

# Environmental Working Group Annual Report 2009





PHOTOGRAPHER: KEVIN KREJCI

*“Changing the game by: Pushing the right buttons – BPA in plastic, mercury in tuna, farm subsidies, cell-phone radiation. The EWG is an environmental superhero with a full set of digital tools in its arsenal. Its pull-no-punches investigations make news, its data-driven reports make it very hard for policy makers to avoid the evidence, and its interactive websites give consumers a place to go for safe alternatives.” (The Huffington Post, 2009)*

## A Message from the President

One of the high points of our year was being voted **The Huffington Post’s Ultimate Green Game Changer of 2009**. The award was nominally for me, but those familiar with my slim digital skills know that it took the entire hard-working, tech-savvy EWG crew to win HuffPost readers’ votes for “harnessing new media to reshape federal environmental policy and public awareness.”

“Game” isn’t the word we’d choose for the very serious energy, food, land conservation and environmental health issues we tackle. But when it’s attached to the concept of change, especially smart change and lasting change – well, obviously, we’ll take it.

We all felt privileged to be singled out for our work, along with Isabella Rosellini, Roger Doiron, Annie Leonard, Bill McKibben, Graham Hill, Gary Hirshberg, David De Rothschild, Brent Schulkin and Gavin Starks. The HuffPost competition was friendly and, we think, succeeded in raising the profile of a range of bright, effective advocates for transformational policies and practices.

In 2009, we achieved major breakthroughs on many fronts. This year, we expect to see a number of initiatives we nurtured in 2007, 2008 and 2009 bear fruit.

All of this is thanks to you, our supporters. The thing about change – change for the better, at any rate – is, it doesn’t happen by itself. It is a living thing. It has to be coaxed along and, when it falters, set back on the path. Well, we are nothing if not persistent. We’ll be there to keep it moving and keep it straight – with your investment in our collective future.

Best,



Ken Cook  
President and Co-Founder  
Environmental Working Group

## About the President



Ken Cook is president and founder of Environmental Working Group. Mr. Cook and EWG’s research and analysis are major forces in national policy debates over toxic chemicals, pesticides, air and water pollution, and the ecological impacts of modern agriculture.

In 2005, *The Hill* named EWG one of Washington’s ten most effective watchdog groups, the only environmental organization on the list, and in 2009, as in previous years, Mr. Cook was listed by the publication as one of the most effective lobbyists in Washington. Cook has been profiled in *The New York Times*, *Omaha World Herald*, and *Des Moines Register*, among other publications. The *Progressive Farmer* named him one of the most influential people in agriculture policy over the past century.

Mr. Cook earned his B.A. (history), B.S. (agriculture), and M.S. (soil science) degrees from the University of Missouri-Columbia. He is a board member of The Organic Center and the Amazon Conservation Team. He and his wife Deb Callahan live in Bethesda, MD with their two-year old son, Callahan Cook.



PHOTOGRAPHER: D. SHARON PRUITT

“The 35-year-old federal law regulating tap water is so out of date that the water Americans drink can pose what scientists say are serious health risks — and still be legal.” (*The New York Times*, 2009)

## Cleaning Up Toxics

Not often can you bring up cell phones, drinking water and cosmetics in the same sentence, but now we here at EWG often do. All three of these everyday items come from weakly regulated industries and have been shown to have potentially harmful health effects.

### Drinking Water

EWG believes the federal government has a responsibility to do a national assessment of drinking water quality. But since it hasn't, EWG and *The New York Times* launched an unprecedented partnership to analyze 20 million tap water quality tests in 48,000 U.S. communities. EWG's finding: Some drinking water supplies contain legal but unsafe contaminants, and the government does not even regulate over 50% of the 315 contaminants found. *The Times'* investigative series, “Toxic Waters,” by Charles Duhigg, won major journalism awards.

### Bottled Water

If you want to know what's in your tap water or where it comes from, you can ask your local water utility and by law they have to tell you. But if you want to get this basic information from a bottled water company, you are usually out of luck: EWG's 2009 report on bottled water labels found that less than 2 percent disclosed the

water's source, how the water has been purified, and what chemical pollutants each bottle of water may contain. These findings not only garnered major media attention — EWG Senior Vice President Jane Houlihan testified at a Congressional oversight hearing, at which the entire report was submitted to the Congressional record.

