

ILLINOIS SIERRA CLUB 2018 PLATFORM





SIERRA CLUB

ILLINOIS CHAPTER

Sierra Club Illinois Chapter
2018 Environmental Platform - 100% In For The Environment

Illinois' constitution establishes the right to a healthful environment for everyone, and charges both our elected officials and each of us to protect it:

“The public policy of the State and the duty of each person is to provide and maintain a healthful environment for the benefit of this and future generations. The General Assembly shall provide by law for the implementation and enforcement of this public policy.” Illinois Constitution, Article XI

The people of Illinois have never needed their leaders to fulfill this constitutional duty more than in the years to come. A half century of effort and investment in environmental protection have made the Illinois we know today possible. Our air, water, and land are cleaner. Generations of workers have supported households building and operating environmental infrastructure, and entire economic sectors focusing on energy and environmental innovation and solutions have been launched. A system of state parks and conservation lands have protected our natural heritage, and provided recreation opportunities and key local economic assets. Yet, despite this great progress, not all communities across Illinois have been able to access these benefits.

The pillars of environmental protection in Illinois are crumbling. The federal safeguards, enforcement, and funding that have long been the foundation of the progress we have made are under assault. Our state's fiscal problems and lack of political will have contributed to steady declines in spending and personnel on environmental protection. Our Department of Natural Resources that used to be a national model for science and conservation has been reduced to a hollow shell that leaves hard working staff with less than the resources needed to merely keep our state park system open and functioning. We have essentially stopped any effort to acquire and protect lands for future generations.

It is time for Illinois to commit - 100% - to provide a healthful environment for each and every one of us. Illinois can step up to ensure that our environment is cleaner, and our economy healthier, by being all in to seize the opportunities in restoring our environmental leadership.

CLEAN ENERGY FOR ALL ILLINOIS.

The Road to 100% Clean Energy

President Trump's abdication of American leadership by withdrawing from the Paris accord is reverberating around our threatened planet, and especially here in the United States. A large and growing group of American leaders are making it clear that Trump's actions and words do not speak for most of us. Illinois should join these voices, and commit Illinois to a bold climate action plan for the Prairie State that keeps our communities and workers at the forefront of the global clean energy economy. Trump won't be able to reverse the global shift to clean energy, but he could very well cause America to miss out on the growing boom. Illinois must show the world clearly that we are a climate action state and open for investment from the growing solutions sectors.

Illinois should commit to a goal of 100% clean, renewable energy.

A 100% clean energy grid will not happen overnight, but is now technologically and economically possible. In fact, the transition has already begun, and setting that long term goal for Illinois will guide job training, economic development, grid infrastructure, and other efforts to ensure that workers, consumers, and communities are put first in planning for the coming clean energy future. We should ensure that new jobs in the clean energy economy are long-term, family-sustaining careers and are available to men and women of color and in rural communities. The significant investments in clean energy that are on the way for our communities and workers due to the Future Energy Jobs Act will provide significant progress toward this ultimate goal. A 100% goal will be a catalyst for long

term growth in a clean energy sector that already one of the fastest-growing of the economy, employing 119,395 workers in 2016, leading the Midwest. Offshore wind energy in the Illinois waters of Lake Michigan is has exciting potential to bring large scale renewables online very close to large electric demand and Illinois should encourage steps toward the responsible development of this resource.

Beyond Fossil Fuels

Illinois must seriously address the legacy and life cycle costs of our reliance on fossil fuels. The largest waste product in Illinois is coal ash, a byproduct from burning coal. Coal ash contains high levels of harmful heavy metals such as arsenic, lead and selenium, and is known to be leaching into streams, rivers, lakes and groundwater throughout the state. Illinois is home to 91 coal ash sites. Given the inadequacy of federal coal ash protections, including the recent roll-back of coal ash wastewater standards, Illinois cannot rely on a piecemeal approach.

Waterways deserve 100% protection with stringent statewide coal ash rules that hold polluters accountable to handling coal ash in a dry and safe manner and do not leave the costs of coal ash remediation on Illinois taxpayers.

Illinois has the most nuclear reactors of any state in the country, and high-level nuclear waste sits at seven Illinois sites, including on the shores of Lake Michigan and the Mississippi River. Operating licenses for all of these plants expire over the next 15 years, and now is the time to begin planning for a just transition for workers and communities at these sites and for new renewable energy capacity, demand reduction, and any needed transmission improvements.

Fracking is dangerous for our water supply and communities and we oppose it. Illinois must prioritize jobs in clean energy rather than opening the doors to the risks of fracking. We support economic transition for Illinois communities that historically were dependent on coal mining, and oppose dangerous pipelines across our state that further our dependence on fossil fuels.

