Tell Congress: Let EPA protect our water

Biggest clean water victory in a decade
The Obama administration is closing loopholes in the Clean Water Act that have left 2 million miles of our nation’s streams open to pollution. But some in Congress are determined to block the rule to restore the Clean Water Act to full strength.

This summer, as polluters and their congressional allies turn up the pressure, Environment Minnesota and our national federation are doubling down to build the support to convince our elected officials to be champions for clean water.

Pushing past our opponents
In February, a joint hearing before Senate and House committees was widely viewed as setting the stage for a vote to kill the rule, which has also faced bitter opposition from corporate agribusinesses, oil and gas companies, and developers.

But thanks in part to our advocacy, more than 250 local officials from across the nation voiced their support for the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and defenders of clean water spoke during the hearing to defend the rule. With the help of our coalition and members, we provided these defenders with photos of beloved waterways at risk to show their colleagues what this fight is all about.

Millions spent to keep loopholes
What are we up against? The same polluters that spent millions of dollars on lobbyists and lawyers to carve the loopholes in the Clean Water Act in the first place. In fact, “Polluting Politics,” an analysis by Environment Minnesota, found that the 10 most polluting companies from 2012 spent more than $53 million on lobbying and contributed more than $9.4 million to candidates for federal office during the 2014 election cycle.

“Our nation’s polluters have deep pockets, but hundreds of thousands of people have raised their voices in support of protecting our waterways,” said Ally Fields, clean water advocate. “It’s time for Congress to listen to citizens, and let the EPA finish the job.”

The EPA’s proposal is expected to be finalized this summer.

Pollution by the numbers

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<th>Percentage</th>
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<tr>
<td>50%</td>
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More than half the country’s lakes, rivers and streams aren’t safe for swimming or drinking. Pounds of toxic pollution that industrial facilities reported dumping in our waterways in 2012. Money spent lobbying by the 10 parent companies that reported the most toxic dumping.

Learn more about polluters’ attempts to block clean water protections at www.EnvironmentMinnesota.org
To our members

The past few months have brought some incredible victories for the environment, from President Obama’s vetoing of a bill forcing approval of the Keystone XL pipeline to 4 million people speaking out to save the bees.

Of course, we still have our work cut out for us. With a Congress that officially denied the science behind global warming and dirty energy companies that continue to pollute and threaten our environment, it’s more important than ever that we speak out for Minnesota’s air, water and open spaces.

In the coming months, Environment Minnesota will talk to people across the state, gather thousands of petitions and mobilize local support to protect Minnesota’s rivers, reduce global warming pollution, and grow solar power in our communities.

It’s only through our members, like you, that we can do so. Thanks for making it all possible.

Sincerely,
Shelley Vinyard
Regional Program Director

Recent action

Keystone veto a victory for the environment

In a huge win for the environment, the much-debated bill forcing approval of the Keystone XL pipeline met its demise this March, when it failed to gain enough votes to override President Obama’s veto. The fate of the controversial tar sands pipeline now rests with the president and the State Department, which must authorize the pipeline’s route across the Canadian border.

According to the State Department, building Keystone XL would add 26 million metric tons of carbon pollution to our atmosphere each year, the equivalent of putting another 5.7 million cars on the road.

Environment Minnesota and our allies worked to stop the pipeline by sending more than 8,600 petitions to senators urging them to oppose Keystone, and phone-banking, marching and lobbying to show the president and others the massive public support for a veto. We will continue to mobilize the public to make sure the president doesn’t approve this dirty, dangerous project.

4 million urge President Obama to save the bees

In March, Environment Minnesota along with a coalition of beekeepers, farmers, business owners and other environmental and food safety advocates rallied in front of the White House and delivered more than 4 million petition signatures calling on the Obama administration to put forth strong protections for bees and other pollinators.

Environment Minnesota and our allies urged President Obama and the Environmental Protection Agency to take swift action to protect bees from a dangerous class of pesticides known as neonicotinoids.

These pesticides are linked to rapid bee decline, and in turn, threaten our food supply. With more than 90 percent of foods dependent on bees for survival, it’s imperative that we protect bees from this toxic threat.
The use of solar power is expanding rapidly across the country and playing a key role in meeting our energy and environmental challenges. Major cities, such as Minneapolis, are playing key roles, according to “Shining Cities,” a new report released by Environment Minnesota Research & Policy Center. With another panel or project installed every three minutes last year, solar jobs growing at a rate faster than the economy, and plummeting costs, we’re harnessing more energy from the sun and getting closer to leaving climate-altering dirty energy behind.

Minneapolis ranked #6 in region for solar

As population centers, urban areas can have an important influence on the way we power our grids across the country. The report found that, at the end of 2014, 20 cities accounted for 6.5 percent of the installed solar in the country. And the 65 cities analyzed have installed more solar capacity than was installed in the entire country at the end of 2009. In total, the United States has enough solar electricity to power 3.5 million homes—a number that will continue to grow if cities like Minneapolis make strong commitments to growing solar power.

Minneapolis ranked among the region’s solar leaders at #6 in the list for total solar installed. Leading cities owe their solar success largely to growing clean energy markets in tandem with local government policies. These include: streamlining the permitting process for solar power in order to cut costs; removing cost barriers to solar energy adoption by adopting permitting policies and tax incentives; and partnering with local utilities to set renewable energy goals and financial incentives.

Reducing threats of global warming

Solar power mitigates the dangerous impacts of global warming by reducing harmful pollution, improves air quality, and increases demand for local jobs in solar panel installation and manufacturing.

“Solar is taking off across the country, yielding huge payoffs for the environment, public health and the economy,” said Rob Sargent, director of Environment Minnesota’s Go Solar campaign. “Ramping up solar in Minneapolis will be important to meeting our environmental and energy challenges.”

Big utilities resistant to change

With momentum building, Environment Minnesota is urging the state to set a bold goal of 10 percent solar by 2030. Civic leaders, citizens, social media users and businesses have joined Environment Minnesota and our national federation’s call to support strong policies to facilitate reaching this goal. Nearly 600 civic leaders from across the country have stood up for strong solar goals, and 1,000 businesses have signed on to the campaign.

In the face of solar power’s rising popularity and feasibility, however, utilities across the country are campaigning to increase fees for rooftop solar.

“With prices going down and concern about global warming going up, solar power is growing rapidly across the country,” said Sargent. “We need federal, state, and even more city leaders to embrace the policies that allow solar to shine.”

For the full “Shining Cities” report, go to: www.EnvironmentMinnesotaCenter.org

To urge your elected officials to set ambitious solar goals and support strong solar policies, visit: www.EnvironmentMinnesota.org

Minneapolis ranked #6 in the region.

All told, the U.S. has enough solar electric capacity to power 3.5 million homes.

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Notes: Findings are based on 2014 data and on total installed solar PV
As a result of global warming fueled by pollution from power plants, Americans today live in a different climate than their parents and grandparents experienced—and without urgent action to clean up this pollution, our children will grow up in a more dangerous world.

“Dangerous Inheritance,” a report released by Environment Minnesota Research & Policy Center, found that the warming that has occurred over the past four decades has increased the risk of severe storms, heat-related illness, floods, drought, crop failure, wildfires and infrastructure damage. So far, temperatures in America this decade are 1.6 degrees Fahrenheit warmer than in the 1970s.

Finalizing the Clean Power Plan to limit pollution from power plants is the strongest action we can take to help solve global warming.