

2026 ADRP Northeast – Mid-Atlantic Regional Conference

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NRDC's Digital Stewardship Transformation

Elizabeth Maguire, Associate Director, Donor Stewardship — NRDC

Remy Erkel, Account Executive — Overture

Meet Elizabeth & the NRDC Stewardship Team



Gabriela
Guerra

- Leadership
- Stewardship Strategy
- Manages Engagement team



Elizabeth
Maguire

- Team Manager
- Stewardship Strategy
- Reporting Management



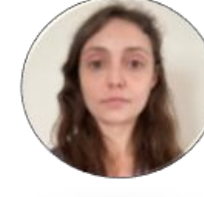
Martel
Catalano

- Stewardship Strategy
- Reporting Management
- Special projects



Carly
Brownell

- Reporting Management
- Membership and Planned Giving stewardship



Renee
Gulotta

- Admin
- Gift Intake
- Database management

Stewardship Materials

- Acknowledgement letters
- Gift pledge and/or gift agreement
- Grant/impact reports
- Endowment reports
- Matching gift reports

- Program updates
- Stewardship communication (condolences, congratulations, etc.)
- Bespoke stewardship touchpoints
- Holiday Cards

Roadmap - What We'll Cover Today

1. The Old Way
2. The Shift
3. Year One: Wins, Challenges & Lessons
4. Our Advice
5. What's Next

The Old Way — What Reporting Looked Like

- 8+ page Word documents. A few photos, lots of text.
- No design tools. No engagement data. No way to know if anyone read them.
- Swap one story → reformat the whole document.



Addressing Climate Through Natural Systems

Forests, grasslands, wetlands, and other natural areas absorb and store excess carbon from Earth's atmosphere, protect biodiversity, and increase climate resilience in both ecosystems and human communities. NRDC advances initiatives that preserve and restore natural systems. Our strategies promote regenerative agriculture policies and practices and support the United Nations international target of safeguarding 30 percent of the world's wild lands and waters by 2030.

TRANSFORMING AGRICULTURE FROM CARBON SOURCE TO CLIMATE SOLUTION

The agriculture sector represents a critical opportunity to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from food, fiber, and fuel production and sequester more carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. NRDC advocates for regenerative practices such as low-till farming, cover crops, prairie strips, rotational grazing, and composting to restore soil health, improve water use, reduce fertilizer and pesticide use, and benefit ecosystems, farmers, and consumers alike.

In June 2021, the U.S. Department of Agriculture announced the Pandemic Cover Crop Program (PCCP), which provides a \$5 per acre discount on crop insurance premiums to producers who planted a qualifying cover crop—e.g., alfalfa, rye, clover—between cash crops in 2021. The program provides short-term financial benefits to farmers who have faced tough challenges over the past year while building healthy soils that absorb carbon, better resist erosion, and produce larger yields over the long term. PCCP was closely modeled on the cover crop incentive programs NRDC

STANDING UP FOR PROGRESS AT THE GLASGOW CLIMATE CONFERENCE

The United Nations Conference of Parties (COP26) is a rare opportunity to push for change on an international scale. Led by our new President Manish Babna, NRDC will actively participate to secure firm climate commitments from the world's largest emitters: China, India, and the United States. China's climate planning to date has focused on its energy sector. However, its use of nature-based solutions (large-scale conservation and restoration of ecosystems) has the potential to both drastically decrease total emissions while preventing extinctions of unique Asian wildlife. NRDC is pursuing various channels to heighten awareness of this opportunity among the Chinese delegation. India has hesitated to raise its ambitions on climate, insisting that more developed nations fulfill their promises first. NRDC will work to convince the Indian delegation that it is in the national interest to participate now; that doing so will create jobs in renewable energy, improve air quality and health by reducing emissions, enhance rural livelihoods through access to clean energy, and attract more climate and private financing. Finally, NRDC hopes to leverage COP26 to push for stronger U.S. commitments given the United States' aim to project credible domestic policies and thereby rally stronger action from other countries. In particular, NRDC will urge the United States to scale up its international climate finance ambition.