Keeping dirty fuels in the ground and not investing in dangerous new fossil fuel infrastructure is critical to meeting carbon reduction goals to address climate change. State and ratepayer dollars should not be dedicated to new fossil fuel projects. Oil sands pipelines and fracked gas operations are threats to the interconnected network of watersheds that

supply the water we drink, nourish the land we cultivate, and affect the air we breathe.

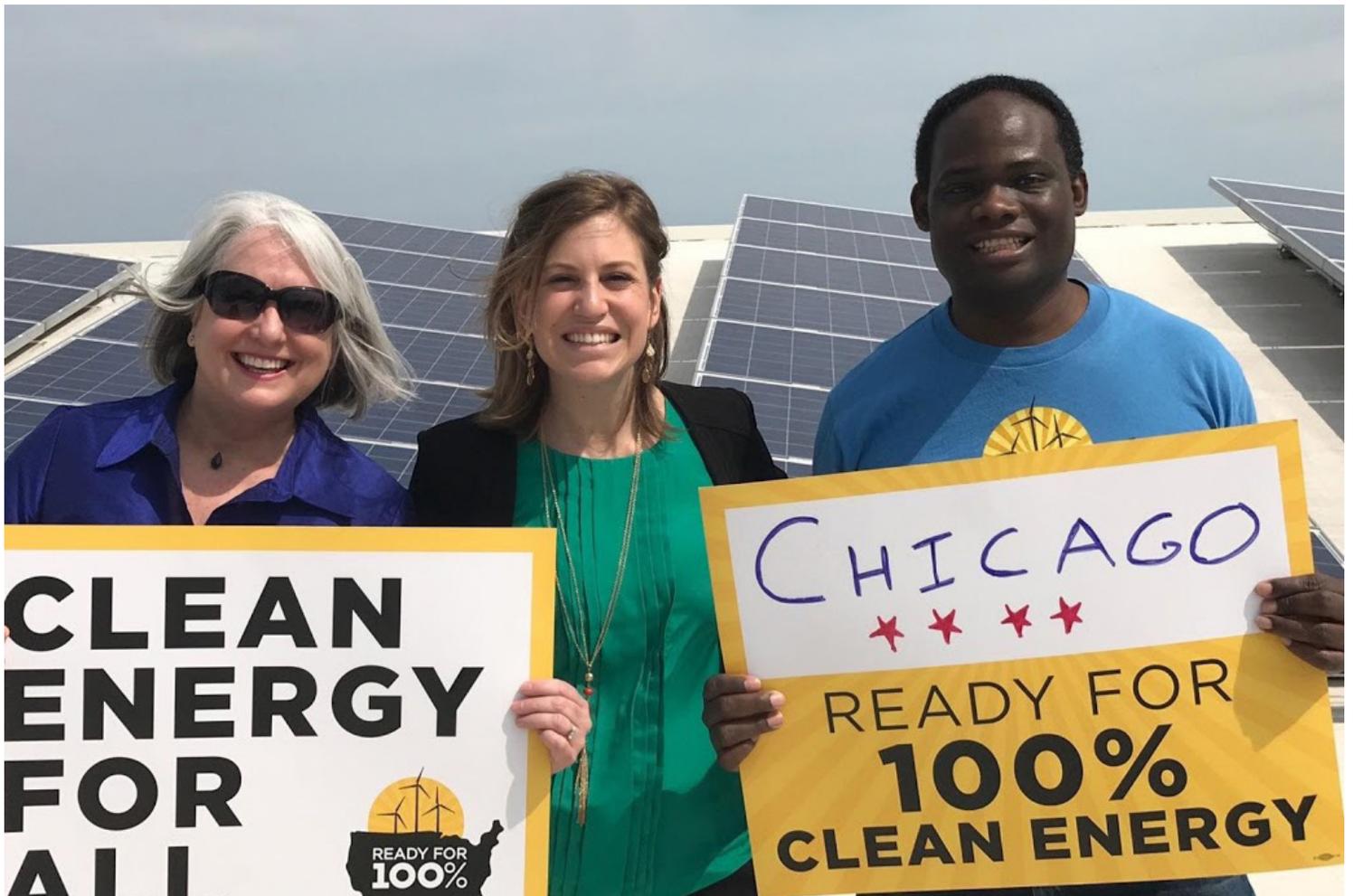
Illinois is one of few states that does not collect a coal severance tax. As coal production in Illinois has dramatically increased in recent years, it is estimated that a tax revenue could amount to as much as \$5 billion by 2040. A coal severance tax must be implemented immediately, allowing for collected money to be spent to support alternative economic development projects in central and southern Illinois communities impacted by mining and loss of mining jobs.

