



“We face changes in the ecosystems and rely on having far-reaching implications for how we will live our lives in the future and how future generations will live,”

-Rivka F.

Environmental Challenges + You

Over the past century the Earth’s average temperature has stayed on the rise creating potentially dangerous changes in climate and shifts in weather. Many people have uncertainty about the environmental issues and tend to disregard the fact that it is indeed taking place and we are the main cause of it.

Human society connects to the planet and it is no surprise that every individual can reduce the risk of change by altering his or her choices that create pollution.

Many organizations tend to focus on the environmental issues today to target different aspects, which make up this global crisis. Research is being done all over, even at college universities such as Iowa State in hopes of discovering more information on issues such as climate change and sustainable living. Student organizations are put together which allows students to focus on different issues and promote a way to make a difference within the Earth’s environment. Live Green! Is an Iowa State University campus-wide sustainability initiative that encourages all students, faculty, and

staff, to commit fully to making the campus and operations, as eco-friendly a possible.

Student organizations such as The Green Umbrella and ActiveUs come together to promote sustainable efforts students can bring their attention to and attempt to tackle eco-friendly policy changes here at Iowa State. It is important for people to bring awareness to the environmental issues because through organizations such as these, there is hope to bring awareness and create a movement in which other students and people can protect their own health and safety.



Our ecosystem is valuable and provides individuals with the resources necessary to carry on with their day-to-day lives. What many people don’t know is that pollution is one of the biggest killers, affecting more than 100 million people worldwide (51 Facts About Pollution, 2013). Pollution can come in multiple forms of contamination such as toxic chemicals soaking in rivers or

streams causing water pollution. Air pollution occurs due to greenhouse gases and burning fossil fuels, which stay trapped within the earth’s atmosphere retaining heat. Even landscapes, city streets, and oceans can become overcrowded with waste and

debris. Pollution can be visible and invisible making it extremely hard to focus on and easy to ignore.

Greenhouse gases such as carbon dioxide and others are the result of burning fossil fuels to produce energy, along with agricultural and industrial practices. Humans are responsible for a majority of greenhouse gases that are released into the atmosphere. For example, driving a car to school causes a heavy amount of pollution and results of actions like these remain hard to manage because people rely heavily on cars for transportation in their everyday life. As individuals who work, go to school, and have many other responsibilities it is hard to keep track of how our carbon footprint is adding to this environmental problem today.

Everyone is responsible for his or her carbon footprint and creating a source of pollution one way or another, whether they realize it or not. For many students, it is safe to say that being environmentally aware of certain issues is not at the top of their list. With tests, assignments, projects, and even having a job, students find themselves focused on what they feel are the most important in respect to their daily lives. What students don't realize is that they all have the power to easily influence one another as well as older adults, on specific environmental issues and create change for the future. Iowa State has developed many different organizations, which tackle and focus on different environmental issues, such as pollution and the burning of fossil fuels leading to climate change. There are also organizations, which bring awareness to sustainability and acknowledge why it is important to live a more sustainable lifestyle.

"The Green Umbrella is a student organization that tries to link students across campus and let them know how to get involve or learn about current issues through education and awareness," Green Umbrella member, Rebecca Chamberlain, said as she explained the organization's goal. Chamberlain got involved with the Green Umbrella after Iowa

State Daily unfortunately took to budget cuts and the Cy-Sustainability section she wrote for was removed from the newspaper. The Green Umbrella works with Iowa State University's Live Green! Initiative, which tries to go about different ways to act eco-friendlier and target the university, while The Green Umbrella aims to target more of the student base.

An increase in recycling has become more available on campus, as well as decreasing down to having only 30 percent of burned waste go to landfills and saving 70 percent for electricity. Chamberlain helps The Green Umbrella network with other student organizations on campus by having open forums, brainstorming and working with The Green Umbrella's advisor, Merry Rankin. "I think it is important to live a sustainable lifestyle because you learn better habits to carry throughout your life," Chamberlain mentioned.

Sustainability isn't the only issue ISU organizations are seeking to tackle. Other organizations such as ActivUs are organized to achieve environmental justice and protect the welfare of future generations by encouraging the transition to alternative cleaner renewable energy sources. ActivUs also works with the Live Green! Initiative and The Green Umbrella to create events such as Sustainapalooza and Earth Day in hopes of getting students support and meeting with administration.

