



PEER
PUBLIC EMPLOYEES
FOR ENVIRONMENTAL
RESPONSIBILITY

2022

ANNUAL REPORT



DEMOCRACY, SCIENCE and the ENVIRONMENT

Over the past four years, working with PEER's dedicated staff and supporters has been the most worthwhile, satisfying, and challenging experience of my life.

Everyday, as we work with current and former public employees, I am reminded of the great sacrifices public employees make for their country as well as the important linkages of our work between democracy, science, and the environment.

Public employees come to us for many reasons. Often, it is because they are under political pressure to alter, dilute, or suppress their scientific findings on issues of controversy, especially when it threatens powerful interests. Or it can be because laws are being poorly enforced and agencies are failing to deliver on environmental commitments. When public employees bring us environmental issues, our goal is to protect their careers while addressing the underlying issues that have led them to us in the first place. These brave individuals believe government plays a critical role in improving environmental quality and protecting public health. What threads together their work and ours is an understanding that a well-functioning democracy requires transparency, accountability, adherence to the rule of law, and demands support for science-based solutions to environmental challenges.


Too often, we find our political system is not doing enough to address these challenges. For example, while overwhelming evidence shows that human activity has a dangerous impact on the climate our government has struggled to meaningfully address these crises. There is good news, however. The general public supports strong science-based measures to address issues such as climate change, biodiversity loss, and toxic pollution. The public understands that laws need to be equally applied and enforced throughout the country and that disadvantaged communities require special attention and investment.

Our goal is to leverage this support and push for meaningful change in government. This is no easy task. It requires PEER to focus on its mission, to cultivate relationships with public employees, and to strengthen its network of partner organizations. Change requires large networks of people working together. We are up to the challenge. Despite its small size, PEER is one of the most productive organizations in the country. Our unique mission gives us important insights and tools to help make this change happen.

On behalf of all of us at PEER, I want to thank you for taking the time to read our Annual Report. It will give you insights into our success in the past year, as well as how our work weaves together the important threads of democracy, science, and the environment.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Timothy Whitehouse". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping underline.

Timothy Whitehouse
Executive Director



PEER MISSION STATEMENT

PEER defends public employees who protect our environment, natural resources, and public health. We work with environmental and public health professionals, land managers, scientists, enforcement officers and other current and former civil servants dedicated to upholding environmental laws and values.

PEER continues to fight for the protection of the Louisiana Black Bear that was delisted and is now threatened by legal hunting. With less than 500 individuals and only 3% of its native habitat left, the road to recovery is steep for this unique species. PEER's case has fully briefed the courts and is awaiting decision from the U.S. District Court for the Middle District of Louisiana.

STAFF

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How Do We Achieve Our Goals?



"I joined the PEER legal team earlier this year, and I am constantly amazed at the breadth and depth of issues our attorneys tackle on a daily basis. From litigating employee defense, FOIA, and environmental cases to advocating for legislation and policy changes, PEER's unique voice can be heard by decision-makers at every level of government. I am proud to be a member of such a versatile and effective team."

Colleen Teubner, Litigation and Policy Attorney

- 1 PROTECT public employees.** We use all legal and administrative means, and apply public and political pressure to support employees who suffer retaliation or other negative consequences because of their work protecting the environment.
- 2 INCREASE government transparency.** Maintaining government transparency is essential for environmental protection and to ensure that government serves the public good. PEER works with current and former government employees, usually anonymously, to address issues through official channels and bring hidden information into the light of day.
- 3 IMPROVE laws and regulations.** PEER engages in litigation and advocacy to ensure the enforcement and implementation of environmental laws, the use of sound science in decision-making, and adherence to the rule of law. We work to provide solutions to environmental problems both nationally and locally.
- 4 EXPAND collaboration with other groups.** Building lasting change requires coalitions working toward common goals. PEER partners with groups on projects and litigation and provides counsel to nonprofits within our areas of expertise.
- 5 ELEVATE lesser heard voices.** Finding solutions to environmental problems requires the involvement of disadvantaged and disempowered communities. PEER works with current and former government employees to elevate the voices of individuals, communities, and local coalitions often left unheard.

Explore PEER's 2022-2025 Strategic Plan

PEER believes that our nation's public health and environment are best protected by a government workforce that embraces the ideals of transparency, inclusion, and accountability. This plan will help us continue our work with renewed vigor and purpose while staying true to our mission. Explore our strategic plan at peer.org/about-us or scan the QR code.