A Just Transition: Real Solutions, Not False Hope

As national and global trends continue to decrease dependence on outdated fossil fuel sources in favor of renewable energy and energy efficiency, our statewide leaders must ensure that a plan is in place to prepare affected workers and communities reliant on these industries. Most Illinois fossil generation plants are uncompetitive in regional energy markets and will face retirement in the near or medium term. However, no programs or policies exist

to help workers and communities prepare for these inevitable transitions, even as out of state corporations gamble each year on market prices and threaten imminent closures. These communities need and deserve real solutions, not false hope or quick fixes that pad the profits of corporations.

Past public policies failed to diversify economic development in Illinois communities historically dependent on coal mining, and all of us now have a responsibility to help bring these men and women a brighter future. A just transition should include: responsible, planned, long-term timelines for replacing operating power plants, rather than leaving workers and communities to the whims of out of state corporations and power markets; policies that drive new economic development and diversification in coal communities; job retraining programs and tax incentives for companies who hire impacted workers; protection of healthcare and pensions of retired miners and other workers; financial assurances from power companies for site remediation and reuse; and assistance to local governments with revenue replacement lost due to energy transition.



LEADERSHIP ON CLIMATE ACTION.

Climate change is already occurring in Illinois, and scientists are warning of some dire consequences if deep emissions cuts aren't made soon. Illinois is particularly prone to worsening air quality, droughts, extreme heat, and flooding from more intense weather events. At risk are our public health, water and transportation systems, housing stock, and agricultural economy. We also know that economically disadvantaged communities, particularly in our cities and rural areas, are likely to bear the largest burden of these impacts, and are most in need of the jobs and investment offered by clean energy.

A statewide climate action plan would not be the first in Illinois - far from it. Dozens of local governments have been leading on climate for years. They include large communities like Chicago and DuPage and Cook counties, but also cities from Alton to Elgin who are showing that cutting carbon isn't a matter of partisan politics, but of taxpayer savings and healthier communities.

A strong and just plan for Illinois would set

ambitious carbon reduction goals for our state and ensure that we reduce pollution in ways that prioritize low-income communities most impacted by carbon pollution. It would prioritize workers and communities historically reliant on fossil fuels, and savings for consumers. Policy options include caps on carbon emissions overall or for particular sectors, economic incentives for clean energy, and partnerships with other states who are already implementing such programs successfully. Any carbon reduction programs should be designed to ensure emissions reductions in environmental justice communities. Worker and community transition, consumer savings, and clean energy projects should be priorities for any revenues from market-based programs.

We should plan for the infrastructure and other investments needed to help adapt to the climate changes that are already posing new challenges and threats to systems that were not designed for this new reality.

CLEAN TRANSPORTATION FOR ALL.

Illinois must invest in modern, sustainable transportation investments that improve access to public transportation, biking, and electric vehicles from Waukegan to Cairo. Public transportation and rail investments are powerful job creators and help reduce energy consumption and unhealthy air pollution.

Unfortunately, Illinois has seen a host of wasteful new road projects seeking support in recent years, including the Illiana expressway, Route 53 extension, and Shawnee expressway proposals. These projects drain resources away from maintaining existing roads and transit infrastructure that will serve more citizens at lower cost. Investments in high-speed rail are cheaper per mile to build than highways and require half the energy of cars or planes to move passengers. Sierra Club opposes the proposed Peotone airport, which would consume prime farmland, propel sprawl and divert investment from existing communities. Capacity at existing airports and investment in our region's intercity rail system are preferable alternatives.

Illinois must support investments in public transit, electric vehicle infrastructure, high-speed rail, and bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure across our state. State and regional capital spending plans should have a "fix-it-first" priority, and utilize performance-based transportation planning.



CLEAN WATER FOR ALL.

Once a wetland rich state covered by wet meadows and marshes, Illinois is home to a great diversity of rivers, lakes, streams and aquifers that supply our drinking water and provide critical habitat for aquatic life. With weakening of federal protections looming, Illinois must be 100% in to ensure that our precious water sources are protected and available for all. Capital spending plans should include new investments in the infrastructure improvements required to deliver clean water, which are a huge potential source of family-sustaining good jobs.

Safe Drinking Water for 100% of Illinoisans

The tragic reality that many of us still drink water contaminated with lead is a reminder that we need to invest in our infrastructure and protect vulnerable communities. Illinois should establish a goal of replacing 100% of lead service lines and plan for investments in drinking water

systems to reach this goal.

