



Photo: Jason Mrachina, Creative Commons

Winter Report

For Iowa's rivers, the time is now

Vital clean water rules yet to be finalized

Despite overwhelming public support, the Obama administration has yet to finalize proposed clean water protections for streams and wetlands, and as a result, our rivers are still suffering the consequences of toxic pollution and development.

When it comes to protecting Iowa's rivers, there should be no hesitation. Our waterways are too important to risk. That's why Environment Iowa is making an all-out push this winter to protect our rivers for good.

Righting a wrong

In the past decade, two polluter-friendly Supreme Court decisions left more than 62 percent of the streams and wetlands that feed and filter our rivers open to unlimited dumping and development. Each year, industrial facilities dump millions of pounds of toxic pollution into Iowa's waterways, much of which makes its way into our rivers.

In April 2011, at the urging of Environment Iowa and our allies across the country, the Environmental Protection Agency proposed guidelines to fix these loopholes in the Clean Water Act. Along with our national federation of state groups, we talked to half a million people and gathered more than 100,000 public comments in support of the proposed guidelines.

What's the holdup?

It's been almost two years. So why hasn't President Obama finalized these crucial



Photo: Scott Smithson, Creative Commons

▲ The Mississippi River near McGregor Heights, Ia. Environment Iowa is making an all-out push to finalize protections for the waterways that feed our rivers.

guidelines?

The main culprits are big polluters and their allies in Congress. Anti-environment politicians in Congress have voted for bill after bill to weaken clean water safeguards in recent years. And Exxon-Mobil and other industrial polluters have even threatened legal warfare if the rules are finalized.

Pushing past the polluters

To overcome the special interests and politicians that are holding clean water protections hostage, Environment Iowa has talked to thousands of Iowans and built a broad movement in support of our rivers. We're showing President Obama the support he needs to finalize these commonsense protections.



Photo:

more online

Toxic pollution threatens our rivers, but proposed clean water guidelines can fix this.

To learn more and take action, visit us online at www.EnvironmentIowa.org.



To our members

I believe 2013 could be a turning point for our environment. The recent rise in extreme weather—including the tragedy of Hurricane Sandy and the record-breaking drought that scorched the country last year—has made global warming impossible to ignore, and hardened my resolve to shift Iowa away from dirty energy and cut our carbon pollution. I know you feel the same way.

Of course, there will be challenges: Anti-environment politicians will continue to cater to the interests of big polluters. But the climate change deniers and the dirty energy lobby are losing their grip on public discourse; they're on the wrong side of science, and the wrong side of history.

Environment Iowa will keep fighting the good fight. And with you by our side, we can make 2013 a year to remember.

Sincerely,

Dan Kohler
Regional Director

Recent action

In Sandy's wake, urgency on global warming

Hurricane Sandy was a wakeup call on global warming for all of us across the country. Thousands of homes were damaged or lost; entire communities were submerged under water; lives were disrupted; the costs were estimated to be as high as \$60 billion; and tragically, dozens of people lost their lives.

Most of us understand that more extreme weather is becoming more common, the planet is warming, and pollution is behind much of it. America can do better. We can reduce the pollution that's behind global warming. To achieve this, Environment Iowa is pushing for more solar and wind power and working to reduce our dependence on coal, oil and gas.

We can no longer allow Big Oil and King Coal to hold America's clean energy future hostage. It's time for our leaders to heed Hurricane Sandy's wakeup call and embrace clean energy, clean air and a safer future.

Taking a stand against Big Ag pollution

Environment Iowa is pushing Gov. Terry Branstad to protect our rivers from agricultural runoff. For too long, corporate agribusiness has gone unregulated and taken advantage of our rivers. As a result, 224 of our rivers are too polluted for swimming or other uses because of bacterial runoff, mainly from corporate agribusiness practices.

Now, after two years of dragging its feet, the Branstad administration has released the Iowa Nutrient Reduction Strategy, its plan to clean up our waterways. But the governor's plan makes no effort to crack down on the biggest polluters in Iowa—industrial agriculture. Instead, it copies corporate agribusiness issue stances directly and fails to make any mandates limiting Big Ag's contribution to the pollution degrading our waterways. In response, we rallied our supporters and submitted hundreds of comments urging strong limits on nutrient and phosphorus pollution from agriculture.

The climate is changing – are your investments?

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▲ Global warming is loading the dice for extreme weather events such as Hurricane Sandy. Above, a satellite image of the hurricane.

