



Summer Report

Photo: David Mahnccke/Bigstock

EPA standard brings new hope for Iowa's rivers

Administration moves to close loopholes

This spring, Environment Iowa celebrated a big step forward for rivers and streams like the Des Moines and Cedar Rivers. After years of urging from the public, the Environmental Protection Agency proposed a rule to close loopholes in the Clean Water Act that leave more than 44,400 miles of Iowa's rivers and streams vulnerable to unchecked pollution.

This rulemaking comes after a decade of uncertainty over the jurisdiction of the Clean Water Act, following polluter-led Supreme Court challenges in 2001 and 2006. The rule, which could be finalized as soon as next spring, would restore Clean Water Act protections to many of the streams and wetlands that criss-cross the state and provide drinking water and recreational areas to thousands of Iowans.

Waterways need restoration

From the Missouri to the Mississippi, Iowa's rivers have long been subject to the threat of runoff pollution from industrial agriculture operations. There are currently 470 rivers and streams in Iowa that are too polluted for fishing, swimming and boating, and many have anywhere from two to 10 times more algae-causing phosphorus and nitrogen than is considered safe.

That's why Environment Iowa, along with its sister groups, have had more than 1 million face-to-face conversations with people across the country about the need to close loopholes in the Clean Water Act. This would place stronger protections on waterways, while preventing



Photo: John Langholz

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

polluters from using them as their personal sewer.

Earlier this fall, more than 150,000 people across the country submitted public comments to the EPA in support of the administration's steps to protect our waterways. And this summer, with the polluters' lobby—led by corporate agribusiness—ramping up to try to block

the rule in Congress, Environment Iowa has launched a citizen outreach campaign to build support for the rule.

Together with our affiliate groups around the country, we plan on having conversations with more than 500,000 people about the importance of waterways in their states and collecting more than 100,000 comments in support of the rule.



Photo: John W. Iwanski

take action

◀ White Pelicans at the Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge

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



Photo: Staff

To our members

I hope this note finds you well and gearing up for summer fishing, swimming, or boating with friends and family on the Missouri or Mississippi Rivers, or in a local waterway closer to your home. After a winter like this past one, there's nothing like being out in the fresh air and enjoying the warmth of the sun on your face.

For years, experiences like these are part of what Environment Iowa has been fighting for—to make sure that Iowa residents can experience their local environment without worrying about pollution or development. This summer's no different. We've launched a huge grassroots effort to protect Iowa's beautiful rivers by closing loopholes in the Clean Water Act.

Our rivers have faced inadequate protection for too long, and many are too polluted to enjoy recreationally. Together, we can strengthen the Clean Water Act and continue to protect the places we love for our children and generations to come.

Thank you for all you do,

Shelley Vinyard
Regional Program Director



Toward a greener future

Environment Iowa and Environment Iowa Research & Policy Center gratefully accept bequests, beneficiary designations of IRAs and life insurance, and gifts of securities to support our work to build a cleaner, greener, healthier future.

For more information, call 1-800-841-7299 or send an email to: PlannedGiving@EnvironmentIowa.org.

Recent action

Green Future Fund: A new way to honor supporters

Environment Iowa's new Green Future Fund honors donors who ensure a greener future for Iowa by remembering Environment Iowa or our sister group, Environment Iowa Research & Policy Center, in their estate plans.

Including Environment Iowa in your planning costs nothing today, while protecting the places we love and the values we share for the future.

With your permission, we'll recognize your gift in our publications, inspiring other members to make their own legacy gifts. Or you may choose to keep your gift private. Either way, any details you choose to provide about your gift will remain confidential.

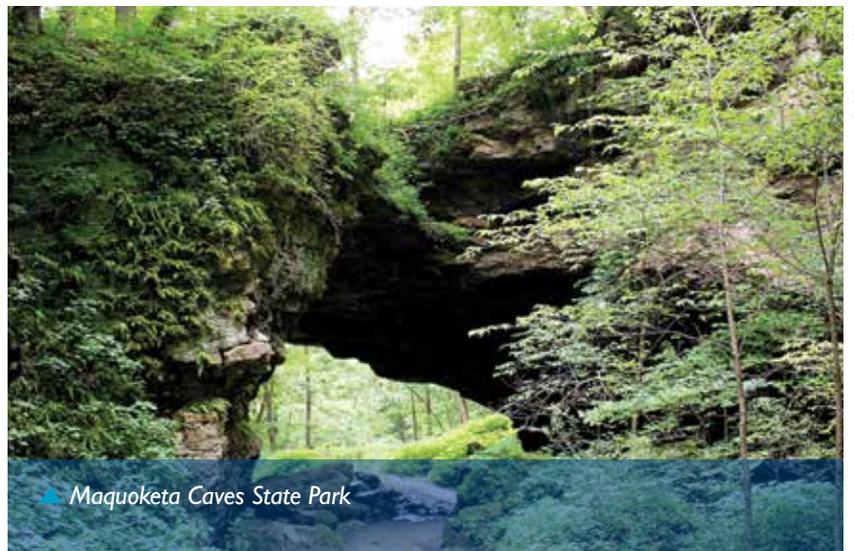
To enroll in the Green Future Fund, or to learn more, call 1-800-841-7299 ext. 312, or email PlannedGiving@EnvironmentIowa.org.

Promise kept to protect our wild places

President Obama took decisive action to protect our public lands in Iowa this spring when he fully funded the Land and Water Conservation Fund, America's premier land conservation program, in his budget. These actions came on the heels of the president's 2014 State of the Union promise: "I'll use my authority to protect more of our pristine federal lands for future generations."

