Thousands against factory farm pollution

Public takes stand to protect lakes

This summer, Wisconsin Environment staff fanned out across the state and talked to tens of thousands of Wisconsinites about the need to protect our lakes by halting the growth of factory farming in Wisconsin.

This face-to-face outreach, as well as coalition-building with local farmers and others, helped mobilize broad grassroots support for our campaign and laid the groundwork for a statewide movement to save our lakes from factory farm pollution.

Factory farms are fouling our lakes

In the last eight years, the number of factory farms in Wisconsin has nearly doubled. The rapid growth of industrial agriculture is proving disastrous for our lakes: These massive farms sit right next to waterways, and produce as much untreated manure as 69 million people. That’s 12 times the population of Wisconsin.

Too often, this animal waste—along with other pollutants, such as fertilizers and pesticides—ends up in our waterways, where it causes out-of-control algae blooms, dangerous nitrate levels and other problems. Factory farm pollution is making our lakes unsafe for swimming, fishing or other use.

25,000 conversations

To protect Wisconsin’s lakes, we need to halt the growth of factory farms in Wisconsin, and make sure that existing factory farms follow the law and stop polluting our waterways.

To do this, we’re building massive public support for our lakes and laying the groundwork for a moratorium on factory farms in Wisconsin. This summer, Wisconsin Environment staff talked to more than 25,000 people across the state, educating them about the threats to our lakes and the urgent need to take a stand. And more than 8,100 people signed petitions to their lawmakers, urging them not to allow any new factory farms until clean water laws are fully enforced and our lakes are protected from pollution. In addition, we’re building a broad coalition of local farmers, rural groups and others to advocate for our lakes and work for an end to factory farm pollution.

Lake Wingra. Wisconsin Environment is working to protect our lakes from agricultural pollution by halting the spread of factory farms.

more online

Our staff talked face-to-face with more than 25,000 Wisconsinites this summer about protecting our lakes.

To learn more about our campaign and take action, visit www.WisconsinEnvironment.org.
To our members

As Wisconsinites, the land and the water are part of our identity. It’s impossible to separate our daily lives from the natural beauty that surrounds us, and we take real pride in preserving it for future generations. That’s what makes recent attacks on our environment particularly painful. We’re seeing family farmland bought up to make way for factory farms; western Wisconsin ravaged for silica sand to aid the national fracking boom; and utilities working to keep us dependent on dirty energy.

Yet we know that when we speak together, our leaders pay attention. That’s why we’re building support for a factory farm moratorium, getting commitments from local leaders to expand solar power in their communities, and showing that the public wants action on global warming. It will take committed activism to make our plans work. But here at Wisconsin Environment, we’re ready for the work ahead of us. And we’re so grateful to have you on our side.

Sincerely,

Megan Severson, State Advocate

Recent action

Dangerous frac sand mining on the rise

Mining for silica sand, nicknamed “frac sand” for its use in the process of hydraulic fracturing, or “fracking,” for natural gas, has seen a sharp rise in Wisconsin. There are a number of potential environmental and health threats associated with frac sand mining, including: waterways polluted by wastewater; depletion of groundwater resources; increased air pollution; and the respiratory disease silicosis.

Accidents from frac sand mining operations are already making headlines. Last year, a wastewater pond at a frac sand mine in Grantsburg burst and sent polluted water and sediment flowing into a protected section of the St. Croix National Scenic River.

Wisconsin Environment is working to stem the growth of this dangerous mining. By educating the public, meeting directly with lawmakers, shining a light on the issue in the media, and reaching out to other activists, we’re working to protect Wisconsin from the threats posed by frac sand mining.

Fighting back against cuts to our parks

In June, the National Park Service released a memo planning for cuts to parks across the board—cuts to every park, including Wisconsin’s own Apostle Islands National Lakeshore and more. The cuts would result in reduced hours of operation, fewer services, and in some cases, even closure.

Our parks aren’t just an integral part of our natural heritage; they’re also a major economic boon. Wisconsin’s national monuments and historic sites attracted $24 million in tourism spending in 2011 alone. But year after year, Congress slashes funding for programs that keep our parks open.

Together with our national federation of state groups, Wisconsin Environment is mobilizing broad public support for our parks and calling on Congress to give these special places the resources they deserve.
On June 25, President Obama announced a climate plan that will set limits on carbon pollution from power plants, advance energy efficiency and increase the nation’s commitment to renewable energy.

In the aftermath of severe droughts across the country, Hurricane Sandy, and other extreme weather events, the president’s plan to address global warming was loudly applauded by Wisconsin Environment and many others.

“Today, President Obama responded to the millions of Americans who have spoken out on behalf of their communities and their families, urging him to lead on climate,” said Megan Severson, state advocate for Wisconsin Environment.

**Responding to an urgent threat**

Left unchecked, global warming is projected to bring to Wisconsin more intense storms and more unhealthy air days. Scientists have warned that the window is rapidly closing for making the necessary cuts in carbon pollution to protect future generations from the worst consequences of global warming.

To respond to this threat, the president’s plan contains several key components. It will:

- **Limit carbon pollution from new and existing power plants.** The president directed the Environmental Protection Agency to set limits on carbon pollution from new and existing power plants, which currently lack any such federal limits despite being the largest single source of the carbon pollution fueling global warming.

- **Invest in energy efficiency.** New efficiency measures for buildings and new appliances will cut carbon pollution by reducing our overall energy demand.

- **Build more renewable energy.** The plan focuses on expanding production of clean, renewable energy sources like wind and solar, especially on public lands.

- **Support affected communities.** The president’s plan will help ensure that communities are better equipped to prepare for and recover from the impacts of global warming.

- **Rebuild U.S. leadership internationally.** The president’s plan calls for the U.S. to actively engage in international efforts to address global warming.

**Massive grassroots support**

Wisconsin Environment offered special praise for the president’s pledge to cut carbon pollution from existing power plants. More than 3.2 million Americans, including thousands of Wisconsin Environment members, supporters and allies, submitted public comments last year in support of the president setting limits on carbon pollution from power plants.

“Carbon pollution from power plants is a huge part of the global warming problem. Today, President Obama acknowledged this and mapped out a plan for cleaning up this pollution,” said Severson. “We also know that this plan is just one important step in a multi-year effort, and that the proof of the plan’s success will be in the pudding. Wisconsin Environment stands ready to assist the president in following through on this critical commitment.”
Thanks in part to the actions and advocacy of Wisconsin Environment staff, members and supporters, the Legislature has restored funding for an important local agriculture program called Buy Local, Buy Wisconsin. Buy Local, Buy Wisconsin is a grant program that supports local Wisconsin farmers. These farmers produce local, sustainable food grown in ways that don’t harm our environment, but have a hard time competing with factory farming operations. That’s why these grants are so important. But Gov. Scott Walker’s budget originally eliminated funding for the program.

In response, Wisconsin Environment and our allies generated calls to the Legislature and showed our lawmakers that the public wants more healthy, sustainable food—not less. In response, the Legislature’s Joint Finance Committee voted 16-0 to restore funding for the Buy Local, Buy Wisconsin program to the budget. And in June, the governor signed the budget into law.

This victory is a good start, but Wisconsin Environment is hard at work pushing for stronger programs that incentivize local, sustainable agriculture in Wisconsin.