Photo: NASA

Iowa wind power cuts carbon pollution

Photo: Carl Wycoff, Creative Commons

As if 1,187,000 cars stopped polluting

After last summer's unprecedented heat and drought prompted Iowans to call for action in tackling global warming and the rise in extreme weather, Environment Iowa released a new report in December documenting the benefits of wind power in cutting global warming pollution and shifting us away from dirty, dangerous fossil fuels.

The report, "Wind Power for a Cleaner America: Reducing Global Warming Pollution, Cutting Air Pollution, and Saving Water," shows that Iowa's current power generation from wind energy displaces as much global warming pollution as taking 1,187,000 cars off the road per year. The Environment Iowa report also shows that wind power saves enough water to meet the needs of 98,100 Iowans.

Continued growth essential

Environment Iowa was joined by Des Moines Mayor Frank Cownie, Maureen McCue of Physicians for Social Responsibility, and Steve Falck of the Environmental Law and Policy Center in releasing the report and touting wind energy's environmental benefits to date, as well as the benefits Iowa will see in the future if wind power continues to grow.

"Wind power is already replacing the dirty and dangerous energy sources of the past and creating a cleaner, healthier future for Iowans," said Amelia Schoeneman of Environment Iowa.

Wind energy now provides almost 20 percent of Iowa's electricity, making Iowa the second biggest producer of wind power in the country. If wind development continues at a pace comparable to that of recent years through 2016, Iowa would reduce global warming pollution by the equivalent of taking an additional 1,047,000 cars off the road, and save enough water to meet the needs of an additional 86,500 Iowans.

Nationwide, wind energy now displaces

about 68 million tons of global warming pollution each year—as much as is produced by 13 million cars. If construction of new wind energy projects continues from 2013 to 2016 at a pace comparable to that of recent years, the United States could reduce global warming pollution by an additional 56 million metric tons in 2016—equivalent to the amount produced by 11 million passenger vehicles.

Wind has health benefits, too

The report also highlighted the fact that today's wind energy in Iowa is delivering results for public health, by avoiding 8,480 tons of smog-causing pollution and 7,420 tons of soot pollution.

Despite the benefits of wind power and widespread public support for federal policies to promote renewable energy, fossil fuel interests and their allies in Congress have vigorously opposed programs that promote wind production. But in January, President Obama and Congress agreed to extend wind power tax credits as part of the deal reached to avert the fiscal cliff.

"As our state heals from the summer's unprecedented droughts, we must invest wisely in a future with cleaner air, fewer extreme weather events, and smart use of our water resources," said Schoeneman.



To read our latest report, "Wind Power for a Cleaner America," visit us online at EnvironmentIowa.org/Reports.



Our national parks deserve more

Together with our national federation, Environment Iowa has been pushing Congress to increase funding for the Land and Water Conservation Fund, a program that provides crucial funding to protect our parks from development. The program is meant to set aside \$900 million each year to buy and preserve special places in Iowa and across the country.

In the past, the fund has helped protect and restore treasured places such as the Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife Refuge (NWR), the Neal Smith NWR, the Driftless Area NWR and the Herbert Hoover National Historic Site.

The problem is, Congress raids the fund every year. And 2012 saw the most drastic, reckless cut yet: House leaders moved to slash a full 93% of the Fund—a shocking move, even for the most anti-environment Congress in recent memory, and a slap in the face to Iowans who care about our national parks. Congress should provide the funds to protect all of our parks for future generations to enjoy.

In response, Environment Iowa and the rest of our national coalition of state environmental groups have leapt into action, mobilizing support for our parks and calling on Congress to give the Land and Water Conservation Fund the support it deserves.

For reports, news releases and more, visit us at EnvironmentIowa.org.

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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.

Environment Iowa applauds soot standards

On December 14, the Obama administration strengthened air quality standards for particulate matter or "soot" pollution. Soot pollution is the deadliest of the common air pollutants, causing thousands of premature deaths every year across the country through a variety of cardiovascular and respiratory illnesses. It also contributes to haze that hangs over many of Iowa's cities, towns and parks. Sources of soot pollution include power plants and diesel trucks and buses.

The strengthened standards, which were supported by Environment Iowa, better reflect the latest scientific research. The new standard will outline how much soot pollution can be in the air and still be considered safe to breathe; overall, soot standards were strengthened by about 20 percent. Environment Iowa applauds the Obama administration for standing up for clean air.



Photo: Shutterstock

◀ *Soot lowers air quality, posing health risks to Iowans and leading to thousands of premature deaths every year across the county.*

To read more on our clean air campaign, please visit us at www.EnvironmentIowa.org.