

Program Report

Recapping our work in 2014 for our members



To our members

“With your support, we’ll keep working to translate our simple formula into positive change in our lives, in the quality of our environment, and in the world we leave to future generations.”



Margie Alt
Executive Director
Environment America

At Environment Illinois, we live by a simple formula: Mobilize grassroots action, build strong and diverse coalitions, and conduct tough-minded advocacy that yields tangible results for our environment and in our lives.

This past year was full of action and more than a few signs of real progress. We still have work to do, though, to protect our environment and our families.



Anna Aurilio
Federal Legislative
Director

One of our top priorities this year has been restoring Clean Water Act protections to all our waters. In 2014, we celebrated when the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) proposed a rule to close loopholes in the law that have left 48,000 miles of streams across Illinois—and the drinking water for 117 million Americans—at risk for a decade. On the heels of the announcement we worked to build support for the rule, mobilizing 200,000 people and hundreds of local farmers and small businesses to take action. At the same time, lobbyists for major agribusinesses and their friends in Congress ramped up their efforts to maintain the status quo. We’ll keep at it as long as it takes to ensure the Clean Water Act protects all our waterways.



John Rumpler
Senior Attorney

Of course, nothing is more important than doing our part to help solve global warming. This past year, we’ve been focused on limiting carbon pollution from dirty power plants—the nation’s number one source of the pollution that leads to climate change. The EPA is on the case as well. But we need to organize more citizen climate defenders, more solar businesses, and more local elected officials to counter the congressional climate deniers and their fossil fuel industry backers, who are fighting to block the Obama administration’s plan. Getting this plan over the finish line and implemented by states will make a dramatic difference in our nation’s carbon footprint, our ability to negotiate climate action with other countries, and the future of our planet and our families.

In the year to come, we’ll strive to make a difference on these issues and more. With your support, we’ll keep working to translate our simple formula into positive change in our lives, in the quality of our environment, and in the world we leave to future generations. Thank you!

Yours,

Shelley Vinyard
Regional Program Director

Margie Alt
Executive Director, Environment America



Go Solar Illinois

2014 was a breakout year for solar power across the country. Another home or business in the United States goes solar every four minutes, and the rate keeps getting faster. In the first half of 2014, solar accounted for more than half of all new electric generation capacity installed in the country. By crafting and promoting state and local policies, Environment Illinois has played a major role in the clean energy boom and continues to work to defend and expand pro-solar initiatives.

Fueled by smart policies, solar power tripled in three years

Too much of our energy comes from dirty sources that wreak havoc on our environment. But by tapping the power of the sun, we can break our dependence on fossil fuels and move to clean energy that's virtually limitless. In 2014, Environment Illinois called on our decision-makers to embrace these renewable resources and enact policies and programs to help repower our state.

Environment Illinois Research & Policy Center's report, "Lighting the Way: The Top Ten States that Helped Drive America's Solar Energy Boom in 2013," found that in the past three years solar power tripled across the country, thanks to strong policies that Environment Illinois helped win. Illinois ranked #22 in our list. While we've made strong progress in recent years, we still have a long way to go. The report found that states with the most installed solar shared policies such as net-metering programs, strong interconnection policies, and strong renewable energy standards, with solar carve-outs and accessible financing.

On June 21, Environment Illinois organized a "Solar Day of Action" with our national federation to expand solar power in communities across the country. In response to our outreach efforts, more than 17,000 people emailed President Obama urging him to put solar on federal buildings.

Top 10 States in Solar Electricity Capacity Installed During 2013 per Capita

1. Arizona
2. Hawaii
3. California
4. Massachusetts
5. North Carolina
6. New Jersey
7. New Mexico
8. Vermont
9. Nevada
10. Delaware

