

# 2026 HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENT PRIORITIES

together for a healthy and sustainable Iowa future

## REDUCE IOWANS' EXPOSURE TO RADON, A LEADING CAUSE OF CANCER IN IOWA'S ENVIRONMENT.

Radon is the state's second-leading cause of lung cancer behind smoking, and most Iowa counties are at the nation's highest risk level for exposure. About 400 Iowans die from radon-induced lung cancer every year. Many families do not know if their homes are contaminated with radon, a naturally occurring gas that is colorless, odorless, and radioactive. Radon testing and mitigation are extremely effective in reducing risks.



**The Iowa legislature should invest in programs and resources that significantly reduce the risks of radon in Iowans' homes, schools, and businesses, protecting our health and reducing healthcare costs.**



## PRESERVE IOWA'S WATER MONITORING NETWORK TO DRIVE INFORMED SOLUTIONS.

A clear picture of how water moves through Iowa's waterways — along with where pollution comes from and how water quality is changing — is essential for developing effective, evidence-based solutions that protect our health and ecosystems. But after a significant funding cut in 2023, 60 water-quality sensors are expected to go offline in 2026, eliminating critical data we rely on to understand Iowa's water-quality challenges and opportunities.



**The Iowa legislature should restore and increase state investment (\$600,000 annually) in the Iowa Water Quality Information System and real-time water quality network, managed by IIHR — Hydroscience and Engineering at the University of Iowa, to preserve and maintain water sensors throughout the state.**



## PROTECT IOWA'S HEALTH AND WATER FROM COAL PLANT POLLUTION.

Coal ash is a byproduct of burning coal for electricity and is one of the largest industrial waste streams in the United States. It contains toxic substances such as arsenic, mercury, and lead that can make Iowans sick and pollute aquatic ecosystems. There are 69 known utility coal ash disposal sites across 16 Iowa counties often with limited scrutiny.



**The Iowa legislature should prohibit the discharge of coal ash leachate into the state's waterways to prevent contamination of drinking and recreational water supplies. The state should also require expanded groundwater monitoring and robust mitigation measures at all coal ash landfill sites to ensure timely detection and cleanup of pollution.**



Iowa  
Environmental  
Council

[iaenvironment.org](http://iaenvironment.org)  
[iecmail@iaenvironment.org](mailto:iecmail@iaenvironment.org)  
(515) 244-1194



**We are the Iowa Environmental Council.**

**FOR IOWANS. FOR THE ENVIRONMENT. FOR OUR FUTURE.**

## IEC'S PROGRAM AND RESEARCH AREAS OF EXPERTISE:

### ✓ CLEAN ENERGY

Renewable energy is the fastest and most affordable way to meet Iowa's growing energy needs. Deploying clean energy in Iowa supports jobs and economic development and keeps energy rates low. At the same time, coal plants threaten the safety of air and water in the communities where they still operate. We must speed the transition away from coal to clean energy.

### ✓ CLEAN WATER

People in every part of the state have a right to clean, safe water. Our rivers, streams, and lakes are increasingly contaminated with pollution and unsafe for drinking and recreation, while Iowa's aquifers are threatened by overuse. Our landscape and people are being overwhelmed. We must invest in transformational policy to restore balance to our environmental and economic systems and keep Iowans healthy and well.

### ✓ PUBLIC HEALTH & COMMUNITY RESILIENCY

Our health is inextricably tied to our environment. Iowa has the second-highest cancer rate in the nation, and we are one of only two states where cancer is increasing. Iowa's cancer crisis impacts people from all walks of life. IEC and partners are exploring how environmental risk factors contribute to Iowa's outlier cancer status — and how policy can help shape solutions that saves lives.

## WHO WE ARE

For 30 years, the Iowa Environmental Council (IEC) has been a trusted leader in policy, legal, regulatory, research, and public engagement work focused on Iowa's most pressing environmental challenges. Our broad coalition of member organizations and individuals is united by a shared commitment to protecting what makes Iowa special — clean and accessible water, healthy air, reliable and affordable energy, and strong, resilient communities across both urban and rural areas.

As Iowans, we respect our natural resources and the joy of experiencing our greatest asset: our environment. We believe it's up to all of us to work together to protect it for future generations.



Looking for data, subject-matter expertise, or technical information about Iowa's environment? Contact us.

