

## PROGRESS REPORT

### LEAVE A LEGACY

Help ensure a safe, healthy environment and sustainable future for Iowa. Make a tax-deductible gift to the Iowa Environmental Council today. Also consider including the Iowa Environmental Council in your estate plans.

**To give,** return the enclosed card or visit [iaenvironment.org](http://iaenvironment.org). You may also contact Development Director Judy Downs at [downs@iaenvironment.org](mailto:downs@iaenvironment.org) or 515.244.1194 x202.

# A MESSAGE OF URGENCY

*Dear Council Supporter,*

January 9th marks the beginning of Iowa's 2017 Legislative Session, with a new Senate majority and many new faces in both chambers. More than ever, elected officials need to hear that improving and protecting our water and advancing clean energy are critical to Iowa's economy, health, and quality of life. We must communicate that Iowans prioritize protection, not pollution, of our natural resources. We are looking for progress, not decline, in policies that protect the environment. Finally, we must communicate to lawmakers our sense of urgency in advancing clean water and clean energy for all Iowans and in all sectors of the economy.

Now is the time to introduce yourself to your current or newly-elected Iowa House and Senate members. Elected officials can become flooded with emails, so snail mail and phone calls can be effective ways to get a short message across.

Attending a legislative forum and getting face time with your legislator is even better.

To find the name and contact information for your current state elected officials, background information on our priorities and relevant news, use our website, [iaenvironment.org](http://iaenvironment.org).

For many environmental issues, Iowans will be looking to Des Moines, not D.C., for answers and sustainable solutions. It will not be an easy task for our legislators; but we elected them to make the right decisions for future Iowans.

*Ralph*

**Ralph Rosenberg**

Executive Director  
[Rosenberg@iaenvironment.org](mailto:Rosenberg@iaenvironment.org)



## THE COUNCIL'S LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES FOR 2017

*This session of the Iowa Legislature* will present new challenges for our environment. However, we believe the legislative priorities developed in collaboration with our members and member organizations will benefit the health and safety of Iowans, promote strong, healthy business and tourism opportunities, and protect Iowa's natural resources for generations to come.

### Improve Iowa's Watersheds

The Council is calling for long-term, sustainable funding to address water quality and quantity challenges in Iowa. We support funding the Iowa Natural Resources and Outdoor Recreation Trust Fund, a constitutionally-protected source of dollars to be set aside from the first 3/8 cent of the next increase in the state sales tax. Iowa voters approved creation of the Trust in 2010. However, it has never been funded.

We will advocate for water quality funding to be tied to goals, timelines, monitoring, measurement, and transparency. The Council recommends that a board or commission be established to oversee implementation of a statewide, coordinated, watershed approach for investing in Iowa's water resources. This structure will ensure that taxpayers see real progress on water quality and recognize a good return on investment.

### Improve Iowa's Economy and Environment Through Renewable Energy Tax Incentives

The Council will support expansion and extension of renewable energy tax credits. Our work on these tax credits over the last ten years has paid off year after year, supporting Iowa's national leadership in wind energy and greatly expanding investments in solar energy. In the 2017 session,

the Council will support increasing the annual solar program cap from \$5 million to \$7.5 million to help meet demand and further spur solar growth across the state. We will also work to protect current policies that support renewable energy and energy efficiency.

### Protecting Water Quality in Iowa's Karst Region

The Council is working with leaders from Northeast Iowa to offer support for efforts to protect at-risk surface and groundwaters in this area. Northeast Iowa is also home to many of our state's treasured recreational waterways. Significant local and state resources have been invested to restore and sustain aquatic life and recreation in these waters.

These priorities are ambitious, but they are attainable with your support. Please reach out to your legislators and share with them why these priorities are important to you, your family and fellow Iowans. ✨

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*Our winter 2017 update for members and friends.*

### WHY I SUPPORT THE IOWA ENVIRONMENTAL COUNCIL

**John Schmidt**  
Member, Board  
of Directors



The *Des Moines Register* has published a number of articles in recent years that highlight the growing problems with water quality, climate change and flooding. As a customer of Des Moines Water Works, I have followed the many reports regarding the challenges of removing contaminants, such as nitrates, from our drinking water. I supported the constitutional amendment to establish a trust that 63 percent of the voters of Iowa approved in the year 2010. I was disappointed, however, by the failure of the Iowa legislature to fund The Trust or take other significant action to address water pollution in the state in recent years. I decided this issue was so important that I should invest more of my time in supporting efforts to improve water quality. I reviewed the information available on its website and decided that the Council was the strongest champion for improved water quality, clean energy and the environment. I was elected to the board in May of 2015.