### Cell Phones

We at EWG believe that until scientists know much more about cell phone radiation, it's smart for consumers to buy phones with the lowest emissions, so EWG created a user-friendly interactive online guide to cell phone radiation. Released in September 2009, EWG's cell phone guide logged 1.5 million visitors in a single month. The report also alerted consumers to the gaps in federal regulation of cell phones, and the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) has embraced major aspects of EWG's recommendations on cell phone safety.

### Sunscreens

Three years into EWG's campaign for more effective sunscreens, 70 percent of those sold for the 2009 beach season contained stronger UVA filters, compared to just 29 percent in 2008. The number of sunscreens containing oxybenzone, a hormone-disrupting ingredient approved

by FDA but black-flagged by EWG, dropped by 19 percent in 2009. EWG's 2009 Sunscreen Guide featured new sections on moisturizers and lip balms.

### Pesticides

In March of 2009, EWG released the 5th update to the popular Shopper's Guide to Pesticides. The Shopper's Guide, which helps consumers minimize their exposure to pesticides by showing the fruits and vegetables most likely to be contaminated, got a fresh new look and became EWG's first iPhone app. A perennial favorite of both the mainstream media and the blogosphere, the Guide has been downloaded by tens of thousands of website visitors and widely shared.



“Thank you so very, very much for the work that you do. As a first time mom, I have referred to your website more times than I can count and have tried to spread the word to anyone who will listen or open an email I send. The information has been invaluable.” (S.V.E., Aliso Viejo, Calif.)

## Thinking Smarter and Safer on Energy

Climate change, global warming, clean coal, biofuels, carbon sequestration, hydraulic fracturing, renewable fuel standards ... the jargon gets confusing. In 2009 EWG decided to not focus on what to call it, but on the facts. And one fact we couldn't ignore was that green energy should not mean more corn, or polluting our watersheds with diesel, or mining the Grand Canyon.

### Ethanol

EWG changed the national conversation about corn ethanol, highlighting its false promise as a solution for climate change and energy freedom.

EWG's research team pointed out that corn-based ethanol was vacuuming up the lion's share of federal tax credits and subsidies for renewable energy. It highlighted little-noticed federal data showing that the \$3 billion in tax credits that helped prop up the environmentally damaging ethanol industry in 2007 was more than four times the amount available to companies trying to expand all other forms of renewable energy, including solar, wind and geothermal.

With the federal government poised in 2010 to make crucial decisions on whether to allow higher blends of ethanol in

gasoline and extend the “blenders' tax credit” that costs taxpayers billions, EWG's research and effective advocacy played a lead role in stripping away ethanol's former mantle as a green energy “free lunch” and exposing it instead as “an over-hyped and dubious renewal energy option.”

EWG's growing Agriculture team also took aim at complaints that pending climate legislation in Congress would prove costly to farmers, making a persuasive case in the “*Crying Wolf*” report that farmers had far more to fear from the impact of a warming climate than from a climate bill. Although prospects for a climate bill remain distant, farm state opponents found their demands for relief effectively challenged by EWG's analysis.

### Fracking

EWG spent six months investigating the threat posed by hydraulic fracturing or “fracking” technology used in 90 percent of the nation's natural gas and oil wells, particularly by drilling companies seeking to extract vast quantities of natural gas locked in rock deposits under large regions of the Northeast, Arkansas, Louisiana and Texas.

In October 2009, EWG Senior Counsel Dusty Horwitt testified before the New York City Council's Environmental Protection Committee on the threat that hydraulic fracturing represents to the city's watershed, which overlaps large portions of a gas-rich deposit known as the Marcellus shale. Key lawmakers and opinion leaders joined Horwitt in raising alarms about the danger to drinking water supplies from New York to Wyoming and, so far, New York State has not allowed drilling in the New York City watershed or other areas in the Marcellus shale.