ENSURING OUR ECONOMIC RECOVERY LEADS TO A HEALTHIER FUTURE

As we continue to grapple with a catastrophic pandemic and its fallout, NRDC is taking action to ensure the federal government moves to protect public health and boost the economy. Our team helped shape the federal

stimulus CARES Act (Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act), including recommending improvements to the bill, such as \$900 million in low-income energy and energy efficiency assistance funding. In December 2020, NRDC helped secure federal clean energy incentives when the Energy Policy Act of 2020 passed as part of the federal omnibus legislation. The Act includes an extension of the solar power investment tax credit for two more years and extensions of tax incentives for solar and wind generation—essential to meeting President Biden's goal of 100 percent clean electricity by 2035. And this summer, NRDC spearheaded a broad effort around the bipartisan infrastructure bill and the related reconciliation package. Our staff urged decisionmakers to reject anti-NEPA provisions that would undermine resistance to the permitting of fossil fuel development projects, secure investment in clean transportation, and replace lead service pipelines that threaten public health—especially children's health—across the nation. While infrastructure discussions are ongoing, the passing of earlier bills shows there is some bipartisan support for addressing climate in Congress. We are continuing efforts to win additional investments to help create clean energy jobs and make progress toward a healthier and more equitable future.

Efforts from the NRDC Action Fund

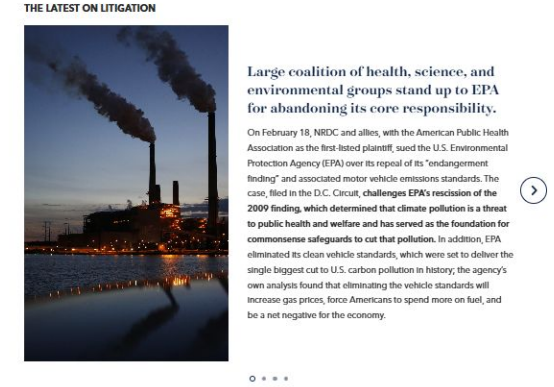
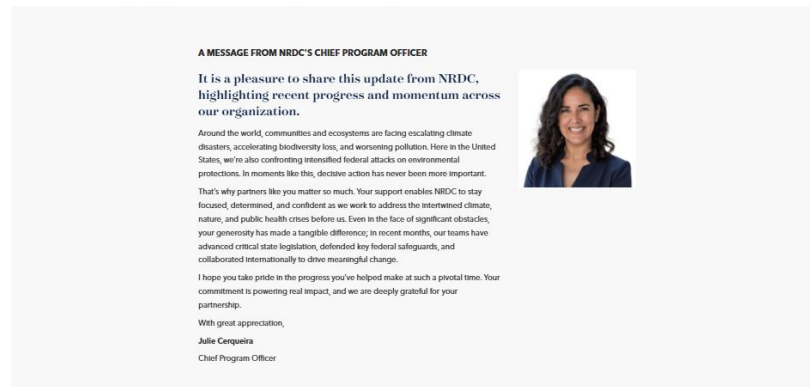
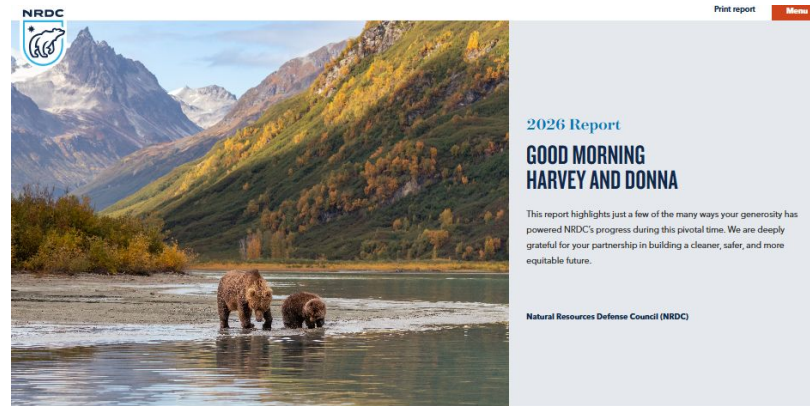
NRDC's work is boosted thanks to additional lobbying and advocacy efforts by the NRDC Action Fund, our 501(c)(4) affiliate. The NRDC Action Fund has deep campaign expertise and the backing of nearly one million members and activists who contact their lawmakers regularly. Separately from NRDC, the NRDC Action Fund engages in targeted electoral activities to ensure lawmakers and candidates hear demand for climate action.

