Clean Energy Jobs comes farther than ever before and we are not done yet. A bill to cap and price the largest sources of climate pollution passed the House for the first time in Oregon’s history. Known as the Clean Energy Jobs bill, Oregon Environmental Council was proud to support the bill and partner with an incredible coalition of farm workers, labor, business, tribes, agriculturalists, forestland owners, nurses, scientists, faith leaders and many others from every corner of the state. Amongst the shining stars were youth leaders who showed up time and time again with a compelling call for leaders to act to protect their future. Their elected officials fell short in 2019, but OEC will continue to stand with them for the future they deserve.

Dirty diesel engines are on their way out. Oregon Environmental Council successfully co-advocated for the second strongest legislation in the country to reduce diesel pollution. Focused on Clackamas, Multnomah and Washington counties, the bill will phase out old heavy-duty and medium-duty diesel engines, require cleaner construction equipment on major projects, and gear VW settlement funds to the companies that need them the most, protecting nearly half of Oregon’s population from the dangers of diesel exhaust. Moving forward, we will ensure strong implementation of the legislation and work to expand protections statewide.

The future of transportation is electric. To protect the climate, Oregon Environmental Council is working to “decarbonize” transportation, while also reducing the smog and soot caused by tailpipe emissions. We coordinated with other advocates to pass legislation that establishes metrics and reporting requirements for successful adoption of electric vehicles. We helped secure a commitment from the state’s largest consumer of diesel (Portland-area transit agency TriMet) to go electric as its fleet turns over. We will continue to push for electrification of heavy- and medium-duty fleets, investment in electric vehicle charging infrastructure, and even incentives to move freight using electric bicycles and tricycles.

Drivers are filling up with cleaner fuels. We achieved a decisive victory against Big Oil when the U.S. Supreme Court declined to hear the oil industry’s lawsuit against Oregon’s Clean Fuels Program, clearing the way for other states to move forward with confidence. OEC intervened in the lawsuits, aided by Earthjustice, and in the end every claim made by oil companies was dismissed by the courts. Heading into its fourth year, the Oregon Clean Fuels Program is accelerating the use of healthier, lower-carbon fuels throughout the state. The program has cut over 2.9 million tons of climate pollution so far, equal to taking half a million cars off the road for a year, and has displaced over 700 million gallons of petroleum.

Oregon is ready to envision a more resilient and just water future. A changing climate, aging infrastructure and lack of steady investment in clean water have left our system stressed, putting our health, economy and environment at risk. Our water team sat down with more than 100 people over the past year to talk about the future of our water resources, regional water priorities and how natural infrastructure solutions like wetlands and floodplains are critical investments for a sustainable and affordable water future. We are actively engaging with state agency leaders to develop a vision and investment strategy for the future of Oregon’s water resources, as well as an emerging movement to define a water justice agenda for Oregon.
Kids will be exposed to fewer toxic chemicals. Oregon Environmental Council is watchdogging implementation of one of our signature accomplishments, the Toxic-Free Kids Act, which requires manufacturers to disclose and phase out hazardous chemicals in consumer products targeted at children. We ensured public access to the first round of data and have kept the law strong despite continued chemical industry attacks at the state and federal level.

We are prioritizing tribal values and relationships. Oregon Environmental Council traveled to meet with eight of the nine federally recognized tribes based in Oregon over the past year to talk about the future of our water resources and tribal priorities around water. In partnership with Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians (ATNI), we helped ensure 10% of the proceeds from the Clean Energy Jobs bill would go directly to Oregon tribes (a first-in-the-nation proposal), and we supported the launch of Changing Currents, an ATNI-led initiative to foster deeper, collective dialogue about water protection and its importance to Native communities. We will continue to co-advocate for meaningful tribal consultation in state policy conversations that impact our environment, public health and rural economies on the frontline of climate impacts across the state.

Buying green is the new norm. Many of the biggest impacts to our health, our climate, and our ecosystems happen when products are being made. One way to help make products safer and more sustainable is by helping to drive consumer demand for greener options. That’s why OEC is leading an effort to establish a new statewide sustainable procurement program that will better align our values with the purchasing decisions made by state agencies, local governments, and schools on behalf of Oregonians.

Citizens are speaking up for clean water. After launching the first statewide celebration of World Water Day in 2018, we continued to grow Oregon’s water movement with the #MyWaterWhy campaign in 2019. Throughout March, Oregonians across the state shared why water matters to their lives, livelihoods and the world around us, growing the campaign on social media by 126% and expanding our partners to 39 organizations.

We celebrated our 50th anniversary with a successful 450-person fundraising gala at the Portland Hilton and a statewide series of art projects celebrating landmark environmental policies Oregon Environmental Council has been part of, including statewide land use planning, the Bottle Bill, and the Bike Bill.