

MAINTAINING OUR VALUES

Dear Council Supporter,

Like all others who care about our natural environment, if not society as a whole, we share your concerns over policies that can set Iowa and the country back. However, we do not stop fighting, nor will we compromise our values. We use our strengths – legislative advocacy, regulatory experience and growing litigation skills – to make progress in a challenging time. Our strong staff and supportive board and members provide the backbone to our work.

Our membership is responding in strong numbers to our legislative alerts, with more than two thousand emails sent to legislators since January 1. Our members have also been showing up at legislative forums to speak directly to elected officials about

the importance of preserving our natural resources. This show of public support is an inspiration for all who care about these issues. Keep it up.

In a victory at the Iowa Utilities Board, the Council helped to secure rules that will make it easier for Iowans to hook up renewable energy systems to the grid. Our work with our partners to fight for Iowa's turtle population led to the creation of a protective season. We also scored a clean water victory through the EPA as our win in a 2016 court case recently resulted in their current rejection of a DNR rule that would allow more pollution of Iowa waterways.

Both Republicans and Democrats are showing strong support for funding the Natural Resources and Outdoor Recreation Trust

Fund as Iowans have made their own support very clear. In this newsletter, Council Board Member Ross Baxter speaks to his values as a hunter and fisherman and the critical support the Trust can provide for wildlife habitat including rivers, lakes and streams.

A rabbi once said that hope is the belief that, together, we can make the world better. So far in 2017, your engagement in our collective victories give me good reason to hold on to hope. Thank you for your continued support.

Ralph

Ralph Rosenberg
Executive Director
Rosenberg@iaenvironment.org



SINCE 1995, the Iowa Environmental Council has been a leader in protecting Iowa's environment and amplifying the voices of individuals like you. Through advocacy and coalition building, we raise awareness, generate action and create large-scale change that makes Iowa a better place to live, work, explore and enjoy.

Your continued support of the Council fuels our work. Will you consider an additional gift today? Your commitment reinforces the strength of our message, shows policymakers

the public is listening, and helps ensure real progress is made to protect our water and land, and to advance clean energy.

The Council and its independent, nonpartisan approach is unique, effective, and well-respected. Our ability to gather the knowledge and expertise of our members, assemble diverse stakeholders around the table, collaborate, create productive dialogue, and offer solutions are among our greatest skills. We pride ourselves on our credibility, our science-based and results-oriented programs,

and our passionate, knowledgeable staff and members.

We have achieved great things over the past years, but there is much work left to be done. The challenges we face are great, but so is our passion, commitment, and determination. Every Iowan can be a voice for clean energy, clean water and sustainable land policies. Together we can achieve lasting change. Help ensure a safe, healthy environment and sustainable future for Iowa – make a tax-deductible gift to the Council today.



LEAVE A LEGACY

To give, return the enclosed card or visit iaenvironment.org.

You may also contact Development Director Judy Downs at downs@iaenvironment.org or 515.244.1194 x202.

PROGRESS REPORT

INSIDE: 2 Attending a Legislative Forum: 7 Tips for Success • Wind Generates Big Benefits • Council Continues to Defend Against Water Degradation For Counties
3 Rule Changes Bring Ease and Clarity for Renewable Energy • Upcoming Events • In The News 4 A Letter from Executive Director Ralph Rosenberg

Our spring 2017 update for members and friends.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION ENGAGES ADVOCATES

Council members and supporters of our work have engaged with their legislators at an unprecedented level. As lawmakers attempted to eliminate the bottle deposit law, dismantle Des Moines Waterworks, neglect important renewable energy tax credits and restrict damages in lawsuits against CAFOs, we activated people across the state to stand up for policies that protect our natural resources and promote clean energy.

The proposed repeal of Iowa's bottle deposit program had opposition from many corners. In place since 1979, the program has been very successful with an estimated 86% of beverage containers in Iowa redeemed annually compared to a 24% recycling rate in states with no such law in place. An impressive 1,068 people contacted their legislators to object to this harmful change.

Iowa's renewable energy production tax incentive is set to expire at the end of this year. Unlike some other tax incentives for renewables, this program can be used by municipal and rural electric co-operatives and schools. Currently, it supports the largest community solar project in Iowa at Cedar Falls Utilities, as well as major projects at Farmer's Electric Cooperative, a national leader in the amount of solar energy per customer. Losing this credit would be a loss for Iowa's progress toward one hundred percent renewable energy. We called on our members to voice their support for its renewal.

