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Editors contact:  
Lynn Laws  
Iowa Environmental Council  
Office: 515-244-1194, ext 210  
Cell: 515-490-1428

## **Flood Prevention Legislation Nixed by Iowa Cities and Chambers of Commerce**

Across Iowa, residents are receiving dire warnings about a new round of potentially devastating floods this spring. Yet many lawmakers appear content to wrap up the 2010 legislative session without enacting new, and badly needed, flood plain management policies.

A modest flood plain management bill (Senate File 2316), which passed the Iowa Senate a few weeks ago, was chopped down from its original version at the request of cities and chambers of commerce, but still included a few modest first steps to protect Iowans from the devastating impacts experienced in 1993 and 2008.

Unfortunately this benign bill was completely stopped in the Iowa House after heavy lobbying by interest groups, including the Iowa League of Cities, whose executive Board includes the Mayors of [Coralville](#) and [Ottumwa](#) as well as City Council members from [Cedar Rapids](#) and [Des Moines](#). In communications sent to their members, the League trumpeted having stopped the flood plain management bill in the House. They continue to actively oppose enactment of even the most modest of proposals from lawmakers.

Even more disappointing is that many of the communities whose residents suffered unimaginable devastation in the recent floods are represented by the League of Cities that is lined up to oppose this bill. Leadership in the League of Cities includes the City of Des Moines and the City of Cedar Falls. See Executive Board of the League of Cities:  
<http://www.iowaleague.org/AboutCities/AboutTheLeague.aspx?id=1>.

But these civic leaders from flood devastated communities are not alone in their efforts to nix even the most modest flood prevention efforts. They are joined by the [Iowa Chambers Alliance](#), whose members include the Chambers of Commerce in Des Moines, Cedar Rapids, Cedar Falls, Waterloo and Iowa City.

Modest and common sense provisions that were included in the Flood Plain management bill that passed the Senate and died in the House include:

- 1) Development of a model ordinance for the regulation of the .2 percent flood plain (also known as the 500 year flood plain) to assist city and county governments. The model ordinance would include suggested language on requirements for the purchase of flood insurance, limits on new

development to mitigate future flood damage, and categories of development that should be prohibited.

2) Requirement that any new construction of critical facilities in the 500 year flood plain be designed to maintain operation or be capable of being safely shut down in the event of a 500-year flood. These critical facilities include hospitals, jails, and emergency operations centers such as fire, police and rescue facilities.

But Marian Riggs Gelb, executive director for the non-profit Iowa Environmental Council, says even these two proposals from the bill did not go far enough.

“With Iowa’s flood history it just doesn’t make sense. We should be doing a lot more. No one should be building in the 500 year flood plain,” said Gelb.

“Iowans—all of us who are footing the bill for flood damages caused by poor land management decisions, but especially those in cities devastated by flooding in the past—should be watching and asking questions of our city and state lawmakers who are opposing even modest steps to prevent future flooding,” added Gelb.

Asked what she would think about the legislature adjourning without doing something to prevent future flooding, Gelb said, “It would be unconscionable.”

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