Today, whistleblowers matter more than ever in efforts to protect public health and the environment. They are also integral in the free flow of information to the public about government goals and operations. That's why defending public employees who report wrongdoing is the most important thing PEER does.

Here is a brief update on a few of our cases:

United States Geological Survey (USGS)

In October 2022, a federal judge ruled that the United States Geological Survey (USGS) had improperly terminated Evi Emmenegger, a USGS scientist, in violation of the Whistleblower Protection Act. USGS had retaliated against her for reporting dangerous biosafety breaches at a wildlife disease laboratory. This ruling will help protect Evi from further retaliation and strengthen PEER's push to have independent accreditation of USGS labs across the country, something other federal labs already have. The USGS has appealed the judge's ruling.

Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE)

In July 2022, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) validated the complaints by state employee whistleblowers detailing how Colorado's Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE) allows excessive release of deadly pollutants in areas already out of compliance with federal standards of the Clean Air Act. In response to a complaint filed by PEER on behalf of the whistleblowers, the EPA has recommended that CDPHE take several actions to correct its air pollution program. If implemented, these changes will greatly improve the air quality in Colorado and surrounding states.

Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)

For the past two and a half years we have represented five EPA scientists who have reported in detail how managers regularly delete hazards and risks associated with new chemicals in order to rush these chemicals onto the market. These improper risk assessments has deep implications for human health and the environment. EPA's Inspector General's investigation

into this program will help force a resistant EPA to make changes in the coming year. In the meantime, we welcome the small changes that are resulting from our work. This includes EPA publicly posting thousands of substantial risk reports submitted by chemical manufacturers. This will allow also scientists to access additional information on the dangers of chemicals that are currently in use.

Retaliation against public employees is widespread across federal and state agencies. This poses a significant barrier to the free flow of information and the transparency of government. The sacrifices of whistleblowers are tremendous. PEER has the privilege of ensuring that their sacrifices do not go unrecognized and that their legacy of ethical government stewardship is widely known.

"PEER is a unique force that fights to maintain government accountability through the protection of whistleblowers in

a time where society needs it the most. Whistleblowers should not have to be alone in exposing wrongdoing and thanks to the hardworking team at PEER, they don't have to."

Board Member and Florida Attorney
Alexandra Bueno



OUR WORK | Climate Integrity

PEER's Climate Integrity Project is working to ensure sustainable solutions to the climate crisis, while strengthening transparency in climate programs.



"The U.N. IPCC stated this year that it is "now or never" for governments to act decisively to avoid future climate disaster. PEER's

work to protect scientists and other public employees addressing the climate crisis is critical to solving this existential challenge."

Professor Rick Steiner, Board Chair and Marine Conservation Biologist

PEER's climate work strengthens the foundations of democracy, not only by advocating for ambitious climate goals, but also by strengthening accountability, transparency, and scientific integrity in government. That's because successfully navigating a changing climate requires revitalizing democratic institutions and a strengthened public work force.

Climate change is an urgent threat that demands decisive government action and is an issue that brings public employees to PEER on a regular basis. They come to PEER with ideas for improving government programs and concerns about government actions.

Through our employee contacts, our work this year has focused on ensuring that energy programs deliver real results and don't shortchange natural habitats for promises of quick-fix infrastructure projects.

Victory in Minnesota

As an example, PEER recently won a vote before the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission where the

Commission agreed with our argument that carbon pipelines are subject to the Commission's oversight and routing rules. This will give the public a greater say in the development and placement of these pipelines and sets an example for other states in the Midwest to follow.

This victory was important because throughout the Midwest companies are proposing pipelines to carry carbon dioxide (CO₂) "captured" from dozens of ethanol plants to distant locations where they can be stored underground or reused for oil extraction. The goal of this effort is to sell carbon credits from ethanol production to fossil fuel producers and allow ethanol to meet clean fuels standards in states such as California.

At PEER, we oppose these carbon pipelines. We believe growing more corn to use as fuel, building complicated networks of pipelines to transport carbon to locations where it will be stored underground, and creating shadowy "carbon market trading schemes" and government handouts to finance these projects will do little to address the climate crisis.



The climate crisis demands real energy solutions.

