While we canoed on our rivers and splashed in sprinklers at home, it would have been nice to assume that our leaders in Congress were making sure the water we rely on for recreation and drinking stayed clean and safe. In fact, they were doing exactly the opposite—working to dismantle the law that has protected our rivers for 39 years: the Clean Water Act.

The Clean Water Act has been extremely successful in limiting pollution across the country. But polluted runoff from farms, cities and construction sites flows straight into our waters, and legal loopholes allow developers to pave over wetlands and polluters to dump into streams that feed our rivers and drinking water sources.

Environment Iowa has been working with our national federation, Environment America, to restore the Clean Water Act's ability to protect all of our waters. This year, the EPA acted. In April, EPA Administrator Lisa Jackson announced a plan to close the loopholes that are allowing polluters to pave over and dump into the small waters that feed our rivers, and threaten our wetlands' ability to protect our communities from flooding.

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Legal warfare
Polluting industries sprung into action. Corporate agribusiness and mining companies have all urged their friends in Congress to stop the EPA from closing the clean water loophole—ExxonMobil threatened “legal warfare.” And over the summer, polluters’ allies in both parties in Congress launched an unprecedented attack on the Clean Water Act. By mid-July, the House of Representatives had passed three separate measures attacking the EPA’s authority to protect our water.

We had already begun building a campaign to defend the EPA’s clean water initiatives. Across the state, our organizers talked with thousands of Iowans about the attacks on clean water. Citizens wrote to their local papers, sent thousands of comments to Washington, and urged lawmakers to let the EPA do its job. As we work to protect our rivers, we’ll be sure to remind officials in Washington that Iowans care deeply about all of our waters, and want to see them protected.
To our members

Over the past several months, we have seen an unprecedented attack on clean water and air in Des Moines and in Washington, D.C.

Efforts by our national federation and active members succeeded in blocking attempts to weaken the Clean Water and Clean Air acts. However, polluters and their allies in Congress have declared war on the Environmental Protection Agency, and the attacks will keep coming.

It’s your support that makes sure we can hold the line in times like these, and continue protecting our rivers, air and open space for future generations.

Sincerely,

Dan Kohler
Regional Program Director

Recent action

Iowa, other states lead way on global warming

There is a way forward in the global warming fight—and it starts in the states.

Our efforts to solve global warming have hit a dead end in Washington, D.C. The oil and coal lobbies successfully blocked congressional action to tackle global warming for another year. Congressional leaders claim that global warming is a hoax.

Meanwhile, state and local governments have adopted clean energy policies that are projected to cut more than 500 million tons of carbon dioxide pollution per year by 2020, nearly 10 percent of our nation’s current emissions. And our research shows we have the potential to go even further. In September, Energy Program Director Rob Sargent unveiled a study showing that states can cut carbon pollution 20 percent by 2020 by adopting clean energy and transportation policies, like renewable energy standards, building energy codes and expanded public transportation.

Mercury rules delayed again

This spring, the Environmental Protection Agency took major steps to cut toxic air pollution from power plants, despite intense opposition from industrial polluters and their allies in Congress. The EPA proposed the first-ever nationwide limits on mercury pollution from power plants—limits that would cut mercury pollution by 91 percent, a huge victory given mercury’s effects on how kids think, learn and behave.

Unfortunately, polluters and their allies in the Senate have fought back, even introducing a bill in August that would delay the EPA’s ability to impose such limits for at least three and a half years. The bill would allow more toxic mercury into Iowa’s air and water, put tens of thousands of lives nationwide at risk, and set the stage for continued delay of protections that are already years overdue. We joined our national federation in calling on the U.S. Senate to oppose the dangerous proposal, instead of giving polluters a free pass to spew toxic air pollution.

How do you want to be remembered?

You can be remembered as a someone who cared enough to keep up the fight for a cleaner, greener, healthier future by making a bequest to Environment Iowa.