Healthy Waterways

Illinois' most widespread water pollution problem is an overload of excess nutrients. The Illinois Nutrient Loss Reduction Strategy offers a plan for addressing the various sources of the problem. Key actions needed are for Illinois to establish water quality standards for phosphorus and nitrogen to drive clean up efforts, help wastewater plants plan and finance upgrades that include nutrient pollution controls, equip streams with adequate buffers and take other strong actions to reduce nutrient pollution from agricultural land. The Illinois Nutrient Research and Education Council has been a successful grant program that helps farmers and researchers demonstrate best practices for nutrient control, and the state should plan to scale up additional programs targeted for on-the-ground nutrient

capture. All counties should be granted the authority to adopt stormwater management plans, ordinances and fee programs that will help reduce nutrient pollution from urban sources. Adequate funding for Soil and Water Conservation Districts to work directly with local farmers and communities is an important part of the statewide effort.

We must also protect our waterways from other sources of toxic runoff. Pavement sealants, like coal tar that are known carcinogens, are still used on driveways and parking lots across our state and must be banned. Confined animal feedlots across our state pollute our rivers every day and current regulations must be updated to require every facility to be registered and develop an adequate plan for waste management that protects local streams and public water supplies.

Protecting Lake Michigan

The Great Lakes Restoration Initiative has been a crucial federal program supporting the protection and improvement of Lake Michigan and adjacent lands. It has been targeted for elimination by the Trump Administration. Illinois leaders must defend the program and be prepared to step up to fill gaps that may emerge in the federal role protecting our Great Lake. Toxic pollutants, such as PCBs and mercury, as well as emerging contaminants like pharmaceuticals, are of particular concern and must be addressed regardless of Federal support.

The Asian Carp that threaten to enter Lake Michigan are just one of the invasive species that must be kept out of our precious Great Lakes and the Mississippi River basin. We support ongoing efforts to stop the spread of invasive species, exploring incremental improvements such as the proposed Brandon Road Lock & Dam project, and ultimately planning for a permanent solution to invasives moving in both directions, both into and out of the Great Lakes.

Protecting Our Remaining Wetlands

Wetlands are critical for protecting communities from flooding, cleansing drinking water, and providing habitat for a rich diversity of wildlife. Illinois has lost over 90% of its original wetlands, and historically has relied largely on the federal government to protect what remains through

the Clean Water Act. Unfortunately, the Trump Administration's attacked on the Waters of the U.S. rule will prevent federal protection for many Illinois wetlands. Sierra Club supports local wetland protection efforts in the handful of counties that have initiated them, and new statewide protections for the rest of Illinois.

Water Quantity

Illinois has extremely limited protections against over-withdrawal from surface and groundwater sources. This absence of planning for future drinking water availability leaves communities vulnerable to drought and our changing climate. Illinois should establish permitting requirements for water withdrawals that ensure the sustainability of current water supplies for future generations. Regional efforts to protect and conserve aquifers such as the Mahomet and northeast Illinois aquifers should be supported.

PROTECTING ILLINOIS WILD PLACES FOR ALL.

Natural lands and water bodies provide important functions such as removal of air pollution, protecting and enhancing water quality, providing fish and game habitat, producing food, managing stormwater, providing flood control, and providing recreation and quality of life for our citizens. We believe that the natural world is vital to our physical, mental, and spiritual health, and equitable access to nature and the outdoors is a moral responsibility. Access and investment in our state natural areas connects people with nature and improves public health by engaging people to explore and protect natural spaces.

Nationally, Illinois ranks 48th in terms of open space and recreational areas available per citizen. Over the past two decades, the Illinois Department of Natural Resources staff has been cut by more than half. Field staff positions have been eliminated, science-trained specialists have left the state for other opportunities in other states. IDNR must be fully funded and staffed to restore morale and achieve its mission. Major capital spending plans should include budgets for acquiring and managing conservation lands. Our state should be vocal proponents and participants in federal efforts to preserve our landscapes, including the new Hackmatack and Kankakee National Wildlife Refuges and our Shawnee National Forest.

The population declines of pollinators like monarch butterflies and bees are a major risk to these species, agriculture, and ecosystems. Illinois should take steps to support these vulnerable species, including bans or limits on particularly toxic pesticides and protecting and increasing their habitats. The return of predators to Illinois such as bobcats and cougars, and perhaps soon black bear and wolves, are exciting accomplishments and the results of decades of conservation efforts. However, Illinois does not plan for the return of these and other formerly threatened, endangered, and extirpated species. Illinois DNR should prepare management plans to maximize the continued recovery of the Prairie State's ecosystems and minimize any conflicts with returning predators.



WASTE SOLUTIONS.

