

ClientEarth Americas 2025 Impact Report

Holding corporations accountable for a livable future

Our unique approach

ClientEarth Americas is committed to changing the environmentally destructive behavior of the worst corporate actors in order to ensure a future with clean air, clean water and a safe climate for everyone. In pursuing this goal, we utilize our unique expertise to hold corporate and financial institutions directly accountable for their devastating impact on our planet.

This matters.

With a focus on systemic change, ClientEarth Americas targets key leverage points in the corporate and financial sectors to shift behavior and drive long-term environmental accountability. Supported by a growing network of philanthropists and funders, ClientEarth Americas continues to expand its impact during this critical decade for climate action

Our attorneys are leading groundbreaking litigation, such as holding oil and gas companies accountable for abandoning methane-leaking wells, dissuading banks from backing a large-scale fossil fuel project that threatens a UNESCO World Heritage Site, and pioneering novel legal theories to steer capital away from fossil fuels and towards clean energy alternatives.



"You are taking a stand against destructive companies. Thanks to your support, we are empowered to drive rapid, far-reaching change for the good of the planet."

- **Danielle Lackey, Executive Director, ClientEarth Americas**



Tackling zombie wells

Oil and gas companies are legally and financially responsible for plugging their wells and cleaning up drilling sites once production ends. But across the U.S., millions of wells are being abandoned because some companies exploit loopholes to walk away from these expensive cleanup duties.

Turning corporate neglect into accountability

In February 2024, ClientEarth Americas filed *McCormick et al. v. HRM Resources LLC et al.*, one of the first U.S. class-action lawsuits targeting oil companies for fraudulently transferring their wells to shed asset retirement obligation (ARO) liabilities. The case alleges that HRM sold low-producing low producing wells burdened with high ARO liabilities to an undercapitalized buyer that quickly became insolvent, leaving the wells abandoned. The scheme appeared designed to offload cleanup costs, shifting the burden from corporations to taxpayers.



Progress made in 2025

In October 2025, the Colorado court granted class certification in the case, delivering a meaningful victory that elevated the matter from an individual dispute to a high stakes challenge for the defendant oil companies. Class certification indicates that the claims have legal strength, economic significance, and a credible path to success, marking a significant milestone in efforts to establish stronger accountability for abandoned well obligations.



Although the ruling does not resolve the underlying claims, it substantially broadens the scale and impact of the case. The oil companies now faced a single, unified action representing all affected landowners rather than isolated suits with limited leverage. The decision also strengthens the plaintiffs' position, as the court recognized that Colorado landowners shared common issues appropriate for collective adjudication, providing a stronger and more coherent pathway toward justice.

Reshaping the legal landscape for abandoned wells

The developments in Colorado are already generating measurable effects in other jurisdictions. Taken together, surviving the motion to dismiss and securing class certification signaled to courts and legal practitioners that the underlying legal theory is robust, that similar actions are likely to advance, and that plaintiffs may now have viable avenues to pursue accountability and relief.



Protecting a threatened marine sanctuary

A UNESCO World Heritage site and home to more than one-third of all marine mammal species, it's where life flourishes in ways found nowhere else—blue whales calving in sheltered waters, vaquita porpoises navigating by sound, and coastal communities drawing sustenance from the sea. But its future is now under threat.

Known as the Saguaro Energia project, it would industrialize pristine shores, cut gas pipelines through desert habitats, and unleash millions of tons of planet-heating methane pollution. In doing so, it puts irreplaceable species at even greater risk and accelerates the climate crisis.





By backing this project, major banks like JPMorgan Chase, Santander and MUFG are choosing to prop up a fossil fuel system that's already pushing our communities, ecosystems, and climate to the brink.

"At ClientEarth, we're working to expose and challenge this destruction and hold corporations accountable. We've alerted JPMorgan Chase that its continued involvement could expose the bank to serious financial, legal, and reputational risks—including potential scrutiny over greenwashing and investor misrepresentation."



