



Iowa
Environmental
Council



ANNUAL REPORT 2023



LOOKING BACK AND LOOKING AHEAD

When we think about IEC's founding nearly 30 years ago, we're proud. Proud to think about business and community leaders like Charlotte Hubbell and Buz Brenton coming together with a new idea that the interests of Iowa's environment and Iowa's business community weren't so far apart, and that with a collaborative coalition-led effort, our state's environment and our people could flourish.

After nearly 30 years however, it can be hard to think that much has changed for the better. Our waters remain polluted. We hardly see the animals or people living on our farms. The flora and fauna of our landscape continue to morph into cookie-cutter row crop acres. Our air is tainted with coal particulate pollution.

But IEC's vision has remained and the work we do has made a difference. Today you see wind turbines and solar panels as you travel our highways, powering our homes and businesses. Our state is criss-crossed with popular bike trails that improve livelihoods in local Iowa towns. The state's final ag drainage wells will close this year. Through all the consolidation and expansion and degradation of the last 30 years, IEC has found ways to collaborate and take action to improve Iowa at every level.

As you read on in this report, you'll learn about how our expert staff at IEC used legal, policy, and collaborative resources and took action that delivered real change in 2023. It was a year that brought uncertainty, changes to environmental laws and resources, another year of statewide drought, and other challenges, but we're focused on the good: IEC's efforts to improve animal feeding operation siting rules, the court rulings that supported our calls to close down coal power generation in Iowa, the growing attention to nitrate and other ag inputs on human health, and more.

We are deeply appreciative to you for your support of this work, whether it was contacting your legislators through an Action Alert, submitting comments in response to a rule change, participating in a rally, attending a webinar, coming to an IEC fundraising event, supporting IEC's work with a donation – or maybe all of the above! IEC's success is only possible with your voice and your support.

Read on to learn more about the work of the organization in 2023, and then commit to coming along for the journey once again in 2024. IEC will welcome new staff and launch new work, build on our environmental justice initiatives, and convene our Annual Conference for the first time in five years, in addition to the work our team does so well every day. We are excited for what's ahead and look forward to engaging with you in the months and years to come!

With thanks,

Catherine "Katie" Cownie
2022 – 2023 IEC President

Jennifer Hermsen
2024 - 2025 IEC President





Iowa
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Jordan Oster, Energy Program Associate Director

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Cody Smith, Senior Policy Advocate

Alicia Vasto, Water Program Director

Kristen Weaverling, Energy & Climate Project Manager



Click to meet the people, volunteer leaders, and the members of IEC

IEC MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS



- 1 Source Solar
- 1000 Friends of Iowa
- Allamakee County Protectors - Education Campaign
- American Institute of Architects, Iowa Chapter
- American Rivers
- Audubon Minnesota
- Big Grove Brewery
- Blank Park Zoo
- Boone County Chamber of Commerce
- Bozz Prints
- Cedar Rapids Linn County Solid Waste Agency
- Center for Energy & Environmental Education
- CHEEC
- Center for Rural Affairs
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- Citizens for a Healthy Iowa
- Clayton County Energy District
- Common Good Iowa
- Conservation Corps Minnesota & Iowa
- Conservation Districts of Iowa
- C-Wise
- Dallas County Environmental Health Department
- Des Moines Founders Garden Club
- Des Moines' Selma
- Des Moines Water Works
- Dickinson County Conservation Board
- Drake Environmental Action League
- Dubuque County Energy District
- East Okoboji Lakes Improvement Corporation
- Energy Association of Iowa Schools
- Environmental Advocates
- Environmental Law and Policy Center
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- Greater Des Moines Botanical Garden
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- Ideal Energy
- IEC Youth - Johnston
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- Iowa Association of Naturalists
- Iowa Association of Water Agencies
- Iowa Audubon
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- Iowa Groundwater Association
- Iowa Interfaith Power & Light
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- Iowa Prairie Network
- Iowa Rivers Revival
- Iowa Stormwater Education Partnership
- Iowa Unitarian Universalist Witness Advocacy Network (IUUWAN)
- Iowa Whitewater Coalition
- Iowa's County Conservation System
- I-Renew
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- Izaak Walton League of America, Iowa Division
- Jefferson County Farmers & Neighbors (JFAN)
- Johnson County Conservation
- Lake MacBride Conservancy
- League of Women Voters of Iowa
- Lewis Lawn & Labor
- Linn County Conservation Board
- National Mississippi River Museum and Aquarium
- Northern Polk Pheasants Forever
- Okoboji Protective Association
- Oneota Community Co-op
- Paniclean
- Polk County Conservation Board
- Polk County Public Works, Air Quality Division
- Poweshiek CARES
- Practical Farmers of Iowa
- Prairie Rivers of Iowa
- Preservation Iowa
- Prudent Produce
- Raccoon River Watershed Association
- RAYGUN
- RDG Planning & Design
- Red Rock Lake Association
- Rockfarm
- Ross Street Roasting
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- Urban Ambassadors
- The Vernon Company
- Waste Commission of Scott County
- Whiterock Conservancy
- Wings2Water

VISION

Iowa utilizes 100% clean electricity by 2035.



