



ILLINOIS ENVIRONMENTAL COUNCIL
ANNUAL REPORT 2024



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HIGHLIGHTS

STATE

Lobby Days








From youth marches to the Governor’s Office to sharing personal impact stories directly with legislators, Lobby Days are a critical component of IEC’s legislative strategy. Our environmental champions and bill sponsors from the House and Senate often participate in our Lobby Day rallies and leave energized by the support we’ve built for environmental progress.

In 2024, IEC hosted four Lobby Days. We brought together voices to fight for soil health, reinforce conservation resources, make progress on climate action, and free Illinois from plastic pollution. **Over 500 Illinoisans made the trip to Springfield to participate.**

Strengthening Our Democracy

In our work to strengthen our democracy by making government more accessible to our supporters and network of affiliate member organizations across the state, we not only compile an accounting of environmental progress at the state level in our [annual Legislative Report](#), but we also release an [annual Environmental Scorecard](#) detailing the votes of every single legislator on every significant environmental bill. These tools are designed to help the public stay informed and communicate with their legislators about their environmental legacy in Springfield. IEC directly connected Illinoisans with their lawmakers over 13,000 times in 2024.

For a full rundown of IEC's 2024 legislative progress, visit our [Legislative Report](#). Here are some of the highlights:

-  **Historic Carbon Capture & Sequestration Protections (SB1289)** - IEC and the Illinois Clean Jobs Coalition (ICJC) worked closely with Gov. Pritzker and his administration, legislative leaders, and industry stakeholders in the spring legislative session to pass a historic carbon capture and sequestration (CCS) protections law that ensures Illinois communities and our land and water are protected from the risks associated with new CCS projects.
-  **More Recycling and Composting at Large Events (SB2876)** - The new Large Event Facilities Act requires large event facilities with legal occupancies of at least 3,500 people to provide attendees with recycling and composting bins, reducing single-use plastic and food scrap waste.
-  **Climate Education for Generations to Come (HB4895)** - Illinois has now joined four other states in enacting a law that requires climate change education in public schools. Going forward, students in Illinois will be educated about the environmental and ecological impacts of climate change as well as the solutions to mitigating its impacts.
-  **Reducing Single-use Plastic Waste at Hotels (SB2960)** - Illinois passed the Small Single-Use Plastic Bottle Act, which requires hotels with 50 or more rooms to eliminate the use of small, single-use plastic bottles containing personal care products in individual rooms and public bathrooms beginning July 1, 2025.
-  **Expanding the Patchwork of Habitat (HB5296)** - The Homeowners' Native Landscaping Act passed in the 2024 spring legislative session, demonstrating the sweeping acceptance of homeowner rights to nurture and expand natural habitat on their private property in the face of potentially overbearing homeowner associations.
-  **Tackling Invasive Weeds (SB2747)** - The Exotic Weed Act Amendment allows the Illinois Department of Natural Resources to add species to the exotic weed list by administrative rule. This process is much more direct and less time-consuming than adding species by statute through the Illinois legislature, as previously required. This new law will allow our state to be more responsive to changing climate and invasives as they are identified.
-  **Grants to Restore Special Places (SB2781)** - The Forests, Wetlands, and Prairies Grant Act created a program to restore degraded lands and promote the growth of native vegetation to help mitigate the impact of climate change, as well as implement a plan for the preservation and enhancement of forests, prairies, and wetlands in Illinois.



2024 Environmental Scorecard

IEC's scorecard is a key piece of our theory of change—holding decision-makers accountable for their use of power. In an election year, there is also no better way to evaluate whether your legislators have used their power in the General Assembly to protect you, plants, animals, and our environment, or to aid big polluters and dirty fossil fuel special interests. Outside of election season, voters can use this information to build a relationship with their lawmakers and urge them to help protect our environment.

Visit our [2024 Environmental Scorecard](#) to learn more about how IEC has evaluated the General Assembly's environmental voting record.

HIGHLIGHTS CHICAGO

Chicago went 100% renewable - The clean energy future is here! We're thrilled to see the City of Chicago deliver on a promise sustained through three mayoral administrations. This is a major step forward in achieving the goals of the Chicago Climate Action Plan, reaffirming the city's commitment to a sustainable, greener future.