We asked members to weigh in on a bill to dismantle the Des Moines Waterworks and the boards of the West Des Moines and Urbandale



water Boards. This was an unnecessarily rushed move by the legislature that did nothing to improve Iowa's water quality.

Finally, legislation limiting damages in nuisance lawsuits passed. The law protects the rights of CAFO owners over citizens who might suffer from adverse effects due to the facilities. This is in direct conflict with the direction local people are going, with eight counties having expressed support for reform of siting and management of CAFOs.

We had an overwhelming response to our work on these issues from our members and social media followers. This demonstrates that we are fighting for causes that Iowans believe in. Though we may not always see the desired outcome for each bill we targeted, our work certainly sent the message to legislators that people care about Iowa's natural resources and they are watching the actions legislators take. ✨

WHY I SUPPORT THE IOWA ENVIRONMENTAL COUNCIL

Ross Baxter

*Board Member,
Land Projects Director,
Iowa Natural
Heritage Foundation*



One of the many, but more significant reasons I support the Iowa Environmental Council is due to their continued support of comprehensive conservation funding. As an avid hunter and fisherman, the environment and its condition have a direct impact on my and other outdoor user's experiences. To have a quality hunt or fishing outing, we need to have the habitat that will sustain that wildlife and river, lakes and streams where gamefish flourish. Iowa has significant unmet needs in the areas of water quality, wildlife habitat, trails and maintenance of our recreation areas. The Council has been a supporter and proponent of the Natural Resources and Outdoor Recreation Trust Fund since its beginning as an idea in 2006. The Council has been pushing funding of the Trust Fund since its passage in 2010. This Trust Fund would create tremendous opportunity to improve Iowa's sustainability and the health of Iowans, which is the bedrock of the Council's mission. The staff, board and members of the Council understand what this Trust Fund would mean for Iowa and the future of its landscape and citizens. It's because of this recognition of the importance of our natural resources and its dedication to making Iowa a sustainable and healthy state that I proudly support the Iowa Environmental Council. ✨

ATTENDING A LEGISLATIVE FORUM: 7 TIPS FOR SUCCESS

Throughout the session and afterward, it is important for you to be in contact with your legislators and ask them to support legislation protecting Iowa's natural resources and continue our state's progress in renewable energy development. Legislative forums are optimal opportunities to raise these issues. Here are some tips to help you be a successful advocate:

1. Legislators often hold forums and other events throughout the summer and fall. Follow your legislators on Facebook, or sign up for their newsletters to stay informed about upcoming events.
2. Arrive early. Legislative forums across the state have been packed. Arriving 15 to 20 minutes early will allow you time to find a seat. You may even be able to talk with your legislator one-on-one. Bring a card with your contact information.
3. Follow the rules. Increased attendance at forums and the number of issues being discussed have led to forum rules. Arriving early and phrasing your question strategically is essential.
4. Be confident. Remember: your legislator was elected to serve and take input from constituents.
5. Be Iowa nice! If you're called on, thank your legislator for attending the forum and discussing issues, then introduce yourself as a constituent. Even if you and your legislator disagree about water quality or renewable energy tax credits, being polite and respectful will legitimize your question and issues, and your legislator is much more likely to take the issues and you seriously.
6. Do your homework. A good question marries facts and personal stories or demonstrates how the issue directly affects district residents.
7. Follow up. Send a thank you email to your legislators after the event. If they disagreed with you, a polite email gives you another opportunity to discuss the issue and provide more information. You could also follow up with a letter to the editor. ✨

WIND GENERATES BIG BENEFITS FOR COUNTIES

Leadership on wind energy has benefitted Iowa through thousands of new jobs, business attraction, and lease payments to landowners who host wind turbines. Those turbines generate property tax revenue, benefiting counties and residents that use the infrastructure and services provided by county governments.

The impact of wind turbine power in four counties is detailed below. These counties exemplify that wind energy provides a major contribution by supporting infrastructure and services that residents use every day.

Pottawattamie County built 102 turbines in 2008. In fiscal year 2015/2016, these turbines generated \$2 million in property tax revenue: \$928,039 supported local schools, \$142,312 supported colleges. The remainder supported roads, rural services, fire emergency services, and cemetery maintenance.

In Carroll County, 133 turbines were built in 2006 and 2008. For the 2015/2016 fiscal year, Carroll County received \$1.4 million in property tax revenue which has multiplied as the valuation and revenue phased in. Carroll County expects revenue to grow and stay at \$1.65 million.

Buena Vista County built 262 turbines in 1999 and 2004, receiving over \$1.2 million annually. Over \$611,000



of the annual revenue supports schools, including funding 18% of the Alta school district budget. The revenue also supports hospitals, mental health and disability services, as well as roads, emergency services and other county needs.

