



Fall Report

A summer spent fighting for clean water

Closing polluter loopholes with grassroots action

Late this spring, the Environmental Protection Agency proposed a rule to close loopholes in the Clean Water Act that have left more than 60 percent of Iowa's streams and the drinking water for more than half a million Iowans at risk for more than a decade.

On the heels of the EPA's announcement this summer, Environment Iowa launched a grassroots campaign to build the public support necessary to get the rule across the finish line. Meanwhile, over the course of several months, our staff talked to thousands of people across the state, collected hundreds of public comments to the EPA, and built a coalition of small business owners, local elected officials, and farmers.

6.8 million pounds of chemicals

Big polluters ramped up their efforts to block the rule, lobbying in Congress, spreading misinformation, and threatening "legal warfare."

But we debunked their claims when we released the report, "Wasting Our Waterways," which found that 6,827,801 pounds of toxic chemicals were dumped in Iowa's waterways in 2012 alone.

"America's waterways shouldn't be a polluter's dumping ground," said Ally Fields, Environment Iowa federal clean water advocate. "If we want our waterways to be clean for future generations to enjoy, we must restore Clean Water Act protections to our waterways now."



John Langholz

▲ *The Upper Iowa River is one of many Iowa waterways that will be protected by closing loopholes in the Clean Water Act.*

Businesses, farmers joined us

And when polluters launched a misinformation campaign targeting farmers, and lobbied in Congress saying the rule would negatively impact small businesses, we hit the streets. Together with our national federation, we gathered the signatures of 300 small business owners and collected comments from more than

200 farmers to call on the EPA to restore protections.

The fight is far from over, but we're closing in on the finish line. With the public comment period coming to a close soon, we're ramping up our efforts to show Congress the widespread support for clean water.



Staff

take action

◀ *Environment Iowa Federal Clean Water Advocate Ally Fields working to achieve clean waterways for Iowa.*

We can win a huge victory for our waterways—but only if enough of us speak out. Visit our website to take action: www.EnvironmentIowa.org



Staff

To our members

This past summer was a whirlwind. Our citizen outreach staff talked to people across the state and collected thousands of petition signatures to protect Iowa's rivers and streams. We've made so much progress, and we owe that success to members like you.

Now, as fall gets underway, it's important to remember another important aspect of the movement for a cleaner, greener Iowa: Electing leaders who will do the right thing for our environment. Elections can have huge implications, and if our elected officials are willing to stand up for clean air, clean water and our open spaces, we stand a far better chance of winning lasting improvements.

So, if you haven't already, I encourage you to make plans to vote, and to bring family and friends with you to the polls. It's our environment and our future—let's get out there and vote!

Sincerely,

Shelley Vinyard
Regional Director

Recent action

Coalition unites for solar day of action

On June 21, Environment Iowa and our national federation celebrated the summer solstice by organizing a "Solar Day of Action" to expand solar power in communities across the country.

Our national federation's outreach efforts generated more than 15,000 emails to President Obama urging him to put solar on federal buildings, and hundreds of people shared our social media meme. Our partner organizations also held events to celebrate new installations, workshops to educate the public about installing solar, and generated social media shares and donations.

Thanks in part to our advocacy, 2014 has been a breakout year for solar, with more solar installed in the last year and a half than in the past 30 years combined. The United States now has enough solar capacity to power more than 2.2 million homes, and in many states, solar is now competitive with other sources of energy—without emitting dangerous greenhouse gases.

Conserving Iowa's natural heritage

Holding the line for Iowa's natural heritage is a key part of our mission. That's why standing by as Congress attempts to zero out funding for the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF), our most successful parks and open space program, wasn't an option for us.

This past July, the LWCF celebrated its 50th anniversary—50 years of protecting places like Maquoketa Caves and Honey Creek State Park from overdevelopment, pollution, and disrepair. But with funding for the LWCF threatened, the places that make up Iowa's natural heritage are on the line.

Along with our national federation, we're bringing people together to urge our senators to make preserving our special places a priority. By standing up to anti-environment members of Congress, our senators can leave a lasting legacy for our parks.

