

# IOWA ENVIRONMENTAL COUNCIL LEGISLATIVE NEWS BULLETIN

*\*Member Organizations: PLEASE DISTRIBUTE TO YOUR LISTS*

The Iowa Environmental Council Legislative News Bulletin provides legislative information to requesting individuals during the legislative session.

The Iowa Environmental Council regularly monitors dozens of bills, and few of them actually warrant us officially opposing or supporting. If you see the Iowa Environmental Council tentatively supporting or tentatively opposing a bill, it means we will likely officially support or oppose the bill the following week.

**If you have strong feelings concerning a position the Iowa Environmental Council is taking, and if you are a member organization of the Council, it is your right AND RESPONSIBILITY to phone or send an e-mail to me as soon as possible.** We may sometimes make the wrong call, or be misinformed, concerning the ramifications of certain legislation. The Iowa Environmental Council is **your** voice, and I wish to make it as responsive as possible to your needs. *Marian Riggs Gelb, Executive Director*

## **January 28, 2008**

**Executive Director's Note:** Not much new to report. Three new bills were introduced last week, which the Council is tentatively supporting. And the interim committee on sustainable funding held their last meeting this morning—see report below.

**Abbreviations...** HF=House File, SF=Senate File, HSB=House Study Bill, SSB=Senate Study Bill, EFF=Environment First Fund.

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## **The Iowa Environmental Council is supporting these bills**

### **SF 261, HF 609 Septic Tank Inspection**

This bill provides for septic tank inspection at the time of sale. If a system is found to be deficient, it must be brought into compliance with building codes prior to the completion of the transaction. It requires DNR to certify inspectors and to maintain a list of those inspectors. It allows county personnel to be certified inspectors & allows counties to set an inspection fee for inspections by certified personnel. This bill was overwhelmingly approved by the Senate last session and is before the House Environmental Protection Committee.

### **HF 900, Waste Tire Remediation Program**

During the last session, the legislature put an end to funding the waste tire remediation program through a small percentage of motor vehicle title fees. HF 900 has been brought up for reconsideration by the House Appropriations Committee. Reps. Jo Oldson, Dave Jacoby and

Scott Raecker have been named to a subcommittee to review the bill. Funding for the program is still unknown, although, at this time, funding through a per tire fee, a state appropriation or reinstating the motor vehicle title fee percentage are all being considered.

## **The Iowa Environmental Council is tentatively supporting these bills**

**HF 2079.** This bill directs the department of economic development, in consultation with the department of agriculture and land stewardship and regents universities, to conduct a study regarding the feasibility of providing incentives to businesses operating in Iowa to develop technologies to predict, control, or mitigate the impact of climate change in the state. On January 25<sup>th</sup> it was referred to the Committee on Economic Growth.

### **HF 2080 (Formerly HF 902)/SF 587, Charitable Conservation Contribution Income Tax Credits**

Creates a State income tax credit for the donations of fee or less-than-fee title real estate to a qualified conservation organization. Makes the credit equal to 50% of the value, and up to \$100,000 and carries forward for 20 years. Amended & passed HWMC. Goes to the H for debate. The Senate bill was passed unanimously on 4/23/07.

**SSB 3091.** This bill provides for an increased tax credit for enterprise zone housing projects which meet certain energy efficiency standards. Currently, an eligible housing business may claim a tax credit up to a maximum of 10 percent of the business' new investment which is directly related to the building or rehabilitating of a specified form of housing located in a part of a city or county in which there is a designated enterprise zone. The bill increases the tax credit to 12 percent if a project meets specified environmental protection agency Energy Star or Target Finder rating performance requirements.

**SF 2027.** This bill amends provisions in Code chapter 206, the Pesticide Act of Iowa", by eliminating two exceptions that allow a person to apply a restricted use pesticide for 21 days without complying with certain certification requirements. It has been referred to the Agriculture Committee.

## **Other**

**REAP and Bottle Bill UPDATE.** As noted last week, the Governor's budget funds REAP out of the General Fund from the increase in the bottle deposit at the full \$20 million. There is some concern over the impact that shifting REAP funding from the Environment First Fund (EFF) to the General Fund may have on long term funding support. The Governor has not yet released any details to his bottle bill proposal, so it is difficult to react thoughtfully. The Legislative Services Bureau has confirmed that the \$15.5 million reduction in the EFF, which is REAP's funding amount last year, has not been allocated elsewhere. Discussions are ongoing and more information will be forthcoming.

**25 by 25.** The Governor is recommending all electric utilities be required to obtain at least 25 percent of their energy from renewable sources, such as wind and solar, by the year 2025. If this becomes a bill, the Iowa Environmental Council will likely support it. See our legislative alert at <http://capwiz.com/iaenvironment/home/> and please take action if you have not already done so.

## Committees of Interest

### Sustainable Funding of Natural Resources

The legislative interim committee on sustainable funding held its last meeting today, January 28, 2008. They approved the recommendations of the stakeholder/advisory committee, which include:

- Adopt HF 902/SF 587 – Charitable Conservation Contribution Income Tax Credit. (discussed above)
- Agreeing with the \$150 million “needs assessment” identified by the Sustainable Natural Resource Funding Advisory Committee. Made it clear that this is NEW money.
  - The advisory committee identified where the additional money would best be spent, to meet current needs:
    - **REAP.** \$20 million would fully fund the authorized level of Iowa’s Resource Enhancement and Protection (REAP) program.
    - **Local Conservation Partnership Program.** \$20 million for infrastructure, nature interpretation and outreach, and conservation management techniques at the local level. Funds would be distributed via a grant application process to county conservation boards (\$12 million), nongovernmental organizations (\$5 million), and cities (\$3 million).
    - **Watershed Protection.** \$20 million to increase emphasis on the watershed approach to solving environmental problems. Watershed protection takes many forms, such as wetland restoration, grassland restoration, and runoff filtration.
    - **Lakes Restoration.** \$10 million for lake restoration needs.
    - **Trails.** \$15 million for maintenance of existing trails and the addition of new trails, marketing, and trail linkages. This would include water trails. These moneys will be used to match federal recreational trails grants.
    - **Iowa Department of Natural Resources.** \$35 million to be added to DNR’s budget for needs in our state parks, state preserves, the wildlife diversity program, public access, private landowner programs and incentives, and natural resources outreach.
    - **Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship.** \$30 million to meet the demands of the department’s existing programs on soil conservation and watershed protection projects. The money would also provide additional technical assistance to soil and water conservation districts, develop a stream bank and buffer stabilization project, initiate a state-funded CRP-type program (federal Conservation Reserve Program) to keep lands in hay and grass, and start a tillage management incentives program to assure adequate crop residue levels in areas impacted by demand for cellulosic ethanol production. Funds will also be used to

support environmental stewardship with regard to agricultural and livestock issues. The Committee asked for further information on how these funds were to be spent.

- Reauthorize the Sustainable Natural Resource Funding Advisory Committee. Also added Iowa Rivers Revival and the Iowa Land Improvement Association to the existing membership.
- Create a Water Quality and Outdoor Recreation Trust Fund and make it constitutionally protected.
- Present a proposal to the people of Iowa to approve a constitutionally protected fractional sales tax increase. 3/8<sup>th</sup> of 1¢ would fully fund the \$150 million.

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**The phone number to reach your Senator is 515/281-3371 & for your Representative is 515/281-3221. To access bills, E-Mail address for legislators, & other info on the Internet go to <http://www.legis.state.ia.us>.**

**Also check out our Action Alert Center at <http://capwiz.com/iaenvironment/home/>.**

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