Yet LWCF funding is set to expire altogether in 2015, a move that would leave amazing places like Maquoketa Caves and Honey Creek State Park vulnerable to overdevelopment, pollution and disrepair.

Last winter, as the LWCF came on the chopping block, Environment Iowa and its affiliate organizations mobilized thousands of Americans to call on their elected officials to protect our parks and their funding. Now, we're working to make sure that the LWCF receives the support it needs to continue to protect our special places.



Maquoketa Caves State Park

Photo: Phil Roeder

Factory farm pollution plagues Iowa's rivers

For most people in Iowa, the state's rivers mean canoeing, swimming, or simply relaxation. Iowa's rivers and streams also provide drinking water for more than 600,000 Iowans.

Yet for years, Iowa's waterways have faced the constant threat of pollution from nearby factory farm operations. Runoff pollution from industrial agriculture—including chemical fertilizer, manure and other pollutants—is allowed to flow unregulated into our rivers and streams.

Years of unchecked pollution

This past fall, Environment Iowa released a fact sheet which compiled ten of the most striking realities about pollution in Iowa's rivers.

"Agricultural and industrial pollution ruins the foul canals that we call creeks," said Tayler Chicoine, leader of Lowater, a student group at Grinnell College. "Water is a common resource and through individual behaviors and pushes for action in policy change, we need to take credit for our poor water management. It may be impossible to return our water bodies to the pristine conditions that Aldo Leopold described years ago, but we can still help change this negative flow for future generations."

Every year, factory farms across the country produce millions of pounds of animal waste containing toxic chemicals, which contaminates our waterways through ground runoff.

"It is time to face facts—decades of relying on landowners to volunteer to cut pollution hasn't worked," said Craig Cox, senior vice president with the Environmental Working Group. "There is no evidence that water quality has gotten better since 1999. We need smart and narrowly-targeted regulations that curb the most damaging farming practices."

EPA rules to restore protections

The Environmental Protection Agency's recent announcement to move forward with a ruling to restore Clean Water

Act protections to streams and wetlands across the country represents critical momentum toward cleaner, healthier rivers in Iowa. If approved, the rule could close loopholes that leave nearly 62 percent of Iowa's streams, and the drinking water for more than 667,000 Iowans, at risk of unchecked pollution.

"Allowing any of our waterways to be vulnerable to pollution means we leave our small businesses, farms and families vulnerable as well," said Michelle Hesterberg, Environment Iowa Federal Field Organizer. "To protect the health of the Des Moines River and our communities, we need the Clean Water Act to protect all Iowa's waterways. We stand by the Environmental Protection Agency in full support of its efforts to keep our waterways clean and healthy—now and for future generations."

This summer, Environment Iowa will continue to work to mobilize public support for Iowa's rivers and streams and collect comments to demonstrate just how important it is that the treasured waterways that define this state get the protection they deserve.



Photo: Travis S. Flicker

research



To learn more about our work on factory farm pollution, visit, www.EnvironmentIowaCenter.org

Photo: Farm Sanctuary



Photo: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

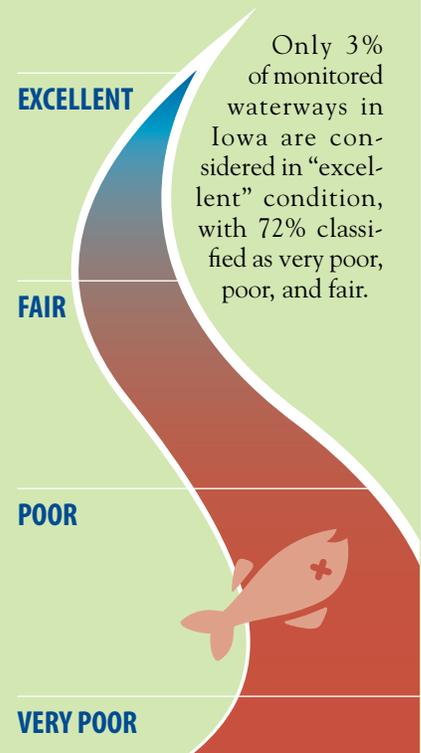
The toxic toll on local waters

"As farmers, we depend on our land and water for our livelihood. The health of the waterways near my dairy is critical to my dairy."

— Francis Thicke
dairy farmer, Fairfield

Factory farms across the country generate 500 million to 1 billion pounds of manure—laden with nitrogen, phosphorus, hormones and pathogens—each year that pollute our waterways. This is three times more waste than the entire American population creates.

In 2012, Tyson Fresh Meats Inc. and Cargill Meat Solutions Corp. released, combined, nearly two million pounds of toxic waste into our waterways.



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Photo: Stephanie Coffman

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.

New policies reduce global warming pollution

Clean energy policies, such as standards for renewable energy and energy efficiency, are leading to big reductions of carbon pollution—the leading cause of global warming—according to a new report by Environment America Research & Policy Center this past March.

The report, “Moving America Forward,” showed that clean energy policies have reduced Iowa's carbon pollution by the equivalent of 1.9 million passenger vehicles. According to the report, renewable electricity standards have helped Iowa offset as much carbon pollution as 1.5 million cars produce in a year.

“By using energy more efficiently and by generating more power from clean, renewable sources, Iowa is delivering a one-two punch in the fight against global warming,” said Julian Boggs, federal global warming program director. “This proves that we have what it takes to protect our children and future generations from the worst impacts of climate change. But we will need firm national limits on carbon pollution from power plants.”



Photo: Sarah Cady

more inside

EPA moves to close polluter loopholes in the Clean Water Act; Factory farm waste threatens Iowa's waterways; Protecting our wild places, and more.

◀ [Boone River](#)