After working with 350.org, an organization that focuses on reducing the amount of CO₂ in the atmosphere to 350 ppm by building a global climate movement, Rivka Fidel, current ActivUs member, joined the ISU organization shortly after.

"Specifically, I wanted to take action to stop climate change, and work with other students. Climate change is something. I've been passionate about since my time as an undergraduate student in environmental science at Union College. I think it's

one of the major challenges of our time and more people should be working on it," Fidel said.

Now many students may be wondering why they should even be concerned about the effects of pollution and other environmental issues because many people don't see the problems taking place or know exactly what is happening. Pollution as well as greenhouse gases, including the burning of fossil fuels, cause

long-term effects such as climate change and global warming.



Global warming causes the earth's atmosphere to warm up in temperature resulting in a change of climate throughout the globe (Cook, 2014). A warming climate will bring changes that can affect our water supplies, agriculture, power and transportation systems, the natural environment, and even our own health and safety (Basics, 2014).

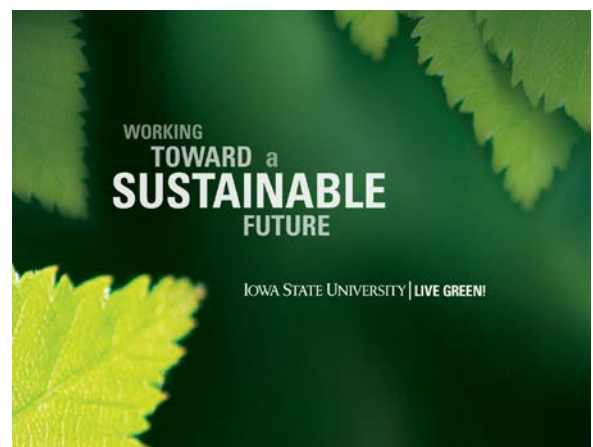
Currently ice is melting worldwide, including mountain glaciers and ice sheets causing sea levels to rise faster over the last century. A decline in species and species that rely on one another are slowly becoming out of sync, causing changes in ecosystem. Water and wasteland pollution build up is currently increasing with the increase in population effecting what chemicals stay trapped and contaminate others through diseases within our ecosystem (Global Warming Effects Information, 2014).

It is important for students to acknowledge and partake in organizations on campus because if students are willing to make a change and promote a healthier lifestyle then those benefits will spread throughout not only their generation but future generations as well.

Government of the Student Body's Assistant Director of Sustainability, Parker Neid, personally believes environmental issues are extremely important. He thinks these are some of the most important conversations to be having now. "I think education is important because it is the starting point for any real change for not just students but everyone. Any Cyclone can make a difference simply by checking if his/her drink bottle is recyclable, reducing water usage, reusing items whenever possible, and simply thinking about your environmental impact can all make a real difference," Neid said.

Student organizations at Iowa State are actively trying to make a difference through different projects and student movements.

ActiveUs has conducted two major campaigns this year known as Beyond Coal and Beyond Plastic. The goal of Beyond Coal is to get ISU to stop burning coal at the campus power plant. While Beyond Plastic is to stop the sale of bottled water on campus and encourage the use of tap water. For these campaigns ActivUs members premiered the movie Dirty Business, set up informational tables and collected petitions. ActivUs also hosted a 5k Run Beyond Coal, held a student march from the power plant to Beardshear, as well as speaking at the Board of Regents meeting. Lastly, they held a press conference with the administration where all petitions were submitted.



While sustainability groups such as GSB and The Green Umbrella have been working on projects involving solar compactors, bike pumps, skate board racks on campus, and MU green roof projects. Next semester, GSB hopes to expand ISU's recycling programs on campus and help create water conservation signs for DOR bathrooms. From current and previous projects throughout the year it is easy to see how much of an effect students can make when they are determined to make a difference.

Students have the opportunity to grow using their education to become better professional and activists for our community. "I think environmental issues are incredibly serious and often overlooked by policy makers. We face changes in the ecosystems and rely on having far-reaching implications for how we will live our lives in the future and how future generations will live," Fidel said, as she strongly stands behind these thoughts, which hopefully shows students how important it is to be sustainable and get involved with environmental affairs, not only for the benefit of them in life but for all of society's well-being.