Clearing the way for cleaner waterways

Staff urge Congress to let EPA do its job
For more than a decade, Wisconsin Environment has been working to close loopholes in the Clean Water Act that have left more than half the nation’s streams, 20 million acres of wetlands, and 117 million Americans’ drinking water at risk of unchecked pollution. This past spring, the Environmental Protection Agency finally proposed a long-awaited rule to restore Clean Water Act protections to all our waterways.

44 commitments secured
Leading up to the proposed rule’s announcement, Wisconsin Environment held its annual lobby day where our state staff, along with federation staff from around the country, secured commitments from 44 senators and representatives to urge them to stand up for the EPA rule.

Wisconsin Environment and our national federation also organized 107 farmers, 87 academics and 89 members of the House of Representatives, all calling on the Obama administration to protect America’s waterways by closing the Clean Water Act loopholes. Federal Clean Water Advocate Ally Fields delivered the letter to the EPA’s Science Advisory Board panel while testifying in support of their report, which makes the scientific case for restoring Clean Water Act protections.

150,000 Americans in support
Earlier this fall, more than 150,000 people submitted public comments to the EPA in support of the administration’s steps to protect our waterways.

With the polluters’ lobby, led by corporate agribusiness and Big Oil, ramping up to try to block the rule in Congress, Wisconsin Environment’s national federation has launched a massive citizen outreach campaign to build support for the rule.

This summer, our national federation will have conversations with more than 500,000 people about the importance of waterways in their states and will collect more than 100,000 comments in support of the rule.

“This summer, we’re running campaigns to close clean water loopholes that put our most vulnerable waterways at risk,” said Fields.

more online

Rep. Mark Pocan speaks with Wisconsin Environment members at a “Coffee with Congress” event.

We can win the biggest victory for our waterways—but only if enough of us speak out. Visit our website to take action: www.WisconsinEnvironment.org.
Recent action

Green Future Fund: A new way to honor supporters
Wisconsin Environment’s new Green Future Fund honors donors who ensure a greener future for Wisconsin by remembering Wisconsin Environment or our sister group, Wisconsin Environment Research & Policy Center, in their estate plans.

Including Wisconsin Environment in your planning costs nothing today, while protecting the places we love and the values we share for the future.

With your permission, we’ll recognize your gift in our publications, inspiring other members to make their own legacy gifts. Or you may choose to keep your gift private. Either way, any details you choose to provide about your gift will remain confidential. To enroll in the Green Future Fund, or to learn more, call 1-800-841-7299 ext. 312, or email plannedgiving@WisconsinEnvironment.org.

1,000 doctors, nurses call to halt fracking
This past February, Wisconsin Environment and our national federation rallied doctors and nurses nationwide to join us in shining a spotlight on the serious health risks of fracking. More than 1,000 health professionals signed letters to President Barack Obama and state officials verifying this drilling has real consequences for the health of nearby communities.

These signatures are firm backup to the irrefutable evidence present in actual communities close to fracking sites. Documented ailments include difficulty breathing, nosebleeds, skin rashes, neurological and gastrointestinal issues. Pennsylvania resident Judy Armstrong Stiles found barium and arsenic in her drinking water, and then in her blood, after drilling began on her land.

Wisconsin Environment will continue to work with health professionals as we educate more decision-makers and the public on the verifiable threats of opening more of our country to drilling that’s proven to be dangerous for our families.

To our members

I hope this note finds you well and gearing up for summer hiking, fishing or canoeing trips with friends and family. After a winter like this past one, there’s nothing like feeling the warmth of the sun on your face or being out in the fresh air.

For years, experiences like these are part of what Wisconsin Environment has been fighting for—to make sure Wisconsinites from every corner of the state can experience their local environment without worrying about pollution, fracking, logging and development. This summer’s no different. We’ve launched a huge grassroots effort to protect our lakes—the most beautiful in the country—from factory farm runoff pollution.

Protecting the places we love is invaluable work. But it’s also not easy. It takes people coming together.

Sincerely,

Megan Severson
State Advocate

Toward a greener future

Wisconsin Environment and Wisconsin Environment Research & Policy Center gratefully accept bequests, beneficiary designations of IRAs and life insurance, and gifts of securities to support our work to build a cleaner, greener, healthier future.

