



Summer Report

On the verge of a victory for the Great Lakes

Some in Congress want to undo progress

Michigan is on the verge of winning major new protections for hundreds of miles of streams that feed the Great Lakes. But just as President Obama is about to sign off on the biggest victory for clean water in a decade, some polluter-friendly members of Congress are doing everything they can to block him.

Biggest victory in a decade

From visiting the Sleeping Bear Dunes to swimming at Sand Point Beach, Michiganders care deeply about the Great Lakes. But despite the lakes' popularity, for many years the waterways that feed and filter them have not been nearly as protected or as safe as they once were.

Thanks to two polluter-driven Supreme Court decisions in the last decade, more than half of our streams and hundreds of acres of wetlands—the same waterways that feed and filter the Great Lakes—may not have been protected by the Clean Water Act. An estimated 24 billion gallons of untreated sewage have been flowing into the Great Lakes each year, causing more than 3,000 beach closings in 2009 alone.

Thankfully, in April 2011, the Obama administration proposed new guideline to restore protections to many of Michigan's waterways, including the streams and wetlands that feed and filter the Great Lakes.

We played a critical role in getting the administration to act. Along with our national federation, we talked to more than half a million people, gathered 88,000 public comments and mobilized more



Susan Montgomery, Shutterstock

▲ Leelanau State Park on Lake Michigan. When finalized, the Obama administration's new guidelines will restore Clean Water Act protections to waterways that feed the Great Lakes.

than 500 elected officials and businesses in support of the guidelines.

In February, the administration announced that it was in the last stage before officially finalizing these protections. Once they are final, this will be the biggest victory for our waterways in the last decade. But many in Congress are working to stop the president from finalizing these guidelines. As of May, there were four separate rollback attempts

in the House and Senate. Environment Michigan is committed to defending these new protections.

From Lake Superior to Lake Huron, we are excited that the Obama administration is about to take this historic step to protect the Great Lakes. Thanks to the support of our members, we will soon have a victory we can all celebrate.



Claes Tuijter, iStockphoto.com

more online

Visit our website and tell President Obama that you want to see all of Michigan's waterways protected:

www.EnvironmentMichigan.org

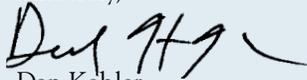
To our members

This winter certainly didn't feel like the Michigan winters we're used to—and it only reinforced the urgency of doing everything we can to avoid the worst effects of global warming. This spring, my staff and I spent a week in Washington, D.C., meeting with our members of Congress, urging them to oppose efforts to roll back the Clean Air Act and move forward on important federal policies to support renewable energy.

Our work is not always easy, and while gridlock in Lansing and Washington can be frustrating, I have been inspired by the thousands of you who care so deeply about the Great Lakes, our air and our open spaces. It is clearer than ever that citizens across Michigan need to get involved so we can take on powerful special interests and win real results for our environment.

So thank you for all that you have done and continue to do. None of what we do would be possible without your support.

Sincerely,



Dan Kohler
Regional Program Director

Recent action

Tax plan levels playing field for renewable energy

President Obama released his framework for corporate tax reform on Feb. 22, which includes provisions to eliminate tax breaks to the oil and gas industries and seeks to expand the manufacture of clean energy technologies.

Federal Clean Energy Advocate Courtney Abrams issued the following statement in response: "By cutting tax breaks to oil and gas companies—which for decades have profited at the expense of our health and environment—and instead investing in burgeoning clean energy industries, the administration recognizes that we can both grow our economy and ensure a future with cleaner air and water for all Americans. We applaud the Obama administration's commitment to responsibly developing truly clean energy sources like wind and solar power."

Clean car standards are a win for Michigan

New clean car standards proposed by the Obama administration will save the average Michigan family \$240 a year at the gas pump in 2030 and bring nearly 23,000 jobs to the state, according to a recent report by allies of Environment Michigan.

The Obama administration proposed the standards in November of 2011. They will ensure that new cars and light trucks meet the equivalent of a 54.5 miles-per-gallon fleet-wide average by 2025. The report, released by the Union of Concerned Scientists and the Natural Resources Defense Council, also found that the proposed standards would, by 2030, save Michigan residents \$976 million annually at the pump, cut oil use in the state by 622 million gallons, and reduce global warming pollution by more than 7 million metric tons.

"By moving ahead with the strongest possible clean car standards, the Obama administration is poised to help move our country away from oil, save Michigan residents money at the gas pump, and cut dangerous carbon pollution," said Jane Wiedenbeck, field organizer with Environment Michigan.

Photo: puchan, Shutterstock.com

How do you want to be remembered?

You can be remembered as someone who cared enough to keep up the fight for a cleaner, greener, healthier future by making a bequest to Environment Michigan or the Environment Michigan Research & Policy Center.

For information, call: 1-800-841-7299, or email PlannedGiving@EnvironmentMichigan.org.



▲ Chevy Volts on Calder Plaza in Grand Rapids. New fuel efficiency standards would save Michiganders \$976 million a year at the pump by 2030.

EPA moves to cut carbon pollution from power plants

On March 27, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency proposed limits on carbon pollution from new power plants. If passed, they will be the first nationwide limits on the largest single source of the carbon pollution that fuels global warming.

As scientists, doctors and other experts have been warning us for years, cutting this carbon pollution is critical because global warming will bring everything from dirtier air and more deadly heat waves, to more devastating floods and extreme weather.

