

PROGRESS REPORT

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SAVE THE DATE

2016 Environmental Lobby Day

Tuesday, Mar. 22, 2016
Iowa State Capitol

A LETTER FROM RALPH

As the New Year rapidly approaches, so too does the end of the celebration marking the Council's 20th anniversary.

As I reflect on the past two decades, I am amazed and humbled by how far we have come. The successes over the years have certainly come with their fair challenges as well, but all things worthwhile do.

The thing that stands out most is the people that made - and continue to make - progress possible. People focused on creating a better, more sustainable future. People like you. More than any time in my memory, there is a sense of urgency for greater change to create lasting, sustainable solutions for our water, air and land. Future generations will measure us by what we do today. For me, that is a powerful inspiration.

As the Council crosses the threshold of this milestone, that is where our focus is: on the future. In this issue of the *Progress Report*, you'll learn about the conversation the Council is driving about

the need for and benefits of a statewide watershed approach, projects that are opening up solar to more Iowans, and next steps following the finalization of the Clean Power Plan. You'll meet Kevin Griggs whose shared beliefs with the Council inform his work; as well as our new team members Barbara Andersen and Ann Robinson.

There are many problems plaguing our water, air and land, and the road ahead is sure to be rough at times, but it is hard not to be optimistic when working with such capable and committed individuals and organizations. The future of Iowa's environment is ours to mold; together, we can ensure it is bright. Thank you for your ongoing support. ✨

Ralph

Ralph Rosenberg

Executive Director
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PROGRESS REPORT



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HEALTHY LANDS, HEALTHY WATERS

High levels of nitrates in drinking water, record-breaking beach closures, an uptick in Iowa's impaired waters; these are just some of the problems that plague Iowa's lakes, rivers and streams.

"The issues are diverse and affect rural, urban and natural areas across the state," said Agricultural Policy Specialist Ann Robinson. "Recent events, as well as long-standing issues, are making it clear that current water quality efforts are not making progress at the pace and scale needed for meaningful change."

The state has introduced several plans and programs to address these challenges, including the Iowa Nonpoint Source Management Plan (INSMP), the Iowa Nutrient Reduction Strategy (NRS) and local Watershed Management Authorities (WMA). If Iowa wants to move the needle on improving water quality, it must adopt a big picture approach that knits these plans together under an overarching watershed framework that is collaborative, coordinated, flexible and accountable. The Iowa Environmental Council is one of the key players driving this conversation.

"Like a comprehensive health plan with individual components targeted to address specific concerns and improve overall health, a watershed framework should be holistic," said Robinson. "Prescriptions for individual actions should be integrated to consider the watershed's water quality and soil



A watershed framework is a holistic approach that views a watershed as interconnected community, where our individual actions impact our watershed neighbors downstream.

conservation status, flooding issues and related concerns like public health and recreation."

Such an approach would not abandon existing plans and projects such as the NRS, INSMP and WMAs. Rather, it would bring them together under one umbrella to leverage limited resources and maximize impacts.

"This is not a new idea," said Water Program Director Susan Heathcote. "In 2008, the Iowa Legislature authorized a statewide watershed assessment program following recommendations from the 2007 Watershed Planning Task Force. The INSMP, developed in 2012, contains elements of a watershed framework, but only addresses runoff pollution and has not been fully implemented due to lack of funding. The blueprint is there. Now is the time to act, and Iowa's Water Resources Coordinating Council (WRCC), created per recommendations from the 2007 Iowa Watershed Planning

*Our winter 2015 update
for our members and friends*

A FRESH NEW LOOK

This fall, the Council relaunched its website with a design that is fresh, modern and more user-friendly. Features include updated content, additional resources, improved site navigation and a mobile-friendly design. The new design will empower the Council to engage more Iowans in our work. Thank you to the generous donor who made this project possible. Check out the new site at iaenvironment.org. ✨



Task Force, has the authority."

Much of the sustained funding needed to implement an Iowa watershed framework could come from Iowa's Natural Resource and Outdoor Recreation Trust Fund. Created by an overwhelming majority of Iowa voters in 2010, the Trust would provide an estimated \$120 million per year once the state sales tax is raised by 3/8 cent. The opportunity to fund the Trust will come before the Legislature again in the 2016 session.

The need for a watershed framework is clear, the foundation has been laid, and existing plans and programs are well-suited to fit within it - Iowa need only seize the opportunity. Together, we can be the agents of change our lakes, rivers and streams so desperately need. ✨

Iowa Environmental Council • *A safe, healthy environment and sustainable future for Iowa.*

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UNPARALLELED POWER



SAVE THE DATE

2016 Environmental Lobby Day

Tuesday, Mar. 22, 2016

Iowa State Capitol

Environmental Lobby Day is an annual event organized by the Iowa Environmental Council that provides an opportunity for advocates to speak face-to-face with legislators and show that there is a broad base of support for a healthy environment. Event details, including an RSVP link, will be posted on our website and sent out in January.

