration. And we continued to build out our new Ocean Program through meetings with NCEL’s Coastal Working Group and in-person events.

Thank you to all of the members of our caucus for your tireless work on environmental solutions in 2023. As we approach 2024, our team is more committed than ever to assisting you with your legislative efforts. We look forward to working with you in the new year!

## Current NCEL Staff



**Sidra Aghababian**  
Climate and Energy  
Coordinator



**Taylor Anderson**  
Communications  
Manager



**Kate Burgess**  
Conservation  
Program Manager



**Logan Christian**  
Wildlife and  
Habitat Coordinator



**Ava Gallo**  
Climate and  
Energy Coordinator



**Grant Gliniecki**  
Outdoor Policy  
Coordinator



**Justin Gulino**  
Conservation  
Associate



**Dylan Macy**  
Communications  
Associate



**Tess Madden**  
Grants and Office  
Administrator



**Julia Meltzer**  
Zero Waste  
Coordinator



**Salvatore Messina**  
Development  
Director



**Ruth Musgrave**  
Conservation  
Senior Advisor



**Angela Yuan**  
Project Manager for  
Sustainable Agriculture  
and Water

# About NCEL

National Caucus of Environmental Legislators - 2023 Annual Report



## Mission

The **National Caucus of Environmental Legislators** empowers a nonpartisan network of legislative champions to protect, conserve, and improve the natural and human environment.

## Vision

State leadership advances a clean and healthy environment for all.

## Why States Matter

States are often referred to as the laboratories of democracy. Many of America's landmark federal laws originated as, or were inspired by, state policies. Empowering state legislators can ensure groundbreaking environmental policies not just for states, but also the nation, making NCEL's mission crucial.

## How We Work



### Research

Provide facts, resources, and connect legislators with scientific research on current environmental issues.



### Educate

Connect legislators to leading experts and their legislative colleagues to stay informed about environmental issues.



### Convene

Founded by and for state legislators, we bring together legislators within states, regions, and across the country.



### Empower

Foster collaboration across state lines to promote multi-state learning and action.





# NCEL's 2023 Impact

National Caucus of Environmental Legislators - 2023 Annual Report

**62**  
events  
hosted



**23** new fact sheets  
and other digital  
resources created



**100+** legislators from **39**  
**states and territories** attended  
NCEL's annual **National Forum**.

**8**

**nationwide**  
**sign-on**  
**letters** with **616**  
total signatories



**100+**  
Media Hits

**2**

**NYC Climate Week**  
events hosted by NCEL  
to highlight state  
climate leadership.



**7** **Issue-**  
**Based**  
**Working**  
**Groups**

**39** **State**  
**Leads**  
**State Leads**  
across 34 states  
and territories.



## Visit Us Online

To learn more about NCEL's year round impact, be sure to visit our website, [ncelenviro.org](http://ncelenviro.org).

## 2023 Legislative Highlights



**15 states** enacted  
legislation supporting  
the deployment of  
**electric vehicles**



**5 states** enacted  
legislation to prevent  
**plastic pollution**



**2 states** enacted  
legislation to protect  
the **Mississippi River**



**3 states** enacted  
legislation advancing  
**offshore wind energy**



**26 states** enacted  
legislation to improve  
**outdoor engagement**  
opportunities



**10 states** enacted  
legislation to  
**conserve habitat**



**10 states** enacted  
legislation to  
**modernize utilities and**  
the energy grid

# 2023 Issue Spotlights

## National Caucus of Environmental Legislators - 2023 Annual Report



### Climate & Energy

NCEL's Climate and Energy team expanded efforts in 2023 to assist legislators in advancing climate-smart electric utility policy. We released a comprehensive [Utility Briefing Book](#) to equip legislators with the strategies needed to transition to a clean grid, launched an explainer blog series on the country's various regional energy systems, and hosted a [Southwest Transmission and Energy Convening](#) for key legislative champions throughout the region. NCEL also organized more than [230 lawmakers from 43 states](#) to call on the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) to strengthen its regional transmission planning rule; the letter received [responses](#) from FERC Chairman Willie Phillips and Commissioner Allison Clements, who shared their appreciation for the legislators and a commitment to incorporating their suggestions into the final rule.



