Dear Environment Michigan members,

I’ve always found the name for Lake Michigan and its sister lakes to be a bit of an understatement. Great Lakes? They’re more like Astoundingly, Mind-bogglingly Huge.

The Great Lakes contain enough fresh water to fill a swimming pool the size of the continental United States 10 feet deep. They provide daily drinking water for 33 million North Americans. They support shipping, manufacturing, a $15 billion-a-year tourism industry and a $7 billion-a-year sports fishing industry. But although the Lakes—and their benefits—are truly vast, they’re also vulnerable.

Invasive Asian carp threaten to devastate the Lakes’ ecosystem, starting with Lake Michigan; manure and fertilizer from corporate agriculture load the Lakes with excess nutrients; storm water runoff from sprawling development overwhelms outdated wastewater infrastructure and dumps more than 24 billion gallons of raw sewage into the Lakes each year.

These problems lead to beach closings, dead zones, and depleted native fisheries. Combined, they have left the entire Great Lakes ecosystem so severely disrupted that scientists believe it is approaching a tipping point—a point beyond which fully restoring the Lakes to their clean, natural state would be impossible.

Environment Michigan and other Great Lakes advocates have been working for years to knock problems off that list and restore the Lakes, and we’ve won some big victories on curbing pollution and promoting interstate cooperation. But with pollution and invasive species bringing us ever closer to the tipping point, we need to act again, and we need your help. I look forward to working with you in the year to come, as we fight for sweeping protections that will restore the Lakes for good.

Sincerely,

Dan Kohler
Regional Program Director

From our staff

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Clean energy future

Working to decrease our dependence on oil

Despite a challenging political and economic environment, Environment Michigan and our national federation, Environment America, made progress in 2010 toward an economy that runs—and thrives—on clean energy. Last spring, President Obama announced new rules requiring cars and light trucks to use less oil; those rules were modeled on standards our national federation had passed in 14 states.

When allies of Big Oil in the U.S. Senate tried to pass a measure that would block the new rules, we mobilized our base in opposition, generating e-mails and calls to key offices. We also released research this year outlining the potential and challenges presented by plug-in electric vehicles. They have the potential to make an immediate impact by reducing air pollution and curbing our dependence on oil; however, it will take a coherent strategy to take full advantage of the technology.
Restoring Lake Michigan

Big opportunity to protect the Great Lakes

Michigan boasts more than 600 public beaches, stretching along more than 500 miles of Great Lakes shoreline. Lake Michigan and the other Great Lakes are a vast and amazing part of our heritage, but they are vulnerable to a litany of threats ranging from toxic pollution to invasive species. We’re working to restore and protect them.

Our vision for the Great Lakes is one in which our beaches are safe and free of pollution—even after a heavy rain. We want to be able to swim in Lake Michigan and enjoy some of the best fishing in the country for trout, perch, bass and walleye.

More than 24 billion gallons of sewage are dumped into the Lakes each year. In 2009, there were more than 340 beach closings on Michigan’s shoreline. Voracious invasive Asian carp threaten to infiltrate the Great Lakes, with potentially devastating results for the entire ecosystem.

Environment Michigan, along with an array of prominent national and Great Lakes conservation NGOs, called on President Obama this year to significantly change the federal response to the crisis, specifically requesting the appointment of a federal incident commander to coordinate and ensure transparency of the response. Later in the year, he appointed a “carp czar” to oversee the response.

Restoration measures progress in Congress

The Lakes are a national treasure, and it will take a national-scale investment to clean them up. This year, we had an opportunity to push for exactly that: The Great Lakes Ecosystem Protection Act currently making its way through Congress would inject new energy and resources—to the tune of $650 million per year—into restoring and protecting the Lakes.

The legislation was introduced by Michigan’s own Sen. Carl Levin and Rep. Vern Ehlers. This summer, our federal clean water staff lobbied for the measure in Washington, D.C., our researchers made the case for restoration (see page 8), and our grassroots organizers engaged thousands of citizens throughout Michigan and the Lakes region to contact their representatives. The bill made it through a key committee, and we’re working to see it all the way to the president’s desk in 2011.
Driving the clean energy discussion

Michigan on the move

Our research on energy problems and potential solutions prompted nationwide discussion this year. We released several reports on energy, global warming and exciting new technology.

While Congress let meaningful climate legislation fall through the cracks this year, our "America on the Move" report gained widespread attention for the idea that individual states can lead the way instead. The actions many states have already taken to reduce global warming pollution are already significant on a global scale, and are projected to reduce carbon dioxide emissions by an amount greater than is currently emitted by all but eight of the world’s nations. In an editorial early last year, The New York Times referenced the report’s findings, calling on Congress to “build on these actions to fashion a national response to climate change.”