ACTION

Push MidAmerican Energy to eliminate coal by 2030.



Reaching 100% clean energy in Iowa is key to realizing IEC's vision of a sustainable future for all Iowans. In 2023, IEC pushed MidAmerican Energy to deliver on its clean energy vision by shuttering its polluting coal plants in Iowa and moving to 100% true renewable power in Iowa.

Years of legal efforts by IEC and partners culminated in several court victories in 2023. The Iowa Utilities Board ordered MidAmerican Energy to reveal internal study data on the economics of its coal plants, which showed that coal is a financial drain on customers and that solar was the most affordable path for future renewable generation. Despite this, the utility continues burning coal and has failed to make workable plan to transition to clean energy. IEC's challenges to MidAmerican's Wind PRIME project secured a critical win in the form of a stakeholder process to model and evaluate the costs of MidAmerican's plans for the future.

In 2023, the IEC-led coalition Clean Up MidAm focused its efforts in the Sioux City region, home to two of MidAmerican Energy's oldest and most polluting coal-fired power plants. IEC alerted supporters to MidAm's plan to dispose of toxic coal ash wastewater in the Missouri River, generating hundreds of comments to the Iowa DNR opposing the action, stopping the plan in its tracks. IEC and Clean Up MidAm hosted a learning session on coal plant pollution in the area, building a growing movement of local residents pushing back on the utility's use of coal.

Later in the year, IEC participated in public discussions and planning for ratemaking reforms, a review initiated by the Iowa legislature in the 2023 session. The Iowa Utilities Board submitted a report to the legislature at the end of the year with recommendations to address ratemaking transparency in Iowa. Those recommendations included a goal sought by IEC: implementing an IRP, or integrated resource plan, in Iowa, something more than 40 other states require for utility operation in the U.S.

IEC's actions are resulting in real change: stopping damaging utility operations, improving utility oversight, developing prudent policy that protects Iowans, pushing investor-owned utilities to act in the best interests of their customers, and ultimately, making progress toward our vision of a cleaner, healthier Iowa.



Click to learn more about IEC's work to close down coal plants in Iowa.



No More Coal Rally, Omaha

Damaging agricultural impacts on Iowa's land and water are growing and our systems to address and correct these threats are not keeping up. Throughout 2023, IEC took several actions independently and in collaboration with others to identify these gaps, make corrections, and call for actions that move us to a future with cleaner water and healthier soil.

The Governor's January 2023 moratorium on agency rulemaking paused IEC's yearslong work to improve concentrated animal feeding operation (AFO) siting and manure storage rules. The Iowa Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) addressed AFO siting in its rule review later in the year. The drafted changes were not protective of water quality, especially after intervention by the governor's office late in the process. IEC and a coalition of partners were ready: we submitted formal comments, attended public hearings, and encouraged hundreds of public comments to IDNR in favor of stronger siting rules to protect sensitive landscapes and Iowa's waterways.

To support calls for stronger AFO oversight, IEC released reports highlighting the dangers and costs related to concentrated animal operations in Iowa. *Animal Feeding Operations in Iowa's Floodplain: A Risk to Iowa Waters*, published in partnership with the Environmental Law & Policy Center (ELPC) with analysis from the Environmental Working Group, highlighted the illegal construction of dozens of AFOs in flood-prone areas in the state.

The Costs of CAFOs: Impacts on Your Wallet and Your Health called attention to how much every Iowan pays for AFOs in our state, from the costs associated with treating drinking water for AFO pollution, to increased healthcare expenses and lost recreational income.

IEC's rulemaking actions took place as we mounted a media campaign for the tenth anniversary of Iowa's Nutrient Reduction Strategy (NRS). In anticipation of NRS proponents celebrating a claimed success, IEC launched Iowa's Declining Decade, a standalone website that brings together reports, publications, articles, and other content that highlights the lack of progress on reducing fertilizer pollution in Iowa. Industry leaders are being forced to respond, finally providing context with their claims of success and acknowledging that it is not enough.

IEC is driving real change for Iowa's water: calling for the closure of regulatory loopholes, seeking improved protections for sensitive landscapes, and changing the narrative on Iowa's nutrient pollution efforts.

VISION

Iowa's water is safe and clean for everyone.



ACTION

Reduce fertilizer pollution from AFOs and agricultural production.



Click to learn more about how IEC is addressing AFO pollution.



VISION

Diverse voices are engaged in, and benefit from, environmental policy.



The effects of pollution are not felt equally. Access to Iowa's land and waters is not equal. People who have had less political power – particularly people who are Black, Indigenous, and People of Color, as well as low-income communities – have faced greater burdens from environmental degradation and pollution. They have not been well-represented in groups like IEC that advocate for a cleaner environment.

ACTION

Meet diverse Iowans where they are to hear their stories and their concerns.