The Shift — Why Go Digital?

- The natural next step: Print → PDF → Web-based
- Not a total overhaul. An upgrade to what they were already doing digitally.
- Flexibility, customization, and analytics.

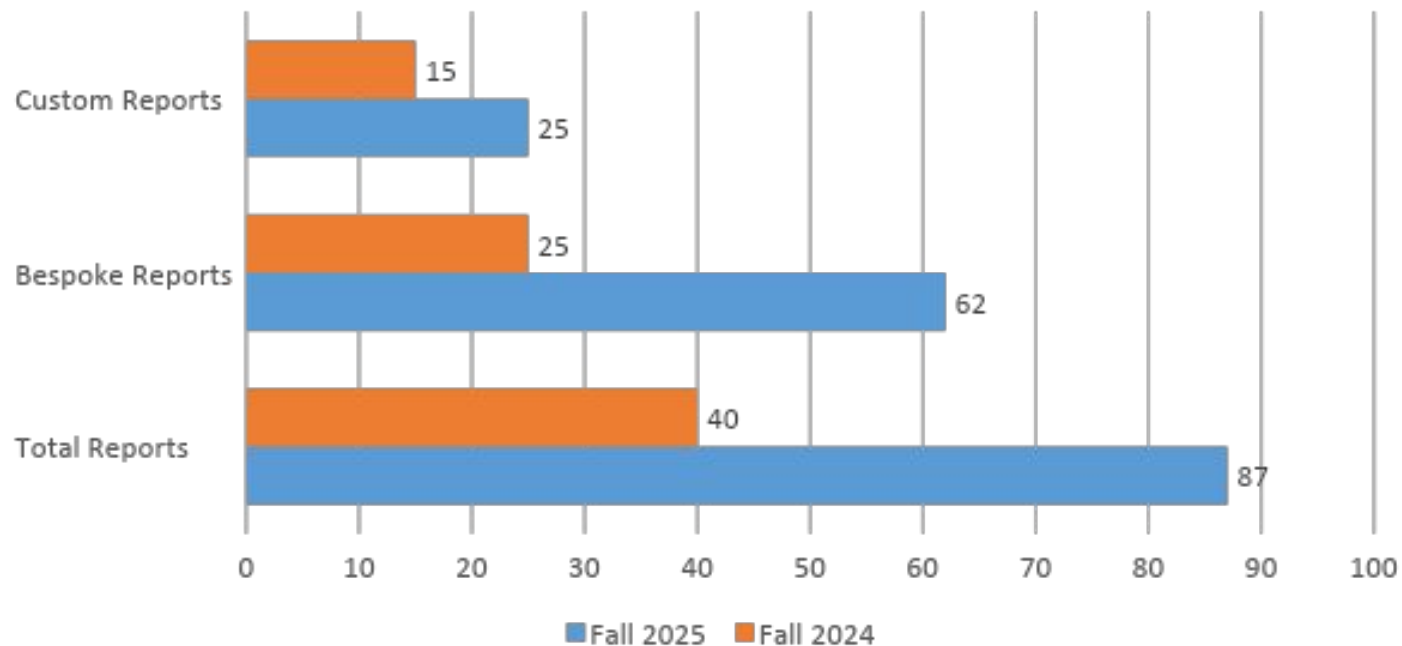
The Shift — A Digital Reporting Platform

- Web-based donor reports. Modular content. Built-in analytics.
- Build a story block once, then swap it in and out by donor interest.
- Content collection stayed the same, but a new delivery method.