OUR WORK | Improve Management of Public Lands

PEER is interested in how government agencies manage the health and sustainability of our nation's public lands.



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Working to Improve the Bureau of Land Management

BLM uses land-health standards to define the minimum benchmarks land managers need to achieve and maintain for landscapes to function sustainably. They do this by measuring conditions such as soil health, water quality, plant species diversity, and the quality of habitat. These assessments provide vital information when it comes to minimizing ecological damage by livestock and holding grazing permittees accountable.

In 2022, PEER centralized BLM's own data, revealing that 54 million acres of BLM's grazing allotments failed to meet the agency's land-health standards. The data also showed that more than 50 percent of the BLM acres that failed land-health standards identified livestock grazing as a significant cause. PEER further revealed that BLM has yet to assess 27 percent of leased grazing allotments, or nearly 40 million acres.

In comments to the Department of the Interior (DOI), PEER stated that landscapes which fail to meet BLM's own minimum standards for ecological health or which have not been assessed cannot be considered conserved under the Biden administration's America the Beautiful initiative, as this aims to protect at least 30 percent of our lands and waters by 2030 (also known as "30x30").

PEER continues to demand adequate staffing at BLM. BLM is experiencing significant increases in visitation while facing concerning reductions in agency staff.

Between 2010 and 2020, visitation to BLM lands rose from 58,570,000 to 73,110,000, a nearly 25 percent increase; however, staffing of full-time employees decreased from 11,000 to 9,458 during the same period. Today, BLM employs 8,800 full-time employees, meaning there is one BLM employee for every 31,499 acres. DOI must address the widening gap between personnel resources and demand by increasing its staff.

In June 2022, PEER submitted Outside Witness Testimony to the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies. We asked Congressional appropriators to increase BLM staffing to a total of 15,000 full-time employees. This recommendation comes with the support of current BLM employees and is supported by a former BLM Director.

National Park Service Litigation

In addition to submitting comments and testimony, PEER's successful environmental litigation resulted in courts ordering agency action. For example, a federal judge ordered the National Park Service (NPS) to evaluate how to avoid user conflicts with electronic bicycles ("e-bikes"), the impacts e-bikes will have on wildlife along backcountry trails, and the potential damage from e-bike use on unpaved trails. In addition, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia ordered the top officials of both the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and NPS to personally explain why they cannot finalize long overdue air tour limits as directed, in response to an enforcement motion from PEER.



Explore PEER's interactive rangeland health map by visiting peer.org or by scanning the QR code.

OUR WORK | Protect the Environment and Wildlife

PEER takes on wildlife protection cases when public employees bring them to us. PEER works with employees to ensure that government delivers on their conservation promises and protect endangered species and their habitats

Much of our work this year focused on protecting predators and North Atlantic right whales.

PREDATORS

In late 2021 – in coalition with the Global Indigenous Council, Center for Biological Diversity, and others – PEER led a rulemaking petition effort to get the Department of the Interior to withhold federal wildlife funding from states with brutal policies of hunting and eradicating predator species such as wolves and bears. Federal law already states that this funding can only go to states with “sound conservation policies” and can only be spent to “sustain healthy populations of wildlife,” but some states appear to actively use these resources to suppress predator populations without regards to sound resource management or science. These states risk making these predators threatened or endangered species, and have an artificially high population of prey species as a result of an imbalance in predators. The petition asked Secretary Haaland to better state the conservation standards in the Department of Interior’s regulations and withhold funds from states that are not meeting the requirements of the law.

NORTH ATLANTIC RIGHT WHALES

PEER began working on the protection of the North Atlantic right whale when a NOAA scientist approached the organization alarmed that the agency responsible for protecting this endangered species, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) was not doing enough to ensure its survival. With only about 350 individuals left and less than 100 breeding females, the future of this whale is bleak.

The right whale suffers from two main threats. The first, death by ship strikes. Due to a combination of increasing coastal ship traffic, smaller crew size, bigger vessels, and faster speeds, fatal collisions between



“When governments trample on the principles of scientific integrity in their rush to exploit wildlife, PEER steps in to defend public employees who blow the whistle. When irresponsible policies are justified with poor science, our resolve hardens tenfold to protect wild nature, government employees, and the quality of science.”