### Conservation

Outdoor engagement, biodiversity conservation, and state-Tribal conservation partnerships were the primary focuses in 2023 for the Conservation team. Our new outdoor policy staff expanded offerings for the Outdoor Working Group and released new resources including the [Outdoors as a Climate Solution Briefing Book](#) and the [Outdoor Opportunity Legislative Toolkit](#). In June, NCEL launched a new partnership with Native Americans in Philanthropy (NAP) to enhance collaboration between philanthropic funders, Tribal leaders, and state officials. NCEL coordinated efforts on biodiversity conservation through webinars, working group sessions, sign-on letters, and direct assistance to legislators working on endangered species, wildlife connectivity, pollinator protection, zoonotic disease, and more.



### Environmental Health

NCEL expanded support for state lawmakers throughout the country working to improve the health of communities this year, including through the elimination of plastic pollution. In addition to hosting regular briefings for the Plastic Pollution Working Group, we released our new [Zero Waste Policy Roadmap](#) which was developed in consultation with three other organizations to give lawmakers the tools they need to comprehensively and equitably address plastic pollution. NCEL's Mississippi River Legislative Caucus, which added 19 members in 2023, continued to provide hands-on opportunities for legislators to strengthen the health of the Mississippi River, including the immersive [River Tour](#) in June and the annual [MRLC Forum](#) in October.



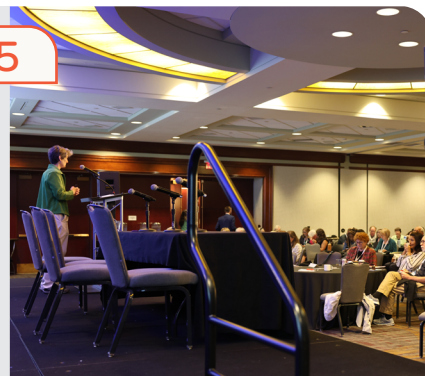
### Ocean

2023 marked the first year with a dedicated NCEL Oceans program. The new program helps to build the capacity of legislators representing coastal areas through engagement with NCEL's Coastal Working Group, in-person events, and other resources. In November, NCEL hosted an event at the [Seattle Aquarium](#) for legislative leaders from Washington, Oregon, and California to discuss and strategize on regional coastal issues. Virtual events included webinars on offshore wind opportunities for the East Coast and how to debunk offshore wind misinformation.

## One Big Thing: Federal Engagement & Collaboration

In response to historic environmental action at the federal level in the past few years, NCEL staff continued to support state legislators in leveraging federal investments and improving state-federal collaboration. NCEL staff provided support through new digital resources, hosting events, and meeting with legislators to share policy ideas and lessons learned. The support NCEL has provided is specifically aimed at helping state lawmakers take advantage of federal environmental programs such as the [Justice40 Initiative](#), [Inflation Reduction Act](#) funding, and the [America the Beautiful](#) conservation program.

5



EPA Deputy Administrator Janet McCabe delivers keynote address at NCEL's 2023 National Forum | Indianapolis, IN



# NCEL 2023 National Forum

National Caucus of Environmental Legislators - 2023 Annual Report



## Legislators Meet in Indianapolis to Ensure a Healthy Environment

On August 10-12, NCEL held its **2023 National Forum** in Indianapolis, Indiana, providing over 100 state legislators from 39 states and territories the opportunity to collaborate on policy solutions related to climate, energy, conservation, and environmental health.

With a continued focus on equitable and high-impact environmental policy, the NCEL 2023 Forum featured an opening plenary session on state-Tribal collaboration and two keynote speakers: Henk Rogers, founder of Blue Planet Alliance, and Janet McCabe, Deputy Administrator of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Other topics covered during Forum sessions included climate-friendly utility policy, plastic pollution, emerging energy technologies, coastal conservation, biodiversity, reducing dependence on toxic chemicals, and more.

In addition to the formal sessions, this year's Forum consisted of two evening receptions, as well as pre- and post-Forum convenings. NCEL held a pre-Forum session to help legislators in the PJM and MISO regions transition their grids and utilities to renewable energy. Following the Forum, legislators walked to Indianapolis' Waterfront Pavilion where they heard from Indiana Representative Cary Hamilton and Dr. Elan Pochedley on outdoor policy as access, equity, and climate solutions. After the panel, the local REI store provided e-bikes for attendees to test out along the Indiana Cultural Trail.

Thank you to all who attended the 2023 National Forum!