Quick Win — Doubled Output, Same Team

- 2x report volume. Same 2-person team.
- Went from annual to biannual general updates, plus more custom reports.



How We Did It — Segmentation and Modular Content

- Build stories once. Swap by donor interest.
- Solar donor → solar story. Wildlife donor → wildlife story
- Don't need to start from scratch for each donor.
- Can build in batches by donor segment, then tailor if needed.

Opt Into Report	Notes	Completed
X	Climate, litigation, environmental health	X
X	Climate, litigation	X
X	Nature	X
X	Litigation, Nature	X

Year One — The Power of 2.5 Minutes

- Average donor viewing time: ~2.5 minutes
- Data to support what we knew: reports needed to be shorter and more succinct.

382

unique reports
sent

2:14

average time
spent reading



Year One — Who's Actually Reading?

- Membership donors read longer than major gift donors.
- Now shaping stewardship strategy for entirely new populations.



Year One — The 20% Open Rate

- First round of reports: 20% open rate.
- Root cause: no gift officer follow-up after reports were sent.



Year One — Fixing the Follow-Up Gap

- Export the distribution list. Filter for unopened. Send to MGOs for follow-up.
- A personal nudge from a gift officer signals this isn't a marketing email.

Year One — "Why Can't I Edit It"

- Gift officers lost direct editing access. Some pushed back.
- The response: share engagement data. Redirect energy from wordsmithing to outreach.



Hard Lesson — The Opt-In Learning Curve

- Opt-in model – MGO's choose who will receive general reports.
- Had to adjust and provide a list to the MGOs

IMPORTANT REMINDER: The link you share with the donor has analytics enabled, so if you click that link to view the report it will alter the data we collect on how the donor is engaging with the report. You should always use the review link here (NOT the link in the draft email) to view the report.

Your review link: [review link]
Passcode (case sensitive): nrdc6

----- **Begin Draft** -----

[donor email]

Dear [salutation],

I am pleased to share your spring 2026 impact report from NRDC. This report highlights the work you have helped make possible over the past few months.

NRDC is now using a digital platform for our impact reports. Please click on the private, personalized link to view:

[donor-facing link]
Passcode (case sensitive): nrdc6

If you have any questions or feedback about your report or have trouble accessing it, please let me know. Your trust and generosity keep NRDC moving forward at this critical moment. Thank you for your commitment to our work.

Sincerely,

[MGO name]

The PDF Question

- Some donors went straight to the PDF download. Some donors don't have email at all.
- Exploring a separate, shorter PDF-optimized version for print.



POWERING COMMUNITIES WITH JOBS AND CLEAN ENERGY

As federal incentives disappear, communicating the benefits of clean energy in cities and states has never been more important. Over the past few years, NRDC has worked with the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) to launch Power Your Community (PYC), an initiative to build local support for clean energy by educating communities about its benefits, including good-paying union jobs.

Our work began in Ohio, where we have helped overcome misinformation, share success stories, and get more than 37 projects approved. This past year, we expanded the partnership to five IBEW Locals in Virginia, seven in Pennsylvania, and two in Kansas. In October, we secured our first victory in Virginia, where we worked with IBEW Local 466 to help Carroll County **raise a proposed solar acreage by 50%—an amount that could power up to 20,000 homes and employ over 100 electricians.** We are working with IBEW to scope out opportunities in 15 additional states where PYC has relationships with IBEW district-level staff.