PEER Board Member, Adrian Treves PhD

ships and whales are one of the leading causes of right whale mortality. Thanks to pressure from PEER and our partners, NOAA recently released new proposed rules that would require dynamic speed zones to be mandatory, not voluntary, and speed restrictions that will apply for vessels as small as 35ft.

The second threat to the right whale involves entanglements with lobster fishing equipment. PEER has launched a formal petition demanding that NOAA take the necessary steps to ensure the survival of the North Atlantic right whale. On the Atlantic coast alone, there are an estimated 900,000 ropes dangling between traps on the sea floor and buoys at the surface of Atlantic waters. Whales are often caught in these ropes and either drown or drag them. NOAA could require all states to transition to rope-less gear and ensure that whales and other marine animals are free from these entanglements.

Learn more about the right whale and sign the petition by visiting peer.org or by scanning the QR code



OUR WORK | Address the Crisis of Toxic Pollution

Government regulatory agencies allow dangerous chemical toxins, like per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS), to be released into the environment, negatively affecting communities, public health, and natural spaces.



Currently, corporations downplay the risks associated with PFAS and place them in pesticides, biosolids, consumer products (and much more), where they are inhaled, ingested or dermally absorbed by humans and wildlife. While regulatory agencies are largely absent, industry is passing tremendous costs onto states and municipalities, ruining lives in the process.

PEER continues to push this issue by exposing wrongdoing and challenging the industry capture of our regulatory agencies through working alongside public employees. Recently, PEER has been exposing how pesticides and biosolids, both of which are commonly applied on commercial farms and home gardens, have incredibly high levels of PFAS. When either pesticides or biosolids are applied, scientists have found that PFAS levels in soils increase and PFAS are likely leach into surface waters and groundwater. Plants become contaminated from PFAS as they

absorb contaminated water, and workers are also exposed to these toxic chemicals. Ultimately, PEER has revealed that the use of pesticides and biosolids contribute to the contamination of our drinking water, food supply and bodies.

PEER continues to work to hold our regulatory agencies accountable through litigation. In 2019, PEER petitioned the EPA to develop standards for the safe management of waste contaminated with PFAS, but the agency has failed to develop any standards. PEER is continuing to pressure EPA to respond to our petition and uphold their mandate to protect human health and the environment.

Stopping the continuous release of toxic chemicals will only be achieved when the federal government takes decisive action and not only regulates PFAS currently on the market but bans PFAS as a class.



“Banning PFAS as a class restricts the production, marketing and use of these substances. Only when we stop introducing

PFAS into our environment will we start protecting human health and the environment.”

Monica Mercola, Staff Counsel

PEER Thanks You

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I have worked as a conservation biologist in the Washington, D.C. region for over 30 years. I first discovered and joined PEER years ago through an edition of PEERreview. I was very impressed with all of the important environmental issues that PEER was working on, some of them uniquely only by PEER. I was also greatly impressed that an organization such as PEER even

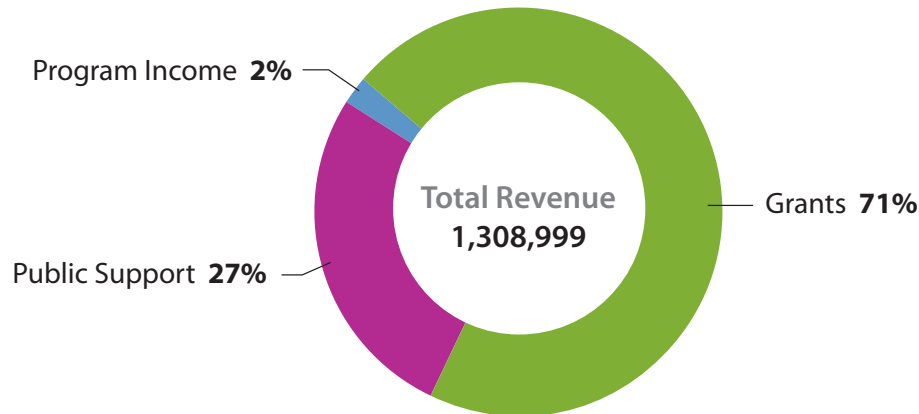
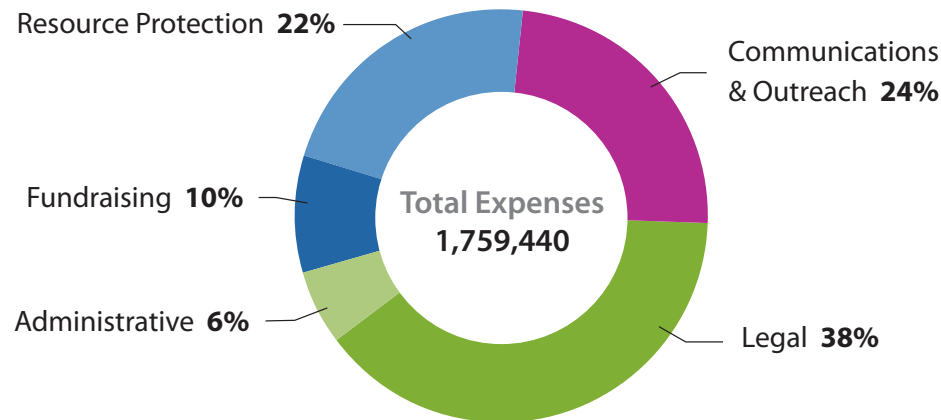
existed—one that supports public servants whose important work, careers, and jobs in the environmental field can sometimes come under attack by contrary agendas and the attitudes of those in upper management.