### 2023 Rising Environmental Leader Award



**Sydney Jordan**  
State Representative  
Minnesota



**Priya Sundareshan**  
State Senator  
Arizona

### 2023 Environmental Achievement Award



**Lorig Charkoudian**  
State Delegate  
Maryland



**Dawn Euer**  
State Senator  
Rhode Island

### 2023 Environmental Activism Award



**Khanh Pham**  
State Representative  
Oregon



**Tara Lujan**  
State Representative  
New Mexico

### 2023 Forum Sponsors



# New NCEL Resources

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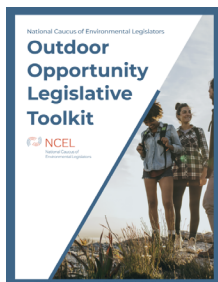
## 23 New Resources to Help You Champion the Environment

Every year, NCEL staff work to expand and improve our [Resource Center](#) to provide environmental lawmakers with the most cutting-edge policy trends and research. Thanks to new funding and partnerships, NCEL's Resource Library saw a significant expansion in 2023, with the launch of a range of new resources to help legislators tackle environmental issues sustainably and equitably. Below are some of the notable resources we rolled out in 2023:



### State Laws for Endangered and Threatened Species

The Natural Legacy for the Future report synthesizes insights from state wildlife agency personnel across the country to provide case studies and strategies states can implement to recover wildlife species and habitats. [View the resource.](#)



### Outdoor Opportunity Toolkit

The Outdoor Opportunity Toolkit was created to provide state legislators, agency staff, and partners with a framework for establishing state-level outdoor opportunity funds and grant programs, which increase outdoor access for underserved youth and their families. [View the resource.](#)



### Zero Waste Policy Roadmap

Developed in consultation with three other organizations, the Zero Waste Policy Roadmap provides actionable guidelines and strategies to comprehensively address plastic pollution at the state level. [View the resource.](#)

### Utility Briefing Book

NCEL's Utility Briefing Book equips lawmakers with the tools needed to transition the nation's primary source of greenhouse gas emissions – the power sector – to renewable energy. The briefing book includes an overview of enacting effective utility policy, as well as information and policy options for a range of specific areas in sustainable utility policy. [View the resource.](#)

### Outdoors as a Climate Solution Briefing Book

Outdoor engagement policies – outdoor education, recreation, access, and equity – are increasingly being recognized as high-impact climate solutions. This briefing book offers examples of how outdoor policies are being implemented as climate solutions by states across six key areas. [View the resource.](#)

[Visit Resource Center](#)



# 2023 Financials

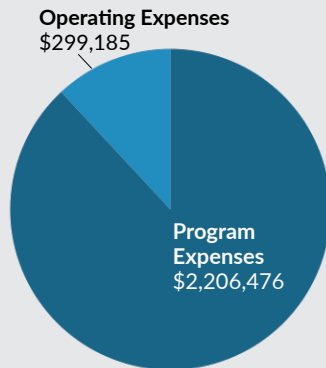
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## Continued Growth

NCEL continues to grow its budget sustainably year-over-year. In 2023, NCEL's budget grew to over \$2,500,000 — a 24% increase compared to 2022. We intend to grow our budget and our impact even further in the coming years.

**88% of expenses**

went directly to **informing, convening, and collaborating with state legislators.**



**24% increase**  
in year-over-year **revenue.**

## NCEL's 2023 Revenue:

**\$2,534,334**

Grants .....	\$2,363,527
Event Sponsorship .....	\$127,347
Individual Contributions: .....	\$18,916
Miscellaneous Income: .....	\$24,544

Program Expenses .....	\$2,206,476
Climate and Energy .....	\$376,782
Conservation .....	\$524,282
Environmental Health .....	\$540,341
Oceans .....	\$260,813
Annual Forum .....	\$504,157
General and Administrative .....	\$186,971
Fundraising .....	\$112,183

## NCEL's 2023 Expenses:

**\$2,505,661**

## Supporting NCEL's Work

Each year, an increasing number of environmental legislators and advocates are choosing to support NCEL's work with tax-deductible donations. Donations are critical in ensuring NCEL's systems and staff capacity can continuously grow at pace with the increasing number of legislator requests for assistance we receive each session on an ever-widening range of policy topics.

While recurring monthly donations starting at \$15 a month provide us with an incredibly valuable sense of flexibility in project planning, donations of any size and frequency are greatly appreciated. If you would like to make a donation or receive more information, please visit [ncelenviro.org/donate](https://ncelenviro.org/donate) or contact NCEL Development Officer, [Salvatore Messina](#).

**Donate**





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 [ncelenviro.org](http://ncelenviro.org)