In 2023, IEC took steps to meet diverse Iowans where they are to listen and learn from those experiencing environmental harms and how IEC can help address environmental injustice. In January, IEC hosted an [Environmental Justice summit](#) following the MLK Jr. Day Prayer Breakfast in Des Moines, inviting community members from Central Iowa to share their experiences and concerns in table discussions. At events in Sioux City, Storm Lake, and Waterloo, IEC heard from residents about the impacts of legacy pollution, brownfields, water quality concerns, and other issues.

In addition to listening and learning from under-represented voices, IEC is working to educate others across the state about environmental justice and what these issues look like in Iowa, from higher utility bills to lack of access to outdoor spaces to increased air pollution.

As part of that work, IEC joined as an Iowa partner of the [Heartland Environmental Justice Center](#), the EPA's Region 7 Environmental Justice Thriving Communities Technical Assistance Center (TCTAC). These TCTACs are intended to provide training and other assistance to build capacity for navigating federal grant application systems, writing strong grant proposals, and effectively managing grant funding. Each of the technical assistance centers will also create and manage communication channels to ensure that all communities have direct access to resources and information.

IEC's work in this space is making real change possible: bringing marginalized voices forward, educating ourselves and Iowans about issues impacting our local communities, and empowering those individuals and communities to benefit from the solutions available through federal funding opportunities.



EJ Summit, Des Moines



EJ Discussion Session, Waterloo



Click to learn more about IEC's history and recent environmental justice work in a new space on our website.



VISION

The Iowa Environmental Council is a sustainable, effective organization.



ACTION

Cultivate relationships that grow IEC's impact and deliver financial support.

IEC built upon the successes of 2022, continuing our slate of quarterly fundraising events, connecting with new donors in communities such as Storm Lake and Davenport, building new relationships through house parties, and gaining new support through the environmentally-focused [Iowa Gives Green](#) day of giving.

IEC benefitted from the generosity of several special grants and generous gifts of support in 2023, including an incredible anonymous \$25,000 matching gift in support of IEC's water program; a major grant from the Green State Credit Union Foundation for the [Iowa Water Watch program and newsletter series](#); several matching gifts to drive donations for Iowa Gives Green, Giving Tuesday, and year end gifts, including a matching gift from long-time IEC supporter [Jennifer Garst](#), who passed away in November 2023.

IEC was also the recipient of the organization's first ever [federal EPA grant](#) in 2023, giving the organization a role in building leadership and capacity for environmental justice in Iowa, and creating programs to build the capacity of vulnerable Iowans to have meaningful involvement in addressing environmental and public health issues.

Thanks to these incredible gifts, our slate of enjoyable fundraising events, the addition of new programs and partnerships, and a growing supporter pool, IEC welcomed more new donors in 2023. This growth is reflected in the 2023 revenue report, with fundraising and events bringing in more than \$300,000, an increase of more than \$20,000 over the previous year. That net revenue will support our program work in the upcoming year.

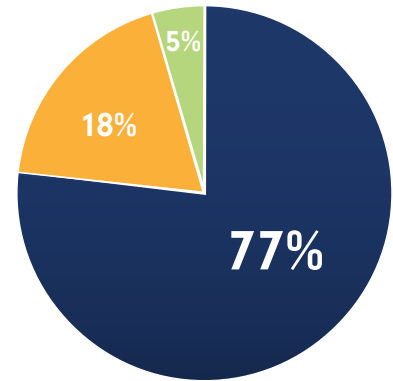
The numbers included here reflect IEC's unaudited financial reports for 2023. The Iowa Environmental Council is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, nongovernmental organization. Our work is supported by our members, individual and corporate gifts, and private and public grants.



Thanks to the sponsors, supporters, and friends who make our work possible. Learn why individual and business support is the key to our success!

2023 Total Revenue

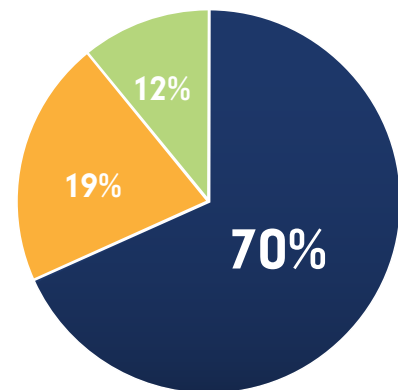
Unaudited



Grants and Other Program	
Specific Funding.....	\$1,353,841
Fundraising & Events.....	\$316,482
Other.....	\$87,912
<small>(Endowments, Sub-Contracts, Misc)</small>	
Total*	\$1,758,235

2023 Total Expenses

Unaudited



Program Expenses.....	\$977,537
Fundraising & Events.....	\$260,489
Administrative Expenses.....	\$169,627
Total*	\$1,406,528



2023 Pro H2O,
Des Moines



IEC Water Trivia, Davenport



Green Gala 2023, Des Moines



2023 Beach Bash, Waterloo

Thank you

President's Circle

(\$10,000+)

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(\$5,000 - \$9,999)

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Iowa Chapter of the American
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Iowa Groundwater Association
Iowa Prairie Network
Iowa Renewable Energy Association
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