I continue to support the Council because it takes positions based on facts, science, and collaboration. It is nonpartisan. It views litigation as a last resort, rather than the first. It also has an extremely talented and dedicated staff who want to make a difference. ✨





**ECONOMICS:  
DOLLARS, SENSE &  
SUSTAINABILITY – 2016**

The Council held our 2016 Annual Conference, *ECOnomics: Dollars, Sense & Sustainability* on October 6 at the FFA Enrichment Center at the DMACC Ankeny Campus. The event featured environmental lawyer Rob Bilott, ecological economics expert John D. Erickson and over a dozen other speakers. Over 230 environmentalists, Council members, students and business leaders gathered to hear from speakers, learn from exhibitors and network.

The conference also featured "Water in Iowa: Voicing the Lexicon," an art exhibition created by students in the Bluestem Institute at Ames High School in partnership with Project Localize and the Lexicon of Sustainability. Students spoke with attendees throughout the day about the project which examined issues related to Iowa's water quality.

Thank you to everyone who made this event a success!

Special thanks to our sponsors: Cultivating Compassion – The Dr. Richard Deming Foundation and Growing Green Communities, the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation and Wells Fargo, BNIM, DMACC, Environmental Law & Policy Center, IMPACT 7G, Iowa Association of Water Agencies, Leopold Center, Practical Farmers of Iowa, Raccoon River Watershed Association and Trees Forever. ✨

**A REVIEW OF 2016**

From legislative victories, to impacting the direction, attention and decisions on water and clean energy-related issues, to raising public awareness. 2016 has been full of successes for The Council, our members and our partners. Four accomplishments stand out as each required the support of our members and partners and each will lead to future successes in years to come.

- **Successfully lobbied to protect solar energy.** Working with other advocacy groups, solar businesses and supportive elected officials from both parties, our advocacy efforts defeated a bill in the Iowa Legislature that would have gutted net-metering, a policy that makes solar a more cost-effective alternative for Iowa farmers, businesses and homeowners. As a result, the solar industry will continue to grow across Iowa.
- **Continued to be a leader in successful efforts to expand wind energy.** The Council provided direct support via testimony at the Iowa Utilities Board for two wind power projects enabled, in large part, because of successful work to extend the federal production tax credit in late 2015. These projects promote clean energy jobs and, once built, will put Iowa well above 40% renewable energy and get us close to a significant 10,000 megawatt benchmark by 2020.
- **Brought statewide attention to the needs of Iowa's watersheds and introduced policymakers to the value of achieving success using a watershed approach.** At the beginning of the 2016 legislative session, The Council issued a policy paper entitled, "Healthy Lands, Healthy Waters" that established significant need for the state to adopt a

comprehensive, coordinated approach to addressing the challenges faced by Iowa's watersheds. The paper drew the attention of a number of Iowa legislators who used its information when speaking about the need for long-term funding for water quality. Our work sparked conversations between citizens and legislators that we will use to fight for a well-funded watershed approach in the 2017 session.

• **Placed continued pressure on and demanded action from the EPA on Mississippi River Pollution.**

The Council worked in partnership with the Mississippi River Collaborative to release a report entitled, "Decades of Delay", calling EPA out for their lackluster efforts in fighting nutrient pollution in the Mississippi. The steps and funding called for in the report received local, regional, and national media attention, informing citizens that continuing the status quo will only increase the threats to our Mighty Mississippi.