Decades ago, there were really no job positions like mine with any of the jurisdictions surrounding the nation's capital. As unchecked development, deforestation, and habitat loss ravaged the region, along with new threats such as climate change and invasive species, it was realized that natural resource management protection officers were greatly needed. However, as important as this first step was, most resource protection officers are kept on the fringe of government operations and usually suffer near constant interference and harassment from upper management, who place economic growth and profit above preserving irreplaceable native biodiversity. This has certainly been my experience as Natural Resource Manager for the City of Alexandria, Virginia—especially the last 5 or so years as the number of environmentally destructive projects in the city have increased.

Review of environmental projects and issues is an important aspect of positions like mine. It is one the public expects and relies upon, which is why local governments fund these positions. Such review, however, is often seen as an inconvenient truth by upper management who, in turn, suppress the information in attempts to keep it from impacting their agendas. Ethical standards and adherence to scientific and professional integrity come into play at this point, compelling public servants to act as whistleblowers as a stop-loss. PEER is currently representing me in such a whistleblower case with the City of Alexandria.

I am passionate about preserving and protecting the irreplaceable, native biodiversity of our natural world—both the common and the rare. This has inspired me to spend countless hours in the field over the years as a botanist and vegetation ecologist studying the flora of the mid-Atlantic region and beyond. I am also passionate about providing such information to the U.S. National Vegetation Classification and others in the hopes of furthering conservation.

Financial Statement



PEER is committed to financial transparency and careful stewardship of our supporter's investment in the organization. We are proud to hold Charity Navigator's highest rating for fiscal responsibility and ethical practices.

These financial results are unaudited and rounded to the nearest dollar. Please visit our website at www.peer.org for complete audited financials that are GAAP compliant. The October 2021-September 2022 audited financial statement will be posted on our website in March of 2023.

ASSETS **\$ 831,572.59**

LIABILITIES **\$ 123,087.20**

Giving Stock or Distributions from your IRA is Easy!

IRA Gifts

If you are 70 ½ years old, you can give up to a maximum of \$100,000 per year from your IRA directly to a qualified charity like PEER without having to pay income taxes on the money. Learn more at peer.org/donate/ways-to-give

Stocks and mutual funds

When you donate appreciated stock or mutual funds in support of our mission, you can reduce or even eliminate federal capital gains taxes on the transfer. You may also be entitled to a federal income tax charitable deduction based on the fair market value of the securities at the time of the transfer. When you donate securities to PEER, you receive the same income tax savings that you would if you wrote a check, but with the added benefit of eliminating capital gains taxes on the transfer, which can be as high as 20 percent.



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PEER works to protect all predators, like the coyote, from senseless hunting in states across the US.
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Thank You for Supporting Environmental Whistleblowers

This year we've worked hard to take on the tough issues and make positive change for public employees and the natural environment. The PEER community has been generous with its time, expertise, and financial contributions. We are grateful for your steady support and the unwavering confidence in PEER.

If your interested in making an investment in PEER, you can do so at peer.org/donate. Thank you for joining us in this effort.

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