- **Hana Heineken, Attorney, ClientEarth Americas**

For further context, you can read additional insights from Hana Heineken, ClientEarth Attorney, in her article [here](#). You can also access the [full ClientEarth–Natural Resources Defense Council \(NRDC\) analysis](#), which details the significant legal, financial, and reputational risks MUFG may face through its involvement in the Saguaro Energia LNG project.

If you are reading a printed version of this report, you can find these resources by visiting www.clientearth.us and searching our latest news.

We're working to mobilize people around the world to demand better from the corporations backing this disastrous plan. Together, we can send a clear message: the Gulf of California is not a sacrifice zone for fossil fuel profits.

Looking ahead: 2026 and beyond

As we move into 2026, climate change will continue to shape the work we do. The progress we have made in our “zombie well” case is setting a new foundation for corporate accountability, and the challenge now is to convert that courtroom win into systemic change across industries.

Turning legal momentum into systemic impact

We will define success in the “zombie well” case this year by securing strong litigation outcomes following our class certification victory, with the prospect of summary judgment or other favorable results now within reach. We will also demonstrate impact by establishing the precedential value of the case in ways that can be replicated across other jurisdictions.



Shielding America's retirement savings from climate risk

In March 2026, ClientEarth Americas launched a landmark case against Cushman & Wakefield for putting its workers' retirement savings at risk by steering them into a high-exposure fund filled with companies vulnerable to climate disruption. Although the firm publicly acknowledges that climate change threatens its business and advises clients on managing these risks, it has not applied the same protections to its employees' 401(k)s, leaving their savings exposed to financial dangers from extreme weather, regulatory shifts, and the declining value of high-carbon industries. With more than \$12 trillion in American retirement accounts, this case reaches far beyond one company and seeks to set a precedent requiring those who safeguard workers' futures to take climate risk seriously. A victory would help ensure that people who earn every dollar of their retirement savings are not left carrying hidden and avoidable climate-driven losses.

Exposing climate risk in the U.S. retirement system

Billion-dollar weather disasters have surged nationwide, and insurers are retreating from high-risk regions, leaving families with inadequate last-resort coverage. The industry has long understood climate risks yet continued to market stability while investing heavily in fossil fuel expansion. ClientEarth Americas aims to confront these practices through litigation that exposes misleading conduct, secures relief for policyholders, and compels greater transparency in underwriting and pricing decisions.

Challenging agribusiness-driven environmental harm

In 2026, Latin America and the Caribbean's biodiversity remains threatened as multinational agribusiness companies and their U.S.-linked financial backers continue driving deforestation, human rights abuses, and greenhouse gas emissions. This year, ClientEarth Americas is advancing forward-looking, U.S.-based strategic litigation, to expose systemic corporate misconduct, financial crime, and environmental harm embedded in agribusiness supply chains, especially the beef sector. Our aim is to shift incentives by holding companies and financial institutions accountable for climate, environmental, and social damage, while strengthening partnerships with civil society, Indigenous Peoples, and local communities. Through these efforts, we seek to reshape global commodity systems toward models that protect nature, uphold rights, and safeguard the climate.

Building partnerships, catalyzing litigation, and shaping reform

We continue to initiate strategic litigation partnerships that break new legal ground and contribute to precedent-setting outcomes. Moving forward, we are accelerating momentum for public interest litigation by enabling actions led by state authorities, municipalities, and whistleblowers. We are also broadening our work by collaborating with academic institutions to produce influential policy research that informs legislative and regulatory change.

Your vision and commitment are powering global climate action and giving vital momentum to a more abundant future for people and the planet. If you wish to direct a personal or institutional gift, I am happy to assist you.

Give with confidence. ClientEarth USA earned a Four-Star Charity rating from Charity Navigator and a Candid Gold Seal of Transparency on Guidestar.

ClientEarth USA, Inc. is a registered 501(c)(3) US organization, EIN 81-0722756
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