



Fall Report

Defending the Clean Power Plan

Your support builds energy for climate action

This summer, the Environmental Protection Agency finalized its historic plan to limit carbon pollution from dirty power plants, America's #1 source of global warming pollution. But fossil fuel interests and their allies in Congress are doing all they can to block the measure before it's implemented, with the U.S. House and two Senate committees voting against it this June.

Environment Illinois and our allies are continuing our work at the state and regional levels to convince leaders in Congress who are on the fence to stand up for the Clean Power Plan, and urge Illinois' leaders to put strong policies in place to implement the Clean Power Plan here in Illinois.

Organizing to build public support

Over the summer, thousands of members like you from across the country signed a petition in support of Clean Power Plan. In addition, our national citizen outreach team talked to more than 47,000 people about this important issue.

Local businesses, elected leaders and Illinoisans also joined us for a day of action on July 30, creating a conversation on social media around the urgent need to act on global warming, and calling on and tweeting at our leaders in Congress to defend the EPA's historic action.

Showing an outpouring of public support for state-level clean energy policies, such as renewable energy standards, fuel efficiency standards, carbon caps and more, will be essential to the overall success of the Clean Power Plan.



Credit: Staff

▲ Supporters turned out to a rally during the Clean Power Plan day of action on July 30.

U.S. should lead by example

The final Clean Power Plan will not only cut carbon pollution by 542 million tons and play an essential role in speeding Illinois' shift to renewable energy, it will also set the stage for an international agreement to tackle global warming in Paris, where world leaders will convene to address this global threat in December.

"On climate action, the best way to lead is by example," said Anna Aurilio, Environment Illinois' Global Warming Solutions program director. "We must build on the goals the Clean Power Plan sets in Paris to ensure a better, healthier future for our climate and our children."



Credit: Suzannah Hoover Photography

take action

Learn more about our work on global warming and take action to support the Clean Power Plan online at:

www.EnvironmentIllinois.org

◀ A canvasser on our national citizen outreach team this summer



Search Staff

To our members

After nine years of demonstrating your support for cleaner water, through advocacy, grassroots organizing, and your phone calls, letters, e-mails and more, we're celebrating a big victory for clean water: The EPA has restored Clean Water Act protections to 2 million miles of streams and headwaters across the country.

It's taken a monumental effort. To keep loopholes in the law, polluters outspent us. Their allies in Congress voted against us. But together, we spoke louder. Together, we convinced the Obama administration that there is broad support for clean water, and overcame polluter opposition.

This fall, we're redoubling our efforts to protect this victory from polluters' attacks in Congress. While I know it won't be easy, I'm confident that the movement we've built together is helping pave the way for healthier, cleaner waterways. I'm excited to share with you in this newsletter all that your support is accomplishing. Thanks for standing with us!

Shelley Vinyard
Regional Program Director



Photo: iStockphoto.com

Toward a greener future

Environment Illinois and Environment Illinois Research & Education 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@EnvironmentIllinois.org.

Recent action

Protecting the Grand Canyon from reckless mining

The Grand Canyon took millions of years to form—but uranium mining could quickly ruin this natural wonder for future generations. Environment Illinois Research & Education Center and our allies are working to stop this reckless proposal.

Despite a ban on new mining close to Grand Canyon National Park that we helped fight for, this summer, a federal judge approved a uranium mine only six miles from the Grand Canyon's southern rim after the mining company argued that they got their permit before the ban was enacted.

We're mobilizing people to call for an urgent stop to this mine. We're also building public support to urge President Obama to permanently protect the Grand Canyon and its surrounding area from these threats by declaring a new Grand Canyon Watershed National Monument, which would conserve 1.7 million acres of land that provide critical protections to the Colorado River and its watershed.

30,000 call for stronger rules on fracking waste

This summer, as the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) reviewed a portion of the Clean Water Act that regulates what kind of waste oil and gas companies can send to sewage treatment plants, Environment Illinois Research & Education Center's national staff and our ally Clean Water Action delivered more than 30,000 comments from people like you in Illinois and across the country to the EPA's doorstep calling for a strong rule to protect our local waterways.

Under current rules, toxic and hazardous wastewater from fracking operations can be sent through plants that are not equipped to process the toxins, cancer-causing compounds and heavy metals that this waste carries. As a result, many of these chemicals can make their way into local waterways.

The EPA is proposing a rule to prevent local municipal treatment plants from accepting hazardous fracking waste, and Environment Illinois Research & Education Center will be working to ensure the rule makes it over the finish line in the strongest iteration possible.



Credit: Staff

▲ Our national staff and our coalition partner Clean Water Action delivered more than 30,000 comments to the EPA from Americans who want to take a stand against fracking chemicals in their local waterways.

Report finds utilities selling us short on solar

More and more of us are going solar, meeting our energy needs in a way that's clean, local and independent. Yet, according to new research by Environment Illinois Research & Education Center, homes and businesses with solar panels may be delivering more benefits to the electrical grid than they receive in exchange from utility companies. This analysis counters increasing complaints from utilities that solar homeowners don't pay their fair share.