States are showing climate leadership where Congress has not.

Report highlight

Global warming and extreme weather: The science, the forecast and the impacts on America

On the heels of a summer that saw many parts of the country hit by record heat, severe storms and damaging floods, we released a report documenting how global warming could lead to similar extreme weather events becoming even more common. The report highlighted recent extreme weather events that have affected Michigan, such as 2008’s Midwest floods, which cost farmers $1.3 billion in lost agriculture production and claimed 24 lives across the Midwest.

“2008’s Midwest flood was just one example of how extreme weather causes extremely big problems for Michigan’s economy and our public safety,” said Nicole Lowen, field associate for Environment Michigan.

The new report, entitled “Global Warming and Extreme Weather” detailed the latest research linking global warming to hurricanes, coastal storms, extreme precipitation, wildfires and heat waves.

Among the report’s recommendations for avoiding the most damaging impacts of global warming:

• A renewable energy standard to promote the use of clean, renewable energy.

• Investment in transit and passenger rail—and support for a transition to plug-in and other alternative fuel vehicles.

• Allowing states to retain the authority to go beyond federal standards on work to reduce global warming pollution.
Protecting Michigan’s waterways

Reversing the Clean Water Act rollback

Whether your favorite waterway is Lake Michigan, Lake Superior, or a local fishing hole, clean water is essential to Michiganders’ quality of life. In 2010, we worked to reverse a decision that put more than half of Michigan’s streams and thousands of acres of wetlands at risk of unlimited pollution.

When the Supreme Court handed down two decisions that threw into question which of our waters are protected under the 1972 Clean Water Act—the intent of which was to make sure all of America’s waters remain safe for drinking and swimming—it put not just our local creeks and wetlands in trouble, but also our great waterways. Lakes Michigan, Superior and Huron can only be as healthy as the small streams and wetlands that feed and clean them.

Michigan’s waterways are no dumping ground

Fortunately, a measure in the U.S. House of Representatives would clarify that Michigan’s waterways are no one’s dumping ground. We’ve joined a strong coalition of regional groups working to pass the measure, called the America’s Commitment to Clean Water Act.

Our research and outreach in Michigan, as well as the advocacy of our federal clean water staff in Washington, D.C., created a flood of regional media attention and helped pass the bill through a key committee in 2010, setting the stage for a big push in 2011.

Opponents claim that the measure will create a bureaucratic nightmare—suggesting that land-grabbing regulators would require a permit for any activity that affected even a puddle of rainwater.

But it’s clear that only waters protected prior to 2001, as the Clean Water Act originally intended, will be protected under this bill.

Report highlight: Our Great Waters

In addition to our advocacy at the state and federal level, we released research this year detailing the threat pollution poses to Michigan’s most iconic waterways. “Unlike in the Gulf, we don’t have spill cam footage or front page New York Times photos of pollution in the Great Lakes,” said Environmental Associate Shelley Vinyard. “But what we do have are 24 billion gallons of pollution dumped into the Lakes every year.”

Combating pollution in the Lakes (see pages three and four for our work on the Great Lakes Ecosystem Protection Act of 2010) will work only if the smaller streams that feed the Lakes are protected just as carefully, so we’re working in 2011 to pass both measures.
Environment Michigan Supporters

Foundation support
The Environment Michigan Research & Policy Center is a 501(c)(3) organization, that conducts research and public education on emerging environmental issues. Contributions to the Environment Michigan Research & Policy Center are tax-deductible. To find out more, contact Dan Kohler at (734) 662-9797.

The Environment Michigan Research & Policy Center would like to thank the following foundations for supporting our work in fiscal year 2010:

- RE-AMP Global Warming Strategic Action Fund
- Energy Foundation

Financial Information
Charts reflect combined financial information for the environmental work conducted by Environment Michigan, the Environment Michigan Research & Policy Center and Environment Michigan’s citizen outreach programs.

### FY10 Income
- Citizen Contributions: 85%
- Foundation Grants: 15%

### FY10 Expenses
- Program: 70%
- Fundraising: 19%
- Administrative: 11%

### FY10 Programs
- New Energy Future: 62%
- Great Lakes Protection: 28%
- Global Warming Solutions: 10%

Building a greener future
Environment Michigan and the Environment Michigan Research & Policy Center gratefully accept bequests, beneficiary designations of IRAs and life insurance, and gifts of securities to support our work. Your gift will assure that we can continue to protect Michigan’s air, water and open spaces for future generations. For more information, call 1-800-841-7299 or e-mail PlannedGiving@EnvironmentMichigan.org.