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Phil Reeder

▲ Maquoketa Caves State Park

Toxic chemical releases into local waters puts public health at risk

6.8 million pounds of chemicals dumped

From the Des Moines to the Raccoon, Iowa's rivers are tranquil and beautiful, and help make Iowa a great place to live.

But in 2012, industrial facilities dumped more than 6.8 million pounds of toxic chemicals into Iowa's waterways, according to our report, "Wasting Our Waterways," which ranked Iowa in the top third of the country for most polluted waters.

Our health at risk

Of the chemicals released into local waterways, more than 16,000 pounds were cancer-causing, nearly 3,000 pounds were harmful to development, and more than 19,500 pounds could cause reproductive harm.

The Blackbird-Soldier Rivers, which run through Iowa and Nebraska, was ranked fifth worst in the nation for total toxic releases, topping out at 4.3 million pounds of chemicals.

The culprits? Industrial farming operations are treating our waters as their own personal sewers. Cargill Meat Solutions in Ottumwa was ranked one of the top 10 worst polluters of waterways in the country, releasing more than 2.8 million pounds of toxic chemicals into the Lower Des Moines River. And Tyson Fresh Meats, Inc. at Columbus Junction released 1.7 million pounds of chemicals into the Lower Iowa River.

These industrial agriculture facilities were responsible for approximately one-third of direct nitrate discharges to waterways, which can cause serious health problems in infants if found in drinking water and which contribute to oxygen-deprived "dead zones" in rivers, streams and lakes. This pollution is in addition to the huge volumes of runoff pollution that factory farms and other agricultural operations generate.

Preventing water pollution

The continued discharge of millions of pounds of toxic chemicals to our rivers and streams clearly demonstrates the need for stronger action to protect our water and health.

That's why we're recommending that the United States prevent pollution by requiring industries to reduce their use of toxic chemicals and restore and strengthen Clean Water Act protections for all of Iowa's and America's waterways, which would prevent polluters from being able to avoid reporting toxic releases. We're also calling for Iowa to implement its own policies to phase out toxic chemicals and require the use of safer alternatives.

"Looking at the data, you can see why polluters might oppose any efforts to protect our waters," said Shelley Vinyard, Environment Iowa regional director. "That's why we're working with farmers, small businesses, and hundreds of Iowans to make sure our voices are heard for clean water. The future of the rivers and streams we love hangs in the balance."



Wasting Our Waterways
Toxic Industrial Pollution and Restoring the Promise of the Clean Water Act

research

To learn more about our work on clean water, visit, www.EnvironmentIowaCenter.org

THREATENING OUR HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENT

Industrial facilities dumped **206 million pounds** of toxic chemicals into American waterways in 2012.



According to the EPA, industrial pollution has left more than **17,000 miles of rivers** and about **210,000 acres of lakes, ponds or reservoirs** unable to support drinking, swimming, fishing or other uses.



Toxic chemicals dumped into waterways have the potential to seriously and adversely impact human health, from developmental harm to cancer.



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Environment Iowa

Our mission

We all want clean air, clean water and open spaces. But it takes independent research and tough-minded advocacy to win concrete results for our environment, especially when powerful interests stand in the way of environmental progress.

That's the idea behind Environment Iowa. We focus exclusively on protecting Iowa's air, water and open spaces. We speak out and take action at the local, state and national levels to improve the quality of our environment and our lives.

A groundbreaking step on global warming

This June, the Environmental Protection Agency proposed a Clean Power Plan that sets targets for states to reduce global warming pollution from dirty power plants by investing in renewable energy, cleaning up existing power plants, and switching to cleaner fuels. On the heels of the announcement, we launched a "Global Warming Solutions" campaign with our affiliates in 23 states to educate the public about the consequences of global warming and the meaningful impact of the Clean Power Plan.

"This is a huge deal," said Environment Iowa Regional Director Shelley Vinyard. "But it's not a done deal. Polluters are spending millions to oppose the plan, so we're working to ensure that people understand the threats posed by global warming and the huge opportunity the EPA's plan presents for a cleaner environment, more efficient economy, and healthier families."



epa.gov

Administrator Gina McCarthy
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

more online

Take action and join our fight against global warming at:
www.EnvironmentIowa.org

◀ EPA Administrator Gina McCarthy announced the Clean Power Plan, an historic step to limit pollution from power plants.