PROTECTING FEDERAL SOLAR AND WIND TAX INCENTIVES

The Trump administration's blockades of clean energy development persist—but so do we. In December, NRDC and partners **sued the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) and Department of Treasury over new rules for tax credits that unfairly and illegally discriminate against wind and solar projects.**

The proposed IRS guidance interprets the statutory term "beginning of construction" differently for wind and solar facilities than for all other types of energy, compromising renewables' ability to qualify for tax credits ending in July. If this guidance stays in place, wind and solar projects will become more difficult and expensive to implement at a time when electricity prices continue to rise. Our lawsuit

asks the court to declare these new rules arbitrary and capricious and reject them, restoring wind and solar projects' ability to rely on the prior rules that had been in place for more than a decade. Briefing is nearly complete, and we expect the Court's decision this spring.



Photo: Chris Bennett/Corbis Images

WINNING PFAS REGULATIONS IN NEW YORK STATE

In December, New York Governor Kathy Hochul signed the **Ban on PFAS & Toxic Chemicals in Menstrual Products Act** into law. The legislation marks a major step forward in safeguarding the health of people who use menstrual products in New York. With this law, the state joins California, Colorado, Connecticut, Illinois, Maine, Minnesota, Rhode Island, and Vermont in restricting PFAS in

menstrual products. As in Vermont, the New York law goes beyond other states by also restricting additional harmful chemicals such as parabens and heavy metals. This bill has been a priority of NRDC and our partners for several years. Looking ahead, legislation banning PFAS in a list of household and consumer products (including rugs, cookware, dental floss, paint, ski wax, cleaning supplies, architectural paint, and non-apparel textiles) remains one of our top priorities in New York in 2026, and we are ramping up efforts to move this forward.

PRESERVING MARINE HABITATS IN THE GULF OF CALIFORNIA

NRDC is celebrating a win in our fight against proposed liquified natural gas (LNG) export terminals on the coast of the Gulf of California. Famously referred to as the "aquarium of the world," the Gulf is a UNESCO World Heritage site and home to one-third of all marine mammal species. In October, we expanded our campaign and sent Sempra, the company behind one of three proposed terminals, a detailed open letter opposing its project. Since then, we've built coalitions, engaged

international partners, issued an open letter to the CEO, penned op-eds in the LA Times and San Diego Union Tribune, distributed an investor brief, and activated a suite of communications tools to strategically position our storytelling and advocacy around the issue. In early March, **Sempra announced that it will not move forward with its project.** While this marks a victory for the region's communities and cherished ecosystems, more work remains to be done; our campaign to stop the remaining two terminals is ongoing.



Photo: iStockphoto

Year One — Direct Donor Feedback

- Positive responses came in — but limited in volume.
- Don't extrapolate from two donors. Analytics tell you what hundreds are doing.

“I just looked over the report. We are excited to support such an amazing organization. You all are doing excellent work in the face of so many challenges.”

“Julie thought the new format Impact Report was really great. “I am so glad they are fighting hard to combat the disastrous policies to destroy the planet, our health and wildlife.”

Advice for your Rollout

1. Build in more time than you think you need.
2. Message benefits early and get buy-in — especially to long-tenure staff.
3. Get the questions out of the way before launch week.
4. It doesn't have to be a total workflow overhaul.



Year Two and Beyond

- Expanding outreaches to membership, planned giving, and foundation donors.
- Same playbook, modified for each audience. Not reinventing the wheel.
- Moving proposals to Overture

Key Takeaways

- **Data over gut feeling.** Viewing time, scroll patterns, and open rates give you evidence for decisions you'd otherwise debate in committee.
- **Change management.** Front-load communication with gift officers. Structure your opt-in process. Accept that some resistance is inevitable, but data can win over doubtful team members.
- **Segmentation and modular content.** Build reusable content. Tailor by audience. That's how a small team doubles their output.

Questions?



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