



Iowa Environmental Council

2022—2026 Strategic Plan

Our Vision for Iowa

We envision a state that is a leader in addressing climate change and environmental justice, and in creating resilient communities that embody Iowans' shared values of respect for all people and the environment.

Our Mission

Our mission is a just, healthy environment and sustainable future for all Iowans.

Our Core Values

- Our greatest strength is our relationships, within our team and our diverse coalition.
- Our work is informed by science, data, and stories.
- We are a trusted voice, respected for our integrity and resourcefulness.
- Sometimes we educate and lead; other times, we learn and follow.
- We are inclusive.
- We are non-partisan.
- We listen to others.

How We Do Our Work

Through education, advocacy, and coalition-building, we raise awareness, generate action, and create large-scale change. We work on federal, state, and local public policy issues to ensure a just, healthy environment and sustainable future for all Iowans.

Why we do our work: Protecting People & the Planet; Past, Present, & Future

For more than 25 years, the Iowa Environmental Council has been the largest environmental coalition in the state, leading the way in addressing urgent concerns impacting people and the planet. At our founding, that main issue was water quality and land stewardship. In 2005, it meant becoming a leader in moving Iowa toward a clean energy future. Both of those issue areas continue to fit within our scope today. However, those issue areas cannot be addressed without addressing the urgent issues of climate change and environmental justice. Both climate change and environmental justice are root causes of the challenges we face around water quality and land stewardship and continuing our push for a 100% clean energy future. We cannot address these individually without addressing them collectively.

Climate change is at the center of all our environmental work. We believe Iowa can be a leader in mitigating the effects of climate change and becoming a carbon neutral state. From renewable energy production to conservation practices that sequester carbon, Iowans are well-positioned to be at the forefront on climate. Measures to mitigate and adapt to climate change can and should also create new economic markets, increase community resiliency, reduce pollution, protect public health, and improve habitat. We will advocate for a just transition that allows people to realize the full value of Iowa's land, water, and ecosystem services while securing a more resilient future for Iowa.

Our work is guided by a commitment to environmental justice. The consequences of climate change and pollution are not and will not be felt equally by all Iowans. Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) and their communities are disproportionately and unjustly impacted by pollution, public health disparities, and economic injustices. Additionally, implicit bias and systemic inequality are inherent in many environmental laws and regulations. We also acknowledge that our work takes place on the ancestral and traditional territories of numerous Indigenous peoples. We will look for opportunities to fight systemic racism and inequality where we find it in environmental regulations, laws, and policies, including examining the disproportionate negative impacts of poor water and air quality, flooding, lack of access to public lands and outdoor recreation opportunities, and high energy bills on BIPOC and marginalized communities. We must actively seek to address these inequities, or else the efforts to mitigate and adapt to climate change will exacerbate them.

We envision an Iowa that has mitigated climate change and corrected inequities through its energy, water, land, and environmental justice policies. That future Iowa has:

- A healthy climate and habitat
- Diverse land uses
- A variety of economic drivers and opportunities for all Iowans
- Equitable access to public lands, outdoor recreation, and environmental education
- Equitable access to affordable, reliable, and clean sources of energy and drinking water
- The promise of a livable future for current and future generations
- An engaged public with equitable access to the democratic process

Our Priority issues: Environmental Justice, Energy, Water & Land

Environmental Justice

The effects of pollution are not felt equally. Access to Iowa's land and waters is not equal. People who have had less political power – particularly people who are Black, Indigenous, and People of Color, as well as low-income communities – have faced greater environmental degradation. They have not been well-represented in groups like IEC that advocate for a cleaner environment. Progress that only benefits those in power cannot fulfill our vision.

IEC is committed to engaging more diverse voices on energy, climate, water, and land policies to ensure we center justice and equity in our work. We will ensure BIPOC individuals and groups are not only part of our movement but lead in their areas of expertise, and increase IEC's impact on environmental policy for the benefit of all Iowans.

We must also ensure that equity and justice considerations are meaningfully included in all of IEC's work and policy positions. We will ensure a just energy transition away from fossil fuels by minimizing the energy burden on Iowans. Everyone deserves access to clean drinking water. Everyone should be able to recreate in natural spaces.

Energy

Mitigating climate change will require Iowa to transition from fossil fuels to 100% clean energy, including wind, solar, storage, and energy efficiency, and to support the region and the nation's transition to clean energy. IEC will work to ensure that this transition happens quickly and that all Iowans benefit from the transition.

We focus on energy because burning fossil fuels for energy is responsible for over 90% of greenhouse gas emissions globally. This transition is fundamental to avoiding the worst impacts of climate change.

Water & Land

Agriculture is the largest source of greenhouse gas emissions in Iowa and the state's primary source of water pollution. IEC will work to improve and protect Iowa's water and land to strengthen Iowa's resiliency, economy, public health, and quality of life.

Addressing these problems requires widespread land-use change across Iowa. We will focus on increasing conservation and land stewardship practices that achieve any of the following: improve water quality, mitigate flooding, increase wildlife habitat, enhance outdoor recreation opportunities, protect soil health, and sequester carbon. Many practices provide several of these co-benefits.

Achieving this goal of transformative land-use change across Iowa requires widespread behavior change, plus policies that include a mix of incentives and requirements (carrots and sticks) to drive behavior change.

Our Objectives

The Iowa Environmental Council is a powerful advocate.

- We work with elected and appointed leaders at the federal, state, and local levels on issues that affect Iowa's environment.
- We act as a public watchdog and advocate, holding regulators, public officials, and corporations accountable.
- We engage and empower others in our advocacy work and support the advocacy work of others who work on aligned issues of climate change and environmental justice.

Strategic objective of our advocacy work

Build a strong, statewide movement of diverse, engaged leaders on environmental issues that impact Iowans.

The Iowa Environmental Council is a valuable resource for data driven, people-centered information and education about Iowa's environment.

- Our work is grounded in science and in stories; we connect information about the environment and its impact on Iowans.
- We collaborate with others to investigate climate change and environmental justice in Iowa.
- We inform and inspire Iowans to take action on environmental issues that affect them.

Strategic objective of our education work

Increase Iowans' understanding of environmental issues and inspire them to take action.

The Iowa Environmental Council is a collaborative, inclusive movement for change.

- We bring organizations and individuals together to create an environmental coalition greater than the sum of its parts.
- We work with others to envision and create a more diverse environmental movement in Iowa, focused on climate change and environmental justice.

Strategic objective of our collaborative work

Expand and activate a diverse coalition to address the environmental issues that affect Iowans.

The Iowa Environmental Council is a sustainable, effective organization.

- We have a broad base of engaged supporters and members throughout Iowa.
- We have the funding, people, and infrastructure necessary to sustainably support our work and enable us to connect authentically with our members, supporters, allies, and critics.
- We know how to get things done.

Strategic objectives of our organization building work

Provide opportunities for people to engage in and champion our organization and its work.