Protected communities from a harmful data center ordinance - We successfully stopped a harmful data center ordinance from advancing as written and ensured that it was amended to require an environmental working group. This critical change will help prioritize sustainability and community input in future data center development projects that could impact public health and the environment.

Secured a historic boost in environmental funding - Following IEC budget advocacy, the City of Chicago doubled the Department of Environment's budget and increased staffing to meet the scale of today's environmental challenges. This landmark investment will allow the recently re-established department to better implement climate initiatives and enforce environmental protections.

Led the call for stronger federal lead protections - IEC submitted a letter to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) advocating for stronger Lead and Copper Rule Improvements (LCRI) with support from 25 of Chicago's alders. This unified call for action helped elevate the urgency of replacing lead service lines and protecting public health.



Accelerated federal action on lead in drinking water - In response to advocacy efforts from Chicago and cities across the country, the USEPA adopted a shorter timeline and more health-protective standards for lead testing and replacement. This means faster relief for families affected by lead-contaminated water and a renewed federal commitment to environmental justice.

HIGHLIGHTS BEST OF IEC



CAFO Storymap – Sometimes a story simply must be told. And the only people who can do it justice are those who lived it. So, IEC’s team traveled out to help capture the story of how one small, rural Illinois community defied the odds and sent a proposed Confined Animal Feeding Operation (CAFO) packing. Get the scoop on the dangers of livestock factories in Illinois and one incredible tale of victory: [View our interactive story map](#). We also established a new coalition in Illinois to pursue livestock reform in our state.

2024 Tour Recap – Tours with decision-makers have always been an important piece of IEC’s conservation work, and as our other programs have grown, we’ve added waste and energy tours because of the success we’ve seen result from these experiences. By bringing elected officials up close and personal with the agriculture and conservation projects in their districts, we hope to grow their personal investments in protecting Illinois’ environment.

#VoteYes Referendum Success – Initiatives asking to invest in strong conservation funding were on the ballot in DuPage, Kane, Lake, and McHenry counties, and **all four ballot measures passed**. These investments in critical outdoor spaces will ensure all Illinoisans experience opportunities to grow in the beautiful prairies, rivers, and forests of The Prairie State. [Learn more on IEC’s blog](#).

Protecting Illinois’ Wetlands – Wetlands stand between us and some of the worst effects of climate change. IEC is at the center of efforts to pass legislation at the state level that would protect wetlands from development. In March, we joined with our Protect Illinois Wetlands coalition partners and sponsors, Sen. Laura Ellman and Rep. Anna Moeller, to introduce the legislation. Throughout the year, **we facilitated 4,102 digital actions delivered to legislators’ offices** and produced [videos](#) on the importance of saving our wetlands.




In the Field for Federal Climate Wins – IEC led an Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) implementation campaign to support the adoption of IRA programs and funding across Illinois. As we built relationships with municipal leaders through more than 30 one-on-one meetings, our team shared information and resources about how to access IRA funds at more than a dozen town halls, community meetings, and webinars across the state.



HIGHLIGHTS




2024 EVENTS

In 2024, **IEC hosted 42 free educational events** - in-person, virtual, and hybrid - with a cumulative total of 3,208 registrants. Some of the most popular events were:

-  [*A Path Forward for Environmental Progress in Illinois During a Trump Presidency*](#) - 329 registrants
-  [*2024 Civics for Environmentalists \(and other advocates, too!\)*](#) - 291 registrants
-  [*Civics for Environmentalists: Chicago*](#) - 95 registrants

Our Civics for Environmentalists event is annual, and because of its immense popularity, we hosted our first-ever Civics for Environmentalists specific to Chicago! It was also a smashing success.

