Defending the places we love

You’re standing up against federal rollbacks

From Lake Michigan to the Apostle Islands, for more than a century Americans have taken action to protect the places we love, guided by our shared values and informed by the best advice of our scientists.

Yet President Trump and the 115th Congress have embarked on a reckless, shortsighted plan to dismantle dozens of environmental protections.

Wisconsin Environment and our nationwide network are working to inform the public about what’s at stake, hold the administration and Congress accountable, and build the support necessary to defend our health and the places we love.

Clean air, clean water, open spaces

The president and Congress are working to eliminate federal protection for 30,580 miles of streams in Wisconsin, with nearly 2 million miles of streams left unprotected across America. They’re moving backward on climate action and endangering public health by moving to shut down the Clean Power Plan, a key part of our commitment to reduce global warming pollution.

Even worse, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is now being run by Scott Pruitt, even though he sued the EPA 14 times to block environmental protections. And perhaps most frighteningly, the White House’s 2018 budget proposal aims to slice the EPA’s overall budget by 31 percent and staffing by 21 percent.

So we’re uniting people from all sides of the political spectrum in urging our senators to stand up and defend our environmental protections.

In response to moves by the president and Congress that would threaten the people and places we love, Americans like you across the country and from all sides of the political spectrum are standing up for clean water, limits on carbon pollution and smog, and protected wild places.

Acting on our shared values

You, our members, are taking action, generating thousands of petitions, calls and emails to our elected leaders. This is making an impact, but we need to do more. The leaders and activists of the past organized the first Earth Day, supported and passed the Clean Air Act, the Clean Water Act, and the Endangered Species Act, and created the EPA. Now the torch passes to us. The children we know and love today can live cleaner, healthier lives in a greener world, but only if we can keep our protections in place and make them stronger.
Your Impact

Who’s leading the way on renewable energy?

Despite the Trump administration’s promises to move America backward on climate action and renewable energy, businesses and cities across the country have committed to 100 percent renewable energy. And a new report from Wisconsin Environment Research & Policy Center, “Renewable Energy 100: The Course to a Carbon-Free Campus”, shows that America’s institutions of higher education can also play a crucial role in combating global warming.

Colleges and universities have long played a leading role in bringing technological changes to society, and should commit to getting 100 percent of their energy from clean, renewable sources.

Meanwhile, in the Northeast, our national federation has been calling on our elected officials to double the strength of the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative, the nation’s best climate and clean air program. In February, 546 health professionals, businesses, academics, elected officials and community leaders from nine states in the Northeast joined our call to action.

How you can protect public lands

Just weeks after the 115th Congress convened for the first time, Rep. Jason Chaffetz filed a bill that would sell off 3.3 million acres of America’s public lands. But he wasn’t expecting the public opposition from hunters, anglers, outdoor enthusiasts, and supporters of wilderness like you. More than 1,000 people showed up at a pro-public lands rally in Helena, Mont., the hashtag #keepitpublic zipped around Twitter, and Rep. Chaffetz’s Facebook page filled up with criticism. One week after introducing the legislation, Chaffetz announced that he would withdraw his bill—which goes to show what people power can accomplish.

Wisconsin Environment has also been working to protect the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR), one of our nation’s most incredible landscapes. This national treasure is home to polar bears, grizzlies, caribou and wolves, but the oil and gas industry is threatening to exploit the region for profit.

That’s why, with your support, we’re mobilizing members and supporters to urge Congress to designate the ANWR as permanently protected wilderness.

You make the difference

As a member of Wisconsin Environment, you’re helping win tangible results for our environment. We all want our children to be able to enjoy clean air and water, the great parks we treasure, and a safer world free from threats of climate change. That’s why in the face of disheartening setbacks in Washington, D.C., or obstruction from special interests here at home, I’m counting on members like you, who share these values, to stand with us as we work for a better future.

People like you, who translate their optimism for a greener future into action, define the advances we make for our environment and health. So, even though at times the road feels riddled with obstacles, I feel encouraged. Together, we’re making headway to tackle climate change, defend our clean air and water, and protect the places we love by uniting Americans around shared values.

Through this, we’re amplifying the call on our elected officials to rise to the task and advocate for our environment.

Thanks for standing with us.

Megan Severson
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 x312 or send an email to: PlannedGiving@WisconsinEnvironment.org.
We need to get the lead out

Over the past two years, the tragedy of Flint, Mich., has stunned the nation. We watched the drinking water of an entire city become contaminated with lead. And now we know this toxic threat extends well beyond Flint to communities across the country.

In February, Wisconsin Environment Research & Policy Center and U.S. PIRG Education Fund released a new report, “Get the Lead Out,” which is helping uncover lead contamination in drinking water in our children’s schools and preschools.

Lead in our kids’ schools?

As our report details, the health threat of lead in schools’ water deserves immediate attention from state and local policymakers for two reasons. First, lead is highly toxic and especially damaging to children—impairing how they learn, grow, and behave. So, we ought to be particularly vigilant against this health threat at schools and pre-schools, where our children spend their days learning and playing.

Second, federal rules only apply to the roughly 10 percent of schools and preschools that provide their own water. Moreover, these rules only require remediation when testing confirms lead concentrations in excess of 15 parts per billion, even though medical and public health experts are unanimous that there is no safe level of lead for our children.

Unfortunately, so far most states are failing to protect children from lead in schools’ drinking water. Our review of 16 states’ laws and regulations finds:

- Several states have no requirements for schools and preschools to address the threat of lead in drinking water; and
- Of the few states with applicable laws, most follow flaws in the federal rules—relying on testing instead of prevention, and using standards that allow health-threatening levels of lead to persist in our children’s water at school.

Kids need safe drinking water

Given the high toxicity of lead to children, the most health-protective policy is simply to “get the lead out” of our schools and preschools. This involves proactively removing lead-bearing parts from schools’ drinking water systems and installing filters certified to remove lead at every tap used for drinking or cooking.

Schools should also immediately begin regular and proper testing of all water outlets that are used for drinking or cooking and provide the public with easy access to all testing data and the status of remediation plans.

The promise and viability of this “get the lead out” approach can be seen in municipal and voluntary programs across the country. Madison, Wis., and Lansing, Mich., have removed all lead service lines from homes, and New York City has replaced them at schools.

The science now makes clear that there is no safe level of lead exposure for our children. To ensure safe drinking water for our children, we need policies that will “get the lead out” at school and pre-school.

Explore more online

Our national staff released our new report, “Get the Lead Out,” in Sacramento, Philadelphia, and other cities across the country to educate people on the threats lead can pose to our children.

Read the full report at: www.WisconsinEnvironmentCenter.org.

Credit: goodmoments/Shutterstock

Communities Rising to the Challenge

A few trailblazing cities are leading the way to protecting our children from this growing threat.

Seattle, WA

In 2014, Seattle began testing the water at every one of its schools every three years. The district’s most recent school tests show that 97% of all tests passed district requirements.

New York, NY

When water tests in schools show high lead levels, fixtures are removed and replaced. As a result, there has been a substantial reduction in lead detected in almost 90,000 tests conducted since 2002.

Madison, WI

Faced with test results confirming lead in its water, the city dug out approximately 8,000 lead pipes between 2001 and 2010. Since then, the highest lead level in the city’s water has been 3.5 ppb.

Lansing, MI

Just 60 miles from Flint, Lansing has successfully removed lead from its water infrastructure. Last year, Lansing completed the removal of 14,500 lead pipes underneath the city.

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Credit: Nelson Pineda

We need to get the lead out

Credit: goodmoments/Shutterstock
Wisconsin Environment

Our mission
We all want clean air, clean water and open spaces. But it takes independent research and tough-minded advocacy to win concrete results for our environment, especially when powerful interests stand in the way of environmental progress.

That’s the idea behind Wisconsin Environment, Inc., a project of Environment America, Inc. We focus on protecting Wisconsin’s air, water and open spaces. We speak out and take action at the local, state and national levels to improve the quality of our environment and our lives.

Your Summer Report
VOLUME 9 | NO. 2 | 2017

Chefs join our call to save bees
As a member of Wisconsin Environment, you have supported our work to save bees and our food supply by calling for a ban on bee-killing pesticides. You may have taken action by signing our petition to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), spreading the word in your community, or planting bee-friendly plants in your garden. In fact, all of our work on this campaign has only been possible thanks to the support of passionate members like you.

This winter, our campaign took another step forward when 235 restaurateurs sent a letter calling on the EPA to ban bee-killing pesticides. Then, in February, 65 chefs and restaurant owners joined with Wisconsin Environment to launch the Bee Friendly Food Alliance.

“From family run pizza shops to fine dining destinations, chefs and restaurant owners around the country are coming together to Save the Bees,” said Christy Leavitt, Bee Friendly Food Alliance Coordinator with Wisconsin Environment. “Chefs know up close and personal: no bees means no food.”

Support our efforts
If you are a chef or restaurateur who is interested in joining the Bee Friendly Food Alliance, visit bit.ly/BeeFriendlyFood to learn more and sign up.