Victory for Wisconsin’s water quality

New rules to improve pollution protection

Wisconsin is taking strong steps toward preventing the algae blooms and weeds we see choking our favorite swimming holes and fishing spots in the summer.

Thanks in part to pressure from Wisconsin Environment’s grassroots activists, the state approved new, stronger, science-based rules to reduce pollution in our lakes, rivers and streams.

The rules reduce excessive manure spreading near rural waterways, and they will ensure that cities control their runoff to prevent toxic chemicals from flowing straight into our waterways.

Making the case for protection

Runoff pollution is the culprit in most of our state’s water problems. It occurs when sediment, manure, fertilizer and other pollutants from agriculture, sewers and roads wash into our waterways—and it threatens 90 percent of Wisconsin’s lakes.

This summer, we had an opportunity to protect our lakes by getting new rules passed that would curb that runoff pollution, and we jumped at it. We’ve won victories for our waterways before, helping pass some of the first water quality rules in the state, and last summer winning protection from phosphorous runoff. But opportunities like this don’t come along often, so we launched a statewide effort to push Wisconsin’s leaders to make the right choice.

To ramp up support, our citizen outreach team went door to door in communities across the state, speaking with thousands of people. We gathered petition signatures for our lawmakers and organized activists to send e-mails on the eve of important votes. We also collected members’ photos of their own favorite lakes, as well as waterways they’ve seen suffering from the effects of runoff.

The Milwaukee Journal Sentinel editorialized in favor of the rules in late July, highlighting the benefits Wisconsinites will see as a result:

“The bottom line is that these rules will help clean the state’s waters, which are critical to quality of life and future economic development.”

more online

Wisconsin Environment volunteers and an “algae monster” worked to educate beachgoers this summer about runoff pollution.

Get the latest news on our website: www.WisconsinEnvironment.org/news
To our members

BP’s Deepwater Horizon stopped gushing—but we don’t know what long-term damage the disaster will cause for the ecosystem and communities of the Gulf. There’s no better reason to push toward a future in which Americans use as little oil as possible, protecting our oceans and beaches and reducing global warming pollution as well.

Our staff is working in Madison and in Washington, D.C., to ensure BP is held fully responsible for the disaster, and to win a permanent ban on new drilling off our shores. But we must do more to prevent future tragedies.

Thus, Wisconsin Environment is joining our national federation to launch a major program to reduce our dependence on oil. Our work with Wisconsin’s leaders, Congress, and with the Obama administration will slash oil consumption and move America toward a clean energy future.

Sincerely,

Megan Severson
Advocate

Recent action

Thousands join our America’s Great Outdoors call

This summer we joined our national federation, Environment America, to launch a campaign to protect and revitalize America’s national parks, bringing thousands of people together to speak out for America’s most beautiful places. While national parks are hailed as “America’s best idea,” many of them are threatened by neglect or pollution, including Glacier National Park. Known for its jagged peaks and pristine waters, Glacier is home to grizzly bears, bald eagles and mountain lions. Yet nearby oil and gas drilling threatens to spoil its vistas and pollute its waters.

President Obama launched the America’s Great Outdoors Initiative to strengthen protections for America’s best-loved national parks. As part of the initiative, we are urging Interior Secretary Ken Salazar to cancel drilling leases near Glacier. And from Shenandoah in Virginia to Mount Rainer in Washington, we’re engaging citizens who care about our parks and lobbying the administration to take action.

Winning steps toward Great Lakes restoration

The Great Lakes are a central part of our heritage, and part of the natural legacy we want our kids to be able to enjoy as we have. But decades of industrial dumping has created toxic “hot spots” throughout the Great Lakes, and 24 billion gallons of sewage are discharged into the Lakes each year. With hundreds of beach closings, a looming Asian carp invasion, and other new threats on the horizon, we cannot wait another year to strengthen protections for the Great Lakes.

Congress is considering legislation that would give restoration efforts a needed upgrade and increase future protections for our waters. We won our first victory this June, when a key Senate committee approved the bill, which would inject new funds and energy into efforts to restore the Lakes. Our staff also wrote and released a report highlighting the steps needed to restore our great waterways. We’ll work to see it through, to make sure we protect our beautiful Lakes.

How do you want to be remembered?

You can be remembered as someone who cared enough to keep up the fight for a cleaner, greener, healthier future by making a bequest to Wisconsin Environment.

For information, call 1-800-841-7299, or e-mail PlannedGiving@WisconsinEnvironment.org.