We hosted 12 Lunch & Learn sessions, including a popular [Environmental Policy 101](#) series educating Illinoisans on the fundamental environmental challenges within each of our issue areas - clean water, clean energy, conservation, sustainable agriculture, zero waste, and equitable transportation. Some of the most popular events were:

-  *Carbon Capture & Sequestration Policy Lunch & Learn* - 189 registrants
-  *Environmental Policy 101: Zero Waste* - 184 registrants
-  *Environmental Policy 101: Inflation Reduction Act* - 159 registrants

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 SCARCE
 Warehouse Workers for Justice



Supporting Affiliates

47th Ward Green Council
 Active Transportation Alliance
 Alliance of the Southeast
 American Rivers
 Barrington Area Council of Governments
 Bird Conservation Network
 Black Oaks Foundation
 Blacks in Green
 Bridgeport Alliance
 C.A.R.E.S. (Community Awareness Response Encouraging Sustainability)
 Calumet Collaborative
 Carbondale Interfaith Council
 The Center For Empowerment and Justice
 Champaign County Audubon Society
 Champaign County Forest Preserve District
 Chi-Nations Youth Council
 Chicago Bird Alliance
 Chicago Environmentalists
 Chicago Sustainability Task Force
 Citizens for Conservation, Inc.
 Clean Power Lake County
 Clifftop
 Climate Action Evanston
 Community Development Corporation of Pembroke Hopkins Park
 Eco.Logic
 Ecology Action Center
 Edgewater Environmental Coalition
 Empire 13
 Environmental Defenders of McHenry County
 Equiticity
 Equity Legal Services
 Evanston North Shore Bird Club
 Friends of Illinois Nature Preserves
 Friends of the Chicago River
 Friends of the Forest Preserves
 Friends of the Parks
 Garfield Park Community Council
 Go Green Barrington
 Go Green Highland Park
 Go Green Illinois
 Go Green Northbrook
 Go Green Vernon Hills & Lincolnshire
 Go Green Wilmette
 Go Green Winnetka
 Grand Prairie Friends
 Greater Highland Area Concerned Citizens



Green Dolphin Project Global
Green Minds LFLB
GreenLatinos
HeartLands Conservancy
I AM ABLE Center for Family
Development Inc.
Illinois Beaver Alliance
Illinois Council of Trout Unlimited
Illinois Environmental Health
Association
Illinois Forestry Association
Illinois Hemp Growers Association
Illinois Lake Management
Association
Illinois Native Plant Society
Illinois People's Action
Illinois Product Stewardship Council
Jo Daviess Conservation Foundation
Jobs to Move America
League of Women Voters of Chicago
Macon County Community
Environmental Council
Metro East Green Alliance
National Great Rivers Research and
Education Center

Natural Land Institute
Northwest Illinois Bird and Nature
Alliance
One Earth Collective
Parents United for Change-East
St. Louis
People for Community Recovery
Pilsen Neighbors Community
Council
Plant Chicago
Prairie State Conservation
Coalition
Rebel Bells Collective
Ride Illinois
Sangamon Valley Sierra Club
Savanna Institute
Seven Generations Ahead
Sierra Club Kaskaskia Group
Sierra Club Palos Park
Sierra Club Piasa Palisades Group
Sierra Club, Prairie Group
Sierra Club, Sauk Calumet Group
Solid Waste Agency of Lake
County
Solid Waste Agency of Northern
Cook County

Southeast Environmental Task Force
Southern Illinois Audubon Society
Southern Illinoisans Against
Fracturing our Environment
Southsiders Organized for Unity
and Liberation
Southwest Collective
Southwest Environmental Alliance
Sunrise DeKalb
Sunrise North Shore
Sustain Rockford
Sustainable Springfield
Teens Against Killing Everywhere
United Congregations of Metro East
United Neighbors of the 10th Ward
Urban Growers Collective
Women For Change - Unity In The
Community

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Since 1975, the Illinois Environmental Council has worked to safeguard Illinois—its people, its plants and animals, and the natural systems on which all life depends by building power for people and the environment.

Representing over 130 environmental organizations in the state, IEC carries out its mission to advance public policies that create healthy environments across Illinois through education, advocacy, and movement building.

IECEF cultivates an inclusive, equitable, and powerful movement to ensure a healthy environment for all Illinoisans through education, communication, and collaboration.