Throughout 2016, The Council further established itself as a knowledgeable and well-respected organization citizens and decision-makers can rely upon to use factual information to fight for a better Iowa. With your help, we look forward to new successes in 2017. ✨



**A RECORD  
YEAR FOR  
WIND ENERGY  
IN IOWA**

The past year was significant for wind energy in Iowa and put Iowa on a path to achieve important milestones in the years to come. The Council strongly supported two major wind energy proposals, both of which were approved by state regulators and are now moving into the local approval and construction phases. MidAmerican Energy's 2,000 megawatt (MW) Wind XI project and Alliant Energy's 500 MW project add up to at least 2,500 MW of wind generation that will be built in over the next several years and will help Iowa reach major clean energy milestones by 2020: wind capacity of nearly 10,000 MW and wind generating over 40% of electricity in the state. MidAmerican Wind XI project is also currently the largest wind energy project in the U.S.

**COUNCIL REPORT  
ON NITRATE  
IN DRINKING WATER  
HIGHLIGHTS HEALTH  
CONCERNS**

In late September, the Council released a new report, "Nitrate in Drinking Water: A Public Health Concern for All Iowans," that reviewed findings of research conducted in Iowa, the U.S. and abroad that have found nitrate in drinking water associated with several birth defects, bladder cancer and thyroid cancer. We found a growing body of research suggesting nitrate pollution poses a variety of risks to human health beyond blue-baby syndrome, a potentially fatal condition for infants that has been recognized since the 1960s. Some studies suggest that concentrations of nitrate lower than the drinking water standard of 10 milligrams per liter may be harmful.

The report highlights the need for more research on this pollutant that is a growing problem for Iowa water supplies. The studies outlined in the report offer compelling reasons to accelerate efforts to reduce nitrate pollution flowing into our surface and groundwater from farms, water treatment plants, urban yards and other sources. The report emphasizes that this is not an urban versus rural problem. Rural residents who often depend on private wells where the water quality is unregulated and often untested may be especially at risk.

The report findings have gained widespread attention, including a front-page, top-of-the-fold spot in the Des Moines Register, stories on Radio Iowa and Iowa Public Radio, and a Cedar Rapids Gazette guest editorial



co-authored by lead author, IEC Agriculture Policy Specialist Ann Y. Robinson, and Iowa Public Health Association Director Jeneane Moody. The report has also been featured in news and web blogs of diverse groups, such as the National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition, the Agree Initiative, the Soil and Water Conservation Society and Mercola.com Health News. Robinson presented on the report at the recent Mississippi River Network annual meeting in Memphis, Tennessee, and other presentations will include a session at the 2017 Governor's Conference on Public Health.

To address the issue of nitrates in drinking water, the Council recommends the state take a watershed approach to bring urban and rural citizens together to solve pollution problems. "We applaud those who are taking responsibility to help clean up our water, but more action is needed," says Robinson. "Water is essential for life, and we have a shared responsibility to preserve our natural resources today and for future generations." ✨

Wind energy is already a major part of Iowa's energy mix and provides clear economic and environmental benefits. The American Wind Energy Association (AWEA) recently reported that Iowa exceeded 35% in wind energy in the twelve-month period from July 2015 to July 2016, well above the next closest states. Wind energy helped Iowa move from relying on coal for over 80% of electricity to just over 50% in 2015. Wind energy supports up to 7,000 jobs in Iowa and provides more than \$17 million in land lease payments to farmers and rural landowners. Wind is a leading source of property tax revenue in counties with significant wind development, which supports schools, infrastructure like roads and bridges, and critical health services.

While the wind projects in 2016 are significant, Iowa has more potential to add wind in future years after they are completed. The Department of Energy's recent Wind Vision report identified potential in Iowa to reach a total of 20,000 MW by year 2030 and even higher amounts by 2040 and 2050. A recent analysis from AWEA found that adding this much wind by 2030 would save consumers money by reducing the cost of electricity. The Council will continue to work to ensure current wind projects are built on-time while developing the policies to ensure Iowa's leadership in wind energy continues into the next decade and beyond. ✨

**UPCOMING  
EVENTS**



**Service Squad Happy Hour**

The Service Squad is a joint effort between Iowa Environmental Council and Iowa Rivers Revival that connects clean water advocates with volunteer and outreach opportunities in the community.

**January 19**

Twisted Vine  
3320 Westown Pkwy  
West Des Moines, IA  
5 p.m. – 7 p.m.

**2017 Environmental Lobby Day  
& REAP Day**

Join us in communicating with Iowa legislators about the environmental priorities that are crucial in making Iowa a healthier, safer and stronger state to call home.

**March 29**

Iowa Capitol

