

Iowa's Water and Land Legacy Amendment - Historic Moment for Iowa's Environment on the Ballot November 2010

Iowa voters will have a historic opportunity on November 2, 2010 to vote for Iowa's Water and Land Legacy constitutional amendment. The amendment would, for the first time in Iowa's history, establish a constitutionally protected trust fund to preserve Iowa's natural resources and outdoor recreational opportunities. Nobody will dispute the fact that Iowa's distinct character and our quality of life are directly tied to our state's natural resources.

Iowa's parks and lakes receive more than 25 million visits each year, and our fertile soil provides the backbone to our economy.

Simply put, protecting Iowa's water and soil is at the heart of this amendment. Specifically, the amendment will create the Natural Resources and Outdoor Recreation Trust Fund which will provide a permanent, reliable and accountable revenue source to improve water quality and natural areas in Iowa. Funding will include fish and wildlife habitat and parks, trails, in addition to aiding in conservation of agricultural soils and restoring wetlands to protect against future flooding.

In 2008 and 2009, more than 90 percent of Iowa's state legislators overwhelmingly approved legislation that would establish the constitutionally protected Natural Resources and Outdoor Recreation Trust Fund. Why? Because Republicans and Democrats alike understand the need to protect our natural resources. Recent data from the Iowa Department of Natural Resources shows that 53% of Iowa's water sources rate "poor," and Iowa currently loses an average of five tons of soil per acre each year due to erosion. Funding to protect our natural resources remains at near historic lows. As of today, Iowa ranks 47th out of 50 states in funding for conservation, despite the fact that more than 27,000 Iowa jobs are supported by outdoor recreation.

The stakes for Iowa's natural resources on November 2, 2010 are incredibly high, and future generations of Iowans are counting on passage of Iowa's Water and Land Legacy Amendment. We must act now. By passing this amendment in November, we can prevent the permanent loss of land, water and wildlife and retain Iowa's quality of life and natural beauty so our children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren can enjoy the state the same way we do. The good news is, by cleaning up our water supply and conserving Iowa's soils, we have the opportunity to actually leave the state to future generations better than we found it.

A vote for Iowa's Water and Land Legacy Amendment is a vote for the creation of the Trust Fund - not a vote for a tax increase. Revenue for the Trust Fund will come from allocating 3/8ths of one cent from sales tax revenue the next time the Iowa legislature raises the state sales tax. This funding recommendation was based on over three years of research and study conducted by a legislative advisory committee. The advisory committee concluded that those funds, in addition to annual state budget allocations, would meet current needs. Once created, the Trust Fund will be managed responsibly, including open, public competition for funding, mandatory audits and citizen committee oversight.

Investing in clean water and Iowa's other natural resources provides quality of life opportunities close to home where Iowans can enjoy and appreciate healthy activities, natural areas and Iowa's beauty. Enhancing and developing more competitive outdoor "destinations" will attract visitors and businesses to the state and create jobs here at home.

In 2008, voters in Minnesota passed a similar Amendment with 56 percent of the vote. More than 30 years ago, Missouri provided constitutionally protected funding for its conservation programs and later reauthorized this funding after 20 years of progress.

The time is now to start investing in Iowa's natural resources. We have a proud history of farming, biking along the Heritage Trail, hiking the Loess Hills, fishing in Big Creek, and teaching our sons and daughters to appreciate wildlife. We must protect and enhance these opportunities to preserve our state's rich legacy. Several states and communities across the country are taking proactive measures to preserve their natural surroundings. The quality and condition of our natural resources is the responsibility of all Iowans.

For more information Mark Langgin, campaign manager for Iowa's Water and Land Legacy, marklanggin@gmail.com; 515-707-0266. Visit www.IowaWaterAndLandLegacy.org for more information