In the path of the storm

In the weeks before the EPA's historic announcement, Environment Michigan released a report documenting why action to cut carbon pollution and tackle global warming is needed.

The report, "In the Path of the Storm," found that 4 out of 5 Americans live in counties that were affected by federally declared weather-related disasters between 2006 and 2011. Furthermore, we documented the latest science warning that global warming could lead to certain extreme weather events becoming even more common in the future (see sidebar for more information).

Environment Michigan also launched an interactive online map, available at www.EnvironmentMichigan.org, where citizens can see state-by-state and even county-by-county information about which weather-related disasters hit when, and can then take action in support of the EPA's carbon pollution limits. The report and map received extensive press attention, including stories in the Washington Post and USA Today.

Scare tactics

The real battle began after the EPA's announcement, as utilities, coal companies and other corporate polluters began spending millions to convince the Obama administration to weaken or abandon the standards altogether.

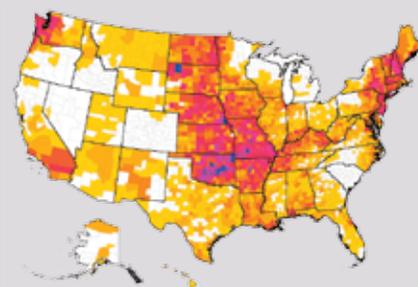
Through paid ads and armies of lobbyists within Congress, the polluters are trying to scare the American public and the Obama administration into thinking that we can't afford to adopt these commonsense standards.

We know that we can't afford to not adopt carbon pollution standards for power plants, so Environment Michigan and our allies launched an unprecedented push to educate and mobilize citizens in support of the standards.

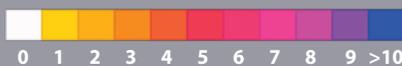
Together with those of our national federation, our on-the-ground organizers are gathering tens of thousands of public comments in support of the standards, holding press events to help raise the profile of the issue, and reaching out to public health groups and local environmental groups to demonstrate broad support.

If all goes well, the EPA is expected to finalize these carbon pollution standards for new power plants by the end of 2012 and begin developing standards for existing coal-fired power plants in the near future as well.

Map of recent weather-related disasters in US



Number of weather-related disasters 2006-2011



You can view the full interactive map online at:

www.EnvironmentMichigan.org

4 out of 5 Americans hit by recent weather disasters

Report says global warming to bring more extreme weather

After a year that saw many parts of the country hit by scorching heat, devastating wildfires, severe storms and record flooding, an Environment Michigan report documents how global warming could lead to certain extreme weather events becoming even more common or more severe in the future. The report found that, already, 4 out of 5 Americans live in counties affected by federally declared weather-related disasters since 2006.

Included in this tally of weather-related disasters is the Groundhog Day blizzard of 2011, which dumped more than a foot of snow in parts of southwest Michigan. The storm caused approximately \$1.8 billion in damage nationwide and caused 36 deaths.

The report shows that the United States has experienced an increase in heavy precipitation events, with the rainiest 1 percent of all storms delivering 20 percent more rain on average at the end of the 20th century than at the beginning. This trend toward extreme precipitation is projected to continue in a warming world.

"The bottom line is that extreme weather is happening, it is causing very serious problems, and global warming increases the likelihood that we'll see even more extreme weather in the future," said federal Global Warming Program Director Nathan Willcox. "The extreme weather we suffered through in 2011 is a frightening reminder of why we must do everything we can to cut the dangerous carbon pollution that is fueling global warming and lessen the threat of even worse extreme weather in the future."

103 E. Liberty, Ste. 202
Ann Arbor, MI 48104
(734) 662-9797

Environment Michigan

Address service requested

NON-PROFIT
ORG
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
BROCKTON, MA
PERMIT NO. 430

Summer Report

VOLUME 7 | NO. 1 | 2012



Environment Michigan

Our mission

We all want clean air, clean water and open spaces. But it takes independent research and tough-minded advocacy to win concrete results for our environment, especially when powerful interests stand in the way of environmental progress.

That's the idea behind Environment Michigan. We focus exclusively on protecting Michigan's air, water and open spaces. We speak out and take action at the local, state and national levels to improve the quality of our environment and our lives.

House transportation bill attacks public transit

U.S. Rep. Dave Camp (Mich.), Chairman of the House of Representatives' Ways and Means Committee, recently proposed eliminating dedicated federal funding for mass transit, moving funds currently used for mass transit and putting them instead toward building new highways. This proposal comes on top of provisions from other House committees that would not only force us to consume more oil, but actually open new, destructive drilling throughout the country.

Our Federal Transportation Advocate John Cross issued this statement in response:

"We are stunned that Rep. Camp is proposing to eliminate all dedicated funding for public transit—guaranteeing that America becomes more dependent on oil. When it comes to transportation, the House is taking us down a dead end road to pollute our air, threaten our climate, endanger our country's treasured spaces and grant oil corporations' every wish."



In May, the Obama administration awarded the Michigan Department of Transportation almost \$200 million in federal funds for high-speed rail projects in the state. These projects include the rehabilitation of track on the Kalamazoo to Dearborn line, which will eventually increase speeds to 110 mph on a 235-mile section between Chicago and Detroit, reducing trip times by 30 minutes.