



**SIERRA
CLUB**

IOWA CHAPTER

Protect the Commons Act: Commonsense reasons this legislation is needed

Does it feel like Iowa government agencies are keeping public money in public hands for the public good? Or does it feel like the public money is being spent on things that are not for the public good? Does it seem like something is terribly wrong with how the Iowa taxpayer money is being spent? Does it seem like your values are not reflected in the areas where state government is spending money?

Iowa's political conversation rarely moves beyond the notion that government's primary responsibility is to grow the economy. Hence we give corporations tax breaks, but slash funding for health care, environmental protections and public interest research at our three state universities.

We hold a different view of government and that is government is the trustee of all the things we share, such as water, wildlife, public universities, state parks, education, public health, roads and bridges, the air we breathe, the archaeological and historical record of the state. These things we share, sometimes known as the commons, are the basis of the cornerstones of the well-being of our state. There is little or no economic activity without the public goods provided by things like roads, water, and education. Therefore, protecting, enhancing and restoring our shared public wealth is the central responsibility of government.

The things that we share – the commons – have been ignored, have been degraded, and have been given away to private companies and individuals. It is now time to restore those things that we all share. That is where the Act to Protect the Commons comes into play.

The features of the Act are:

1. The Attorney General will name a legal guardian for future generations.
2. All proposed regulations shall have an assessment of the effect of the regulation on the commons.
3. All state agencies will evaluate the common assets they manage and determine the costs for adequate care as the first step in setting the agency budget.
4. Each agency will be charged with setting measurable goals for the protection, restoration, and enhancement of common assets.
5. The Iowa Workforce Development shall create a program to repair and restore public assets, modeled on the federal Works Progress Administration and Civilian Conservation Corps.