For more information, call 1-800-841-7299 or send an email to: PlannedGiving@WisconsinEnvironment.org.
In April, Wisconsin Environment was joined by Alderman Nik Kovak to release a new report, “Shining Cities: At the Forefront of America’s Solar Energy Revolution.” The report provides a first-of-its-kind comparative look at the growth of solar power in major American cities.

“Cities are the focal point of this solar energy revolution and that has Milwaukee looking on the bright side,” said Megan Severson, state advocate with Wisconsin Environment.

The report found that there is more than 200 times as much solar photovoltaic (PV) capacity installed in the U.S. today compared to 2002, much of that in America’s cities. The top 20 cities account for 7 percent of the installed photovoltaic solar, while occupying only 0.1 percent of the land area.

“Solar power is booming across the country and cities are at the forefront,” said Severson. “The progress we are seeing here and around the country should give us the confidence we can do more.”

With the cost of solar coming down, there’s growing awareness of solar power as a mainstream energy solution with widespread benefits for our health, our economy and the environment.

“As a pollution-free energy source with no fuel costs, solar energy helps us meet our city’s environmental and economic goals,” said Alderman Nik Kovac. “I’m looking forward to continued progress.”

Clean energy policies, such as standards for renewable energy and energy efficiency, are leading to big reductions of carbon pollution—the leading cause of global warming—according to a new report by Wisconsin Environment Research & Policy Center this past March.

Our report, “Moving America Forward,” showed that clean energy policies have reduced U.S. carbon pollution by the equivalent of 34 million passenger vehicles.

The report shows that renewable electricity standards have helped states develop enough renewable energy to offset as much carbon pollution as 12.5 million cars produce in a year. Energy efficiency policies have helped avoid as much carbon pollution as 12.9 million cars produce in a year.

**National limits still needed**

“By using energy more efficiently and by generating more power from clean, renewable sources, states are delivering a one-two punch in the fight against global warming,” said Julian Boggs, federal global warming program director. “They’re proving that we have what it takes to protect our children and future generations from the worst impacts of climate change. But we will need firm national limits on carbon pollution from power plants.”

**America’s leadership is crucial**

American leadership in the fight against global warming is crucial. The United States is the world’s largest economy, the second-largest emitter of global warming pollution, and the nation responsible for more of the human-caused carbon dioxide pollution in the atmosphere than any other. Without prompt action by the U.S., catastrophic impacts—from coastal flooding to food system disruptions—could become unavoidable.

**Polluter Protection Act**

Unfortunately, we’ve seen that when President Obama and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) attempt to step forward on climate, big polluters and their allies are there to hammer them. When we learned about a new attack on the EPA’s ability to tackle climate in the House of Representatives—HR 3826 or the ‘Polluter Protection Act’—we leapt into action.

The week before the vote, Wisconsin Environment’s federal staff held meetings with members of Congress and their staff—brining with us letters of support, media clips, and petitions from across the country.

Thanks to our work, Congressional efforts to prevent the EPA from addressing global warming pollution are losing steam. When the bill came for a vote, it passed—as we knew it would—but it received 26 fewer votes than last time.

“We must tackle global warming in any way we can,” said Boggs. “It’s going to take a combination of actions, and Wisconsin Environment and the rest of the Environment America state federation is committed to ensuring the U.S. is doing what it can on both the state and federal level.”

To read the report, “Moving America Forward,” visit: www.WisconsinEnvironment.org/reports.
This summer, Wisconsin Environment is campaigning across the state to urge the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources to clean up existing factory farms, and stop permitting new ones. In Wisconsin, we’ve got the most beautiful lakes in the country. They’re where we take our families on vacation, or where we get away for the weekend. But too often we’ve found lakes and streams that are suffering from pollution, covered with algae or choked with weeds.

Industrial agriculture in Wisconsin creates as much untreated waste as 69 million people. That’s 100 times more than the population of Milwaukee. And far too much of this animal waste ends up as runoff pollution in our lakes, where it causes out-of-control algae blooms and makes our lakes unfit for fishing, swimming or other activities.

To make matters worse, the number of factory farms in Wisconsin has nearly doubled in the last eight years, greatly increasing the amount of pollution. Continued factory farm pollution in Wisconsin will mean more algae blooms, more out-of-control weed growth, and more ruined lakes.