2015 Annual Conference

Over 200 people gathered in Des Moines on Oct. 2 for the Iowa Environmental Council's 2015 Annual Conference, *Elevate: Creating an Environment of Action*. Chad Pregracke, 2013 CNN Hero of the Year, author, president & founder of Living Lands & Waters, headlined this year's event. He was joined by a dynamic slate of national renowned speakers. Stay tuned for info about the 2016 conference. ✨

This summer, the EPA finalized the Clean Power Plan, arguably the single most important action the U.S. has taken to reduce carbon pollution. The final plan will cut 32 % of carbon pollution from U.S. power plants by 2030.

"The Clean Power Plan is a strong showing of our country's commitment to reducing carbon pollution," said Climate and Energy Policy Specialist Cindy Lane. "It also prompts an increased response from the global community, and will continue to be a key policy point in both domestic and international conversations about our energy future."

Under the Clean Power Plan, each state has its own carbon pollution reduction goal based on its energy portfolio. The final plan calls for Iowa to reduce its carbon pollution rate to 1,283 lbs/MWh, a slight – but important – increase from the originally proposed 1,301 lbs/MWh.

"As a national wind energy leader, Iowa is already on track to achieve and surpass its carbon reduction goal," Lane said. "Though Iowa's goal doesn't realize its full clean energy potential, it does create significant economic opportunities including the ability to sell wind energy credits, infrastructure and services to neighboring states. The pollution reductions coupled with the market opportunities will improve Iowa's economy, protect our communities, safeguard our working lands, and strengthen our energy independence."



Energy Program Director Nathaniel Baer was proud to represent the Council and its members at the White House for a media event with President Obama announcing the final Clean Power Plan.

Having successfully advanced the final Clean Power Plan standard, the Council and its allies now turn our attention to sustaining momentum by shaping a strong implementation plan that maximizes the state's potential for clean energy growth and energy efficient savings. ✨

COUNCIL TEAM GROWS

The Council had the pleasure of welcoming two new members to its team this fall, Agricultural Policy Specialist Ann Robinson and Clean Energy Organizer Barbara Andersen.

As the Council's new ag policy specialist, Robinson works with diverse stakeholders to

expand soil and water conservation efforts in Iowa, with a focus on strengthening programs and policies to reduce agricultural pollution. Robinson grew up on a farm in Missouri. Introduce yourself to Ann: Robinson@iaenvironment.org

As the Council's first clean energy organizer,

Andersen works to advance wind, solar and energy efficiency growth and development, with a focus on mobilizing Iowans to advocate for clean energy leading up to the 2016 Iowa Caucuses. Andersen is a native of Waterloo, IA.

Introduce yourself to Barbara: Andersen@iaenvironment.org ✨



Ann Robinson



Barbara Andersen

THE POWER OF COMMUNITY



The Heartland Power Community Solar Project located on 4.5 acres east of St. Ansgar, Iowa will produce 1.2 million kilowatt hours annually once completed, enough to power approximately 125 homes.

Interest in solar energy is strong in Iowa, but until recently, options were largely focused on the land, home or building owners with property suitable for solar panels. Not anymore.

Thanks in part to the work of the Council and its allies, a new crop of clean energy projects are popping up in communities across the state, and you don't need to own panel-friendly property to reap the benefits.

Community solar allows individuals to directly invest in and benefit from shared solar energy. Customers purchase a subscription to an array owned by the utility, a solar developer, or sometimes, the customers themselves. In return, they receive a credit on their energy bill.

"Community solar leverages the collective resources of customers to generate solar on a larger scale," said Energy Program Director Nathaniel Baer. "Not only does this option improve accessibility to clean energy – especially for low-and middle-income Iowans

– it can also facilitate more cost-effective projects. That translates to increased job and economic opportunities, greater health and environmental benefits, and a better quality of life."

During the 2015 session, the Council was instrumental in passing HF645, which included improvements to 476C production tax credits, 10 MW of which could be used for community solar projects. Within two months, those 10 MW were spoken for, confirming much potential for solar growth remains.

Building upon this success and further expanding access to clean energy by increasing clean energy incentives will continue to be a focus for the Council during the 2016 Iowa Legislative Session.

"Iowa boasts the highest percentage of electricity produced by wind nationwide, and we can lead in solar, too," Baer said. "When Iowa invests in clean energy, it invests in its communities and a more sustainable future Iowans can be proud of." ✨

WHY I SUPPORT THE IOWA ENVIRONMENTAL COUNCIL

**Kevin M. Griggs,
PWS, CWB**

*Individual member
Founder, principal
and president of
Griggs Environmental
Strategies, Inc.
Boone, Iowa*



As an active conservationist in my community and an environmental consultant specializing in environmental permitting, planning and compliance with a focus on wetlands, I've had the opportunity to work with a lot of different organizations and businesses. The Iowa Environmental Council stands out.

I was first exposed to the Council when I attended its annual conference a few years ago. I was immediately impressed with the organization and have been a strong supporter ever since.

I support the Council because I share its values and believe in its ability to have an impact on the environment in Iowa. Two of those values that rank high for me are the Council's commitment to information *and* action.

A lot of people like to complain and place blame, but that doesn't always result in change. The Council isn't afraid to stand up for what's right, but they're also focused on taking the next step and working across the table to create solutions that are respectful, responsible and sustainable.

As the Council sets its sights on the future, I look forward to being part of building upon past successes and moving the state forward to improve water quality, expand land stewardship and grow clean energy development. ✨