Wisconsin Environment

www.WisconsinEnvironment.org/newsletters
After the spill, a plan to end America’s oil addiction

The United States just suffered the greatest environmental disaster in our history. At least 120 million gallons of oil poured into the Gulf after BP’s Deepwater Horizon drill rig exploded on April 20—the equivalent of more than 10 Exxon Valdez spills. Oil contaminated 580 miles of coastline from Texas to Florida, and the spill has already proven catastrophic for local wildlife—from oil-soaked pelicans, to dolphins choking on fumes, to the sea turtles who nest in the Gulf’s warm waters. It will also be catastrophic for shrimpers, fishermen, and the men and women who work in the Gulf’s $20 billion tourism industry, all of whom now face a difficult and uncertain future. It may take decades for the ecology and the economy of the Gulf Coast to recover.

As we begin the long process of cleaning up the spill, compensating those affected, and rebuilding the Gulf Coast, we must ensure that a crisis of this magnitude never happens again. We have known for decades that America’s dependence on oil is environmentally and economically unsustainable. Beyond the threat of catastrophe, our addiction to oil pollutes our air, endangers our climate, enriches our enemies, and robs our economy of billions of dollars every day.

We can get off oil permanently

Wisconsin Environment is joining our national federation, Environment America, in launching a major new program to free America from our dependence on oil. We can have American-made electric cars instead of more air pollution, walkable communities and public transit instead of price shocks at the pump, and clean electricity instead of oil spills. The result will be more jobs, less pollution, improved public health and thousands of dollars in savings for American families. We are bringing together a coalition of environmental groups, public health organizations, consumer advocates and national security groups to build a sustained campaign to end America’s addiction to oil. Even with all this support, getting off oil will be no simple task. There is no easy solution, no silver-bullet legislation. It will require a sustained commitment from supporters and activists to change policy at every level of government, from the local zoning board to the president of the United States.

Right now, we are fighting to ensure that any climate or energy bill passed by Congress includes strong policies to reduce oil dependence. Sen. Jeff Merkley of Oregon recently proposed visionary legislation that could reduce our oil consumption by more than 40 percent by 2030 through increased fuel efficiency, support for electric vehicles, and regulatory reform to ensure our tax dollars support public transit and smart growth instead of highways and sprawl. We call on the Senate to pass Sen. Merkley’s oil savings plan.

We’re also calling on our state leadership, especially our next governor, to commit to moving Wisconsin toward a clean energy future—starting with a solar electricity standard. Visit our website to sign a petition and let the next governor know you want concrete action for Wisconsin’s energy future.

Progress on clean cars

The BP oil spill in the Gulf demonstrated in heartbreaking terms why we need to move away from oil as quickly as possible. That’s why Wisconsin Environment is working to set aggressive new standards requiring cars and trucks to go farther on a gallon of gas.

In May, President Obama announced historic new clean car standards, which Wisconsin Environment and our national federation, Environment America, helped secure. These new rules are expected to cut gasoline consumption by more than 11 billion gallons per year in 2016, nearly as much as all the vehicles in Texas use annually. This is a great start, but not nearly enough—the standards are slated to expire in 2016.

The disaster in the Gulf demands that we go further after the current standards expire, so Wisconsin Environment is calling for even stronger rules requiring the average car and light truck to travel 60 miles on a gallon of gas by 2025.

We know that car companies have the technological know-how to make it happen, so we’re working to convince the Obama administration to make this goal a reality. As our campaign kicks off, we’ll collect thousands of public comments and mobilize support from leaders within the national security community and from areas impacted by the Gulf oil spill.

Clean energy for Wisconsin

Early this summer, students, adults and kids sent in videos explaining why we need clean energy for our first video contest. You can watch all of the submissions on our website.

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As oil flowed into the Gulf of Mexico in June, Sens. Russ Feingold and Herb Kohl had to decide whether or not to increase America’s dependence on oil and block Clean Air Act rules. Both Sen. Feingold and Sen. Kohl stood up for the environment by voting against a measure that would have done so.

The measure, dubbed the “Dirty Air Act,” would have crippled future attempts to reduce our dependence on oil by blocking any regulation of global warming pollution—including new federal clean car standards.

“Now the Senate must get down to business passing a bill to lessen the extensive damage caused in the Gulf, cut our oil dependence, and move to a clean energy economy that caps carbon pollution and finally prioritizes energy efficiency and clean, renewable energy,” said Emily Figdor, our federal global warming program director, in a statement following the Senate’s vote.

Defeating a handout for Big Oil