### Mining

In July 2009, Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar announced a two-year moratorium on new mining claims on one million acres around Grand Canyon National Park. Speculators had filed a flurry of uranium mining claims in response to higher uranium prices driven in turn by growing interest in nuclear power. But EWG's Horwitt and others called attention to the threat the mining activity would pose to this national icon and the 25 million Americans living downstream who depend for drinking water on the Colorado River which flows through the canyon. Their work over more than two years helped to lay the groundwork for Salazar's wise decision.



“Throughout the angry Senate debate about whether to limit subsidies to wealthy farmers, lawmakers kept referring to ‘the web site.’ No one had to ask ‘what web site?’ It was [www.ewg.org](http://www.ewg.org), operated by the Environmental Working Group, a small nonprofit with the simple idea that taxpayers who underwrite \$20 billion in farm subsidies have the right to know who gets the money.” (The New York Times, 2002)

## Fighting for Sound Agriculture Policies

Building on its leadership role in advocating for rational agricultural practices that focus on limiting erosion and runoff of nitrogen, carbon and phosphorus, conservation, and promoting healthier crops, in the summer of 2009 EWG unveiled AgMag, an elegant new online platform that showcases our cutting-edge research and bullet-proof analysis and commentary.

While AgMag’s audience has been modest in absolute numbers, fervent feedback from those on all sides of these debates documents that AgMag has quickly become a leading forum for intelligent and informed debate on the widespread failures of U.S. agricultural policy.

Seeking to broaden the political base of support for reform, EWG in 2009 became the first environmental organization to join forces with the Grocery Manufacturers Association and livestock industry to fight the unsupported claims of the ethanol lobby. That linkage has grown into an effective coalition that helps counterbalance the Big Ag lobby’s lavish spending.

EWG has taken a lead role in seeking to expand adoption of farming systems that conserve carbon and nitrogen as part of the global effort to curtail greenhouse gas emissions. In both California and Washington, D.C., EWG research has focused on the crucial role that good agricultural practices can play in smart climate policy. To make that case, EWG researchers issued influential reports and presentations that included *“Loopholes in Climate Bill Offset Provisions,”* *“Dead Zone Action Needed,”* *“Facing Facts in the Chesapeake Bay,”* *“State-by-State Funding Cuts, Part Deux”* (on cuts in agricultural conservation programs) and *“Seizing a Watershed Moment.”*

Realistically, the battle for intelligent and climate-smart agricultural policies is a difficult one. Those who benefit from today’s misguided policies are deeply entrenched and well funded. But it is a battle in which EWG has the knowledge and communication skills to shine a light into the dark corners, identify the harmful consequences for the environment and human health and press federal and state policy makers to recognize that there is a better way.

## Get the Facts

- » Federal subsidies to a single cotton farm in 2005: \$2.95 million
- » Federal funding for organics research in 2006: \$3 million
- » Subsidies to farmers (1995 – 2006): \$177 billion



“Thank you for empowering us with the knowledge to protect ourselves from such hazards and for providing the resources which enable us to be better stewards of this incredible world... Not only am I inspired to be more conscientious of the effects my actions have on others, my awareness has been equally heightened concerning the need for the preservation and healing of our beautiful planet.”  
(D.W., Vienna, Va.)

## EWG Action Fund

Five years. Yes, it's been five years since the Kid-Safe Chemicals Act was first introduced to reform the Toxic Substances Control Act of 1976. Now in 2010, both House and Senate committees are finally working on meaningful legislation.

If you're like us, you may be wondering “why now?” Thanks in large part to EWG's policy achievements, we're happy to report that *the times they are a-changing*.

**“We're at a transformative moment. There are differences of opinion. I salute you for getting together in the room to talk about it.”**

That was Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Lisa P. Jackson at an historic, EWG-hosted conference where she committed to “comprehensive reform” of the nation's toxic chemicals laws, particularly for contaminants that affect children. In 2009 we saw many indications that reform is on the horizon, as a number of states and the federal government moved their chemical policies in the right direction.

