Annual Report
A recap of our work for our members in 2012
Over the past year, your support helped us win landmark victories for clean air, clean water and the places we love.

Together with our national federation, we helped build support for a number of historic victories for clean air and clean water. Thanks in part to our efforts, President Obama announced the first-ever nationwide limits on toxic mercury pollution from power plants. And in