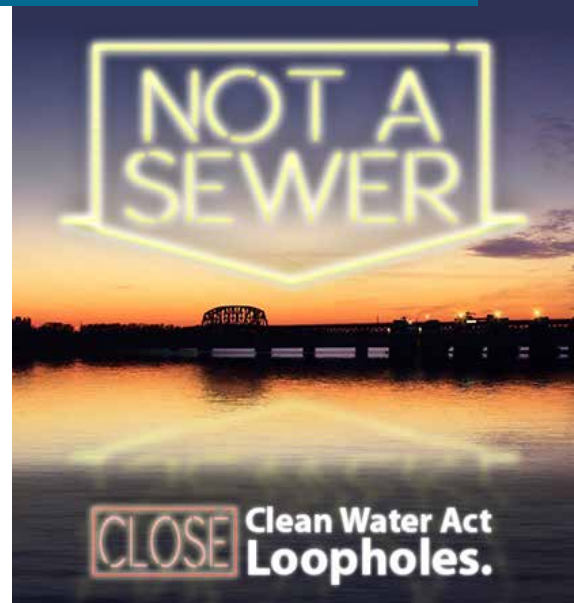
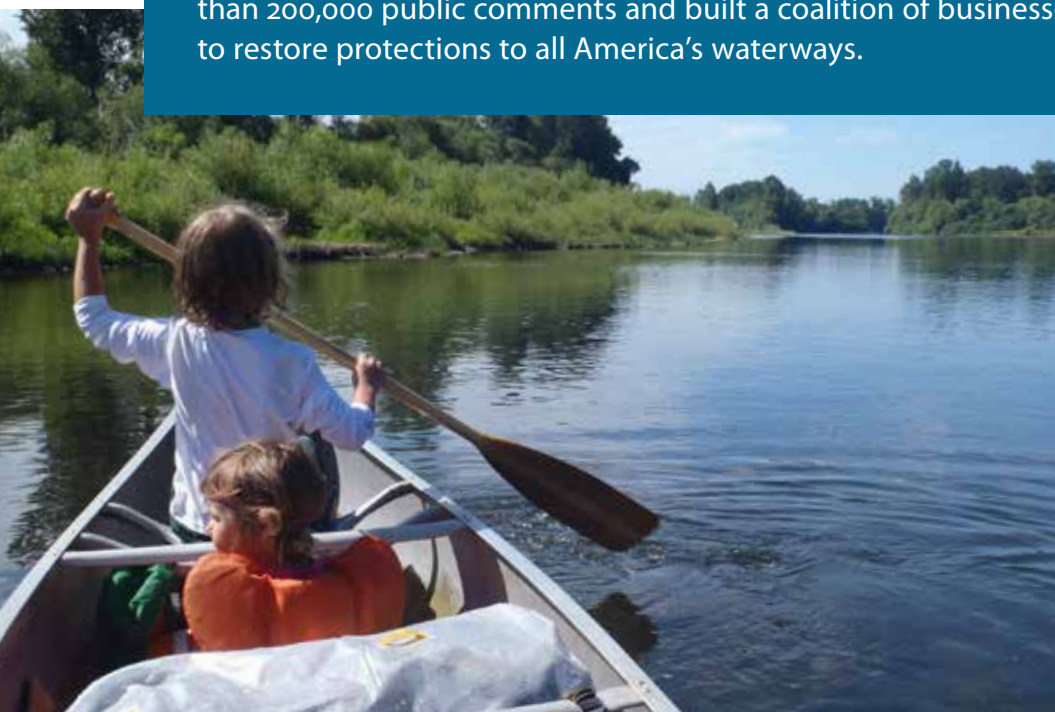
Illinois' Ranking:

 **#22**



Clean Water for America: Protect Lake Michigan

Polluters shouldn't be allowed to treat Lake Michigan like their own personal sewer. That's the message Environment Illinois and our state affiliates took to more than 400,000 people in 2014, as part of a renewed call to close loopholes in the Clean Water Act. Together, we collected more than 200,000 public comments and built a coalition of businesses, elected officials and farmers to restore protections to all America's waterways.



▲ Our rivers, lakes, and streams are where we take our kids to swim, fish and boat, or just enjoy the scenery.

▲ Our online outreach efforts helped generate thousands of comments for clean water.

The EPA agreed to close loopholes in the Clean Water Act

After a chemical spill in West Virginia, a coal ash spill in North Carolina, drought plaguing the West, a toxic algae bloom in Ohio and other pollution disasters, it's clearer than ever that restoring protections to America's waterways is crucial. On March 25, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) proposed a rule to close loopholes in the Clean Water Act that have left more than half the nation's streams, and the drinking water for 117 million Americans, at risk for more than a decade. Environment Illinois enthusiastically applauded the proposal and went to work to get it over the finish line.

800,000 people joined our call to action

From Lake Michigan to all our smaller streams, Illinois' waterways are part of our heritage and make Illinois a great place to live. We shouldn't have to worry about letting our kids go swimming in the summer, or about the water we drink.

More than 800,000 people sent public comments to the EPA backing the clean water proposal, with 200,000 coming from supporters of Environment Illinois and our national federation. We also sought to engage influential constituencies, including local elected officials, small business owners and family farmers.

On the heels of the EPA's announcement, opposition from some polluting industries intensified. Some agribusinesses launched a "Ditch the Rule" campaign, based in part on claims the EPA was engaged in a massive "land grab" designed to regulate "puddles in driveways." The exaggerations were wild and often false, but they had their intended effect, giving some members of Congress all the reason they needed to support efforts to block the EPA. As 2014 drew to a close, we worked to refute the industry's fanciful claims and show senators who were on the fence that the public wants our country to move forward on clean water, not backward.

6.1 million pounds of toxic chemicals dumped

In 2014, Environment Illinois Research & Policy Center released, "Wasting Our Waterways," a report underscoring the urgent need for clean to protect our lakes and the streams that feed them.

The report revealed that 6.1 million pounds of toxic chemicals were dumped into Illinois' waterways in 2012 alone, many of which are known to cause cancer, and can be harmful to children. To curb this massive release of toxic chemicals into our nation's water, we must step up Clean Water Act protections for our waterways and require polluters to reduce their use of toxic chemicals. The report earned coverage in more than 160 media outlets across the country.