### BPA

Major baby bottle manufacturers switched to non-BPA plastic. Lawmakers in Minnesota, Connecticut, Maryland, Washington state, Suffolk County, N.Y. and Chicago voted to ban BPA in food packaging for babies and young children. The California Assembly voted 35-to-31 for a similar ban, falling just short of the 41 votes needed for passage. We feel confident that the legislation will pass in 2010. Meanwhile, California regulators proposed to add warning labels to canned and bottled food containing BPA, and the issue is now under active consideration by the California Environmental Protection Agency.

### Hex Chrome

In August 2009, California officials proposed a strict safety standard for hexavalent chromium, a water pollutant that became infamous as the “Erin Brockovich chemical.” Regulators plan to embark on a rule-making process to set a legally enforceable upper limit of .06 parts per billion for chromium-6 in the state's water supply.

### Other Chemical Threats

A federal ban went into effect on Feb. 10, 2009 for toxic plasticizers called phthalates in children's toys and childcare items. Under pressure from EWG and other advocates, EPA and three chemical companies also agreed to end production, importation and use of Decabromodiphenyl ether (Deca), a neurotoxic chemical and possible carcinogen, by the end of 2013. Deca, commonly added to consumer electronics, furniture, textiles and plastic shipping pallets, is biopersistent and presents particular dangers to children. EWG continues to support a federal ban and rules to assure safe substitutes.

### What is EWG Action Fund?

*The mission of the Environmental Working Group Action Fund (EWGAF) is to energize lawmakers and citizens to create a healthier future for our children. EWGAF is a 501(c)(4) organization, founded in 2002 by the Environmental Working Group.*

*To be a 501(c)(4) organization, a nonprofit must be operated exclusively for the promotion of social welfare and can engage in lobbying or political activity.*



“I’m happy to invest in the great work EWG is doing... I am passionate about people taking back their power and responsibility, so much of which they’ve given away to the experts, the authorities and the government over the past decade. And the only way they can do that is through information they can trust.” (P.A., Framingham, Mass.)

## Leadership Circle

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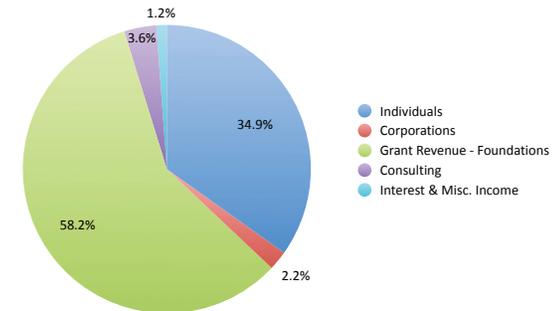
*Top Rated 6 Years in a Row*



## Financials

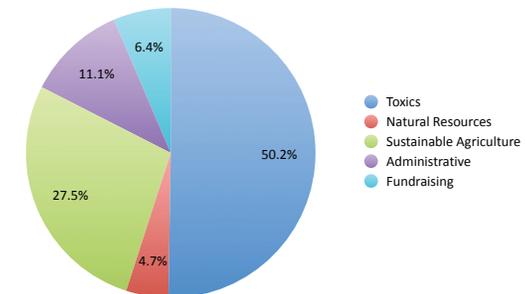
### 2009 Revenue

Individuals	\$1,224,402	34.9%
Corporations	\$75,923	2.2%
Grant Revenue - Foundations	\$2,043,119	58.2%
Consulting	\$127,201	3.6%
Interest & Misc. Income	\$40,877	1.2%
<b>Total Revenues</b>	<b>\$3,511,522</b>	<b>100.0%</b>



### 2009 Expenses

Toxics	\$2,558,160	50.2%
Natural Resources	\$240,820	4.7%
Sustainable Agriculture	\$1,401,416	27.5%
Administrative	\$564,432	11.1%
Fundraising	\$326,547	6.4%
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$5,091,375</b>	<b>100.0%</b>



Prior Data	2008	2007	2006	2005	2004
Revenue	6,570,003	4,280,586	3,587,078	3,773,746	2,811,403
Expenses	4,827,119	3,884,723	3,230,003	2,749,547	2,447,440



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