Disposal of wastes that could be recycled or reused, and the unnecessary generation of solid waste, adds cost to Illinois households and products, and threatens groundwater supplies from leaking landfills. Reuse and recycling are growing industries that can create jobs, but Illinois' recycling goals were set in another era, in the 1986 Solid Waste Management Act, and have not been updated since. Illinois' current requirement that counties plan for 25% recycling rates has been exceeded by many counties, and we should increase those goals. State policy should also require or encourage waste reduction approaches, food waste composting, and hold producers of special wastes accountable for collection and recycling or safe disposal at the end of product life. Local governments that seek to innovate and solve local waste problems not addressed by effective state policies should be free to do so, and not fear pre-emption of their local authority.

100% FOR ENVIRONMENT JUSTICE.

Sierra Club's values are rooted in principles of justice, fairness, and equity. We believe both nature and people deserve justice and full protection under the law. Policies that not only preserve and protect the environment but promote racial, economic, social and environmental justice are critical to a strong and just democracy - and a healthy planet.

Air and water pollution and the impacts of climate disruption disproportionately impact our nation's poorest families and communities of color. For example, Latinos, Blacks, Asians and Pacific Islanders are more likely to live in areas where air pollution exceeds national standards. In Illinois, we have communities that exceed federal health standards for ozone, or smog, which is linked to asthma attacks and other respiratory problems; and fine particulate matter, which is linked to premature deaths from respiratory and cardiac disease. The major causes of both problems are the combustion of fossil fuels for transportation and electricity.

Illinois has no reliable funding source for the many contaminated sites for which there is no active responsible party. This is a statewide problem, but particularly acute for disadvantaged communities in which these sites pose health threats and also a barrier to economic development. Illinois should aggressively pursue responsible parties when they can be identified, and provide new resources for cleanups when they cannot.

Further, low income families and communities of color are more likely to lack access to adequate healthcare and experience higher levels of unemployment, compounding the situation for too many American families. We must ensure that as we hold polluters accountable and pursue action to address climate disruption the solutions are just and fully

address the needs of these communities. Illinois EPA must ensure that all communities are protected from environmental hazards and engage these communities throughout the process with meaningful community participation and decision making. State rulemakings and legislative policies must be analyzed through a lens of environmental justice to ensure vulnerable communities are prioritized in environmental protections and benefits.

The Illinois Environmental Justice Commission was created in 2014 and gathers community leaders to advise state government broadly on environmental justice issues. However, the Commission has very little authority to make or influence policy, and has minimal staff support. Illinois should lift up the Commission's role in policymaking in many areas, and support it with adequate staff to allow for regular and effective meetings of these important leaders.

People and communities that are marginalized in our society are both more vulnerable to environmental threats and also less able to protect themselves from these threats. That is why the Sierra Club supports efforts to empower everyone to fully participate in our economy, democracy and society, including policies that protect the rights of workers to organize, raise wages and reduce income inequality, help everyone vote, provide a path to citizenship for new and existing immigrants, and fight discrimination and racism in all forms.



COMMITTED TO KEEPING 100% OF OUR PROTECTIONS, ENFORCING, AND CAPACITY TO INNOVATE.

Illinois must be prepared to play a larger role to maintain our environmental quality and continue making progress. This will likely mean increased budget and staffing needs at the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency, new political will to enforce state and federal laws, and a demand for top quality, public interest leadership of the Environmental Protection Agency, Department of Natural Resources, Pollution Control Board and Commerce Commission, all of which make decisions that impact how our state takes action on the environment.

Budget Priorities

Illinois will need to prepare to assume significant responsibilities as the Trump administration pulls back from federal responsibilities and potentially cuts budgets for state environmental programs. This may require increased General Revenue Funds for environmental programs, but Illinois should also review its pollution permit fee structure, last comprehensively reviewed in 2003, to ensure that pollution fees are, at

minimum, covering the costs to the state of issuing those permits.

Capital spending plans should include significant components for conservation land acquisition and management, remediation of contaminated sites, clean water projects, and public transit.

Sweeps & Borrowing - Ensure 100% of Environmental Funds Spent As Intended

Illinois' recent fiscal crises have led to constant pressures on dedicated environmental funds that have diverted hundreds of millions of tax and ratepayer dollars away from their intended purposes. The Open Space Land Acquisition and Development Fund (OSLAD), Natural Areas Acquisition Fund (NAAF), Renewable Energy Resources Fund (RERF), Renewable Energy Resources Trust Fund (RERTF) and the Illinois Clean Water Fund have all seen significant diversions in recent years. 100% of dedicated environmental funds should be spent on their intended purposes.