Top: Federal Clean Water Advocate Ally Fields updates staff on the campaign's progress.

Bottom: Across the country, people joined Environment Illinois' call for clean water, taking photo petitions to demonstrate support for closing loopholes in the Clean Water Act.



Global Warming Solutions

Together, we've made hard-won progress in the race to protect our children from the worst consequences of global warming. In June, after 6 million Americans urged President Obama to limit carbon pollution from dirty power plants, the Environmental Protection Agency finally proposed a bold Clean Power Plan. Environment Illinois defended the EPA's plan from attacks by those in Congress who deny the science of climate change, as well as their fossil fuel industry backers.



▲ Environment America Executive Director Margie Alt (left) testifies opposite Hal Quinn, President & CEO of the National Mining Association (right) at an EPA hearing.



Administrator Gina McCarthy
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

▲ EPA Administrator Gina McCarthy announced a precedent-setting plan to curb carbon emissions from power plants in the United States.

A groundbreaking step to tackle global warming

From severe storms to worsening flooding and drought, the consequences of global warming are becoming increasingly clear. This summer, we took a big step in tackling this threat when the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) proposed the first-ever limits on carbon pollution from power plants. America's power plants are the number one source of the dangerous carbon pollution that is fueling global warming, and cleaning up power plants is the most important step the United States can take to reduce this threat.

Historic plan released to cut power plant pollution

In 2014, Environment Illinois worked to build support for the EPA's Clean Power Plan, which would limit, for the first time, carbon pollution from power plants, reducing this pollution by 30 percent below 2005 levels by 2030.

Once implemented, the Clean Power Plan will be the biggest step the U.S. has ever taken to cut global warming pollution. It's a huge deal—but it's not a done deal. The fossil energy lobby and other polluters are spending millions to oppose the EPA's commonsense action.

Following the announcement, our Global Warming Solutions campaign, waged by Environment Illinois together with our national federation, sought to connect the dots between the consequences of global warming that are already being felt across America and the meaningful impact of the Clean Power Plan.

Staff, supporters turned out to back Clean Power Plan

In June, the EPA held hearings on the Clean Power Plan in Denver, Pittsburgh, Atlanta and Washington, D.C. Environment Illinois and our national federation's staff testified and helped turn out citizen climate defenders to show support for the plan.

During the summer, we also distributed literature making the case for global warming solutions to nearly 1 million households across the country.

In September, Environment Illinois Research & Policy Center released an update of a report entitled, "America's Dirtiest Power Plants," that found our country's coal-fired power plants produced more carbon pollution than the entire economies of Russia, India, Japan, or any other nation besides China.

CO2 emissions from the nation's five most polluting power plants, 2011

21.3 million metric tons of CO2 emissions

Scherer, Georgia Power Co.

Fuel source: Coal



20.7 million metric tons of CO2 emissions

James H. Miller, Jr., Alabama Power Co.

Fuel source: Coal



18.8 million metric tons of CO2 emissions

Martin Lake, Luminant Generation Co., LLC

Fuel source: Coal



18.5 million metric tons of CO2 emissions

Labadie, Union Electric Co.

Fuel source: Coal



17.8 million metric tons of CO2 emissions

W.A. Parish, NRG Texas Power, LLC

Fuel source: Coal



TOTAL OUTPUT FROM THE NATION'S FIVE MOST POLLUTING POWER PLANTS

20.2 MILLION

Emissions equivalent in passenger vehicles

(that's 97.1 million metric tons of CO2 emissions)



Source: America's Dirtiest Power Plants report, 2013

Stop Fracking Our Future

From Pennsylvania to the coasts of California, the dirty drilling process known as fracking has boomed across the country, contaminating water, tearing up landscapes, and threatening public health and the environment in its wake. In 2014, Environment Illinois collaborated with victims of fracking to share their stories, and joined with health professionals to urge our decision-makers to keep fracking out of Illinois for the sake of the environment and our families.

We fought to keep Illinois safe from fracking

- Environment Illinois called on the Obama administration to better protect communities from fracking. More than 1,000 doctors, nurses and other health professionals signed letters to President Obama and other decision-makers verifying that fracking and its toxic waste have real consequences for the health of nearby communities.
- Last winter, we collaborated with residents living on the frontlines of drilling to release “Shalefield Stories,” a booklet of their experiences living alongside fracking. From flammable tap water, to cancer-causing substances in the air, to severe illness, real people shared their stories and gave life to the alarming numbers that outline fracking’s environmental impacts.
- 29,000 activists also joined our efforts to halt attempts by the oil and gas industry to ship toxic fracking waste in barges on our nation’s rivers.
- Loopholes in the law exempt fracking from key provisions of the nation’s major environment and public health laws, leaving sensitive areas, such as drinking water sources, vulnerable to contamination.



Residents living near a fracking operation spoke with Senior Attorney John Rumpler about their community's experience.



An open fracking waste pit