Finally, Franklin County had 300 wind turbines installed in 2010 and 2012. The revenue from these wind turbines – over \$2.6 million – already accounts for 14% of the county's annual budget.

These are just a few of the counties financially benefitting from wind power. Last year, MidAmerican projected that its 2,000 MW Wind XI project would generate over \$500 million in property tax revenue to counties over the 40-year life of the project. Alliant Energy projected that its 400 MW wind project would generate \$90 million in property taxes over 20 years and now more since Alliant expanded that project to 500 MW. Both projects were approved last year and will be operational by 2020, so future revenues are in store to support schools, roads, health services, and more across Iowa counties. ✨

RULE CHANGES BRING EASE AND CLARITY FOR RENEWABLE ENERGY

After a thorough rulemaking process, the Iowa Utilities Board has adopted a set of improvements to Iowa's renewable energy interconnection rules that are based on national best practices. The Council and several partners, including the Interstate Renewable Energy Council and Environmental Law & Policy Center, participated actively in the rulemaking process and welcome the new rules. During the process, we identified areas of agreement and submitted joint comments on specific issues with MidAmerican Energy and Alliant Energy, as well as multiple rounds of additional coalition comments from our three organizations.

Interconnection rules govern how distributed renewable energy, such as wind and solar, connect to the grid. The rules are designed to ensure safety and reliability while also providing an efficient and well-defined interconnection process for the customer, the renewable energy installer, and the utility.

"These rules will help every home, farm or business that connects a renewable energy technology like solar to the grid with Alliant and MidAmerican," said Nathaniel Baer, Energy Program Director at the Council. "The rules help ensure that utility

customers have a clear, straightforward and effective process to add renewable energy."

New features in Iowa's rules now include an optional pre-application report, which allows renewable energy installers to get more information about the grid where a wind or solar project may connect, and a supplemental review process to allow more options for screening reliability impacts. The rules now provide for a streamlined application process for more types of projects and have broadened to include energy storage facilities. There are a number of additional changes regarding site control, fees, disconnection devices, and other aspects of the interconnection process.

The rules currently apply to interconnection with MidAmerican and Alliant. In the past, many cooperative and municipal utilities have largely adopted these rules because of their many benefits and we hope the same occurs with the updated rules. ✨



UPCOMING EVENTS



Pro H₂O

Thursday, June 1, 2017
Science Center of Iowa
6:30 P.M.

IN THE NEWS

On Friday, March 17, 2017 a federal judge dismissed the Des Moines Water Works lawsuit stating that the issues within the suit should be handled by the state legislature. This decision is not a loss. The process brought important attention to many concerns on issues of water quality and public health. The lawsuit has also raised awareness that Iowa needs to update its water laws to reflect new understandings of the need to balance the benefits of drainage of private land with the downstream, public consequences that include water pollution and potential for increased flooding. The Council advocated for accountable and sustainable funding to address water quality problems prior to and during the lawsuit, and we will continue to do so going forward. ✨

COUNCIL CONTINUES TO DEFEND AGAINST WATER DEGRADATION

Last year, several groups worked with Iowa's Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to weaken Iowa's antidegradation rules. Antidegradation is meant to prevent unnecessary new pollution. Antidegradation standards only apply when an entity wants to increase the amount of pollution it discharges to a stream, or introduce new pollution. IEC opposed the changes to Iowa's antidegradation standards because they weakened these important protections. On January 19th, 2017 the EPA sent a letter to Iowa DNR stating that the changes to Iowa's antidegradation rules could not be approved because they violate federal Clean Water Act regulations for antidegradation programs.

EPA based its disapproval, in part on the fact that the new one-size-fits-all cost comparison test limits the public's opportunity to weigh in on individual cases. Public input is an essential part of the antidegradation review process. This makes sense, as our lakes, rivers and streams are public waters belonging to all. In its disapproval letter, the EPA explained, "the public should have a voice in the ultimate outcome" of antidegradation reviews.

The story does not end with this recent decision. DNR has asked Gov. Branstad to "appeal" the recent action by the EPA, hoping to receive a more favorable decision under the EPA's new leadership.

The Council, together with the Environmental Law & Policy Center, sent a letter to the EPA explaining that the Clean Water Act provides for no such appeal once the EPA has disapproved a state water quality standard. "The administration might have changed, but the federal Clean Water Act has not", said Ralph Rosenberg in response, believing that the EPA's decision will stand. ✨