For information, call: 1-800-841-7299, or email PlannedGiving@EnvironmentIowa.org.
Healthy farms, healthy planet

From the first pint of strawberries in June, to the juicy tomatoes of summer, down to the last crisp red apple of a Midwestern fall, the abundance of a farmers market is unrivaled. But fresh food that’s been grown close to home shouldn’t only be found on a special trip to the market.

Though there are now 230 farmers markets across the state—from Cedar Rapids, to Des Moines, to Iowa City—much more remains to be done to expand Iowans’ access to fresh, local food. That’s why Environment Iowa has joined a nationwide coalition of groups working to make sure local farms can grow and provide their own communities with safe, fresh, delicious food.

A system of pollution

We should be doing everything we can to encourage healthy food and responsible farming. Unfortunately, too much of the food we buy in the supermarket comes from factory farms that pollute our lakes with runoff and pollute our air by trucking food to all corners of the country. And the U.S. House recently voted to continue sending billions of dollars in subsidies to those huge farms, while eliminating a program that supports small, sustainable farms.

Across the country, runoff and spills contribute to massive fish kills and unsafe swimming and fishing conditions. Much of this pollution comes from massive factory farms, which house thousands of cows or spray huge amounts of pesticides on their fields.

Environment Iowa has worked hard to protect our lakes from pollution in Des Moines and in towns statewide by activating our members online to get in touch with their leaders. While cracking down on the farms that pollute is important, we have much to gain by promoting local, sustainable farms.

More local food, not less

Though the U.S. House disappointingly voted against programs to help small farmers, the U.S. Senate, with the leadership of Iowa Sens. Tom Harkin and Chuck Grassley, can restore those programs and get small farmers the help they need to grow.

Over the summer, we spoke with Iowans about locally grown food and built the momentum we’ll need to take this campaign into the fall. In the coming months, we’ll make sure that the issue stays in the media and continue building support across the state. Together, we’ll show lawmakers that Iowans want the fresh, local food we associate with farmers markets to be accessible enough to include in every meal.

Plug into clean energy

Efficiency is the cheapest and cleanest way to cut our fossil fuel use and pollution. It seems intuitive enough: Use less energy. Save fuel, and save money.

But it can be tough to figure out where to start with the numerous rebates, discounts, financing and other kinds of incentives offered by federal, state, and local organizations and agencies ready to help you retrofit your home or business.

Environment Iowa Research & Policy Center designed our “Plug Into Clean Energy” guide to help you cut through the clutter and pick what works for you, so you can get on the path toward a more efficient home or business, one step at a time.

Here are five low- to no-cost things you can do right now to cut your energy use:

1. Replace incandescent light bulbs with CFLs to cut your lighting costs by up to 75 percent.
2. Wash your laundry using cold water only.
3. Plug appliances into power strips, and turn them off when not in use.
4. Put aluminum foil behind radiators to reflect heat back into the room.
5. Scrape—rather than rinse—dishes, and only run the dishwasher when you have a full load.

For the full list, visit www.EnvironmentIowa.org/center/plug-into-clean-energy
In July, an ExxonMobil pipeline spilled more than 42,000 gallons of oil into Montana’s pristine Yellowstone River. Now, according to one nearby resident, “You go down to where the oil is, and you don’t hear anything anymore. No birds, no toads, no crickets, nothing.”

In the wake of the latest spill, Environment Iowa stepped up our work in a national effort to get America off of oil—by making our cars more fuel-efficient, building strong public transportation systems, and investing in electric vehicles. We mobilized more than 10,000 people across the country to push for a 60-mpg fuel standard that will ensure our cars go farther on a tank of gas, and we’ve made big progress. In August, the Obama administration announced the single biggest policy ever enacted to get our nation off oil: a standard that requires a fleetwide gas mileage average of 54 miles per gallon.

Our research showed that if a 60-mpg standard had been in place, the average Iowan would have saved $532 on gas this summer.

Read the full report, “Beating the heat with clean cars,” at: www.EnvironmentIowa.org/reports