The new report, "Shining Rewards: The Value of Rooftop Solar Power for Consumers and Society," was released at the end of June as at least a dozen states across the country hotly debated this very issue with their citizens and utility providers.

Rewards of solar greater than costs

One of the most debated programs that promotes rooftop solar is net-metering, which credits solar panel owners at a fixed rate—often the retail price of electricity—for providing an excess of power to the grid. Programs like this have been instrumental to helping solar energy skyrocket across the country by making solar more economically attractive, but utilities have increasingly begun to attack them as unjustified "subsidies."

"Shining Rewards" tells a different story. The report found that utilities were actually underpaying solar panel owners—not subsidizing them. Of the 11 net-metering studies reviewed, eight found that the value of solar energy was higher than the local retail electricity rate. And, the median value of solar power across all 11 studies was nearly 17 cents per unit, compared to the nation's average retail rate of 12 cents.

"While some utilities claim they're subsidizing solar panel owners, our report shows the opposite is probably true," said Rob Sargent, energy program director at Environment Illinois Research & Education Center and the report's co-author. "If anything, utilities should be paying people who go solar more, not less."

Of course, the advantages of solar power extend beyond the economic—they also include valuable benefits for the environment and society at large. Solar avoids greenhouse gas emissions, reduces air pollution that harms public health, creates jobs and spurs local economies.

More pro-solar policies needed

The report sheds light on the debate raging in more than a dozen states across the country over how much solar panel owners should be compensated for the power they produce. For example, Nevada is considering imposing a new fee for solar panel owners who sell excess power. Arizona Public Service wants to lower the reimbursement rates for solar power. And in Wisconsin, the Public Utility Board aims to increase fees on certain solar customers.

Solar power is widely popular with the public, and policies such as net-metering have encouraged a wide and varied distribution of rooftop solar. Yet, such debates often stall pro-solar policies, keeping residents from taking advantage of solar power and states from growing their use of renewable energy.

"Solar power's rewards are far greater than its costs," Sargent concluded. "That's why we should be encouraging more of it across the country, not penalizing it."



Staff in action

▲ Environment Illinois Research & Education Center Energy Program Director Rob Sargent leads a discussion on net-metering at Intersolar 2015, a conference attended by thousands of solar industry players.



Increasing solar access for all

Low and moderate-income Americans, and those renting their homes and businesses, will have more access to solar and play a bigger role in moving America toward a future that is powered entirely with pollution-free energy, thanks to a new plan federal officials announced in July to increase access to solar energy for all Americans. Environment Illinois Research & Education Center has been urging President Obama to set bold goals that raise the bar for pollution-free renewable energy.

The program triples the Obama Administration's previous goal to install 300 megawatts of solar on federally subsidized housing, provides more tools for affordable housing projects to install and finance solar installations, promotes community solar programs through local partnerships, and increases local job training programs in the solar industry in low income communities.

"This announcement is another big step toward a future where all Americans can access renewable and affordable solar electricity," said Environment Illinois Research & Education Center Solar Program Coordinator Bret Fanshaw. "The progress we're making on solar and renewable energy should give us the confidence that we can do much more, including eventually achieving a goal of 100 percent clean energy."

The plan will not only continue to push the United States toward a future powered by clean energy, but will also improve the lives of millions of people by cutting the costs of their utility bills. We still have a long way to go, but with this plan in place, we're one step closer to a future where we can all access renewable and affordable electricity.

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Environment Illinois

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 Environment Illinois, NFP, a project of Environment America, Inc. We focus on protecting Illinois' 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.

Credit: Sean Kennedy



Biggest clean water victory in a decade

Thanks to your support, the Obama Administration finally closed loopholes in the Clean Water Act that left more than 48,000 miles of streams in Illinois at risk of pollution—but now polluters and their allies in Congress are taking steps to derail this historic action. Environment Illinois has launched a new phase of our clean water campaign to ensure that doesn't happen.

Along with our allies, our person-to-person outreach efforts reached more than 1 million households, and hundreds of farmers, small businesses and local officials across the country this summer. We've also placed paid advertisements in newspapers, organized phone calls to senators and held rallies.

"Thanks to this historic action, the drinking water for one in three Americans, and our favorite rivers, lakes and streams will be cleaner," said John Rumpler, senior attorney with Environment Illinois. "Now we need our senators to stand up to the polluters who want to dismantle these critical protections."

Support our efforts

Help us protect the Clean Water for America rule.
Donate at: www.EnvironmentIllinois.org

▶ EPA Administrator Gina McCarthy (sitting, right) and Assistant Secretary of the U.S. Army Jo-Ellen Darcy (sitting, left) sign the Clean Water for America rule on May 27, 2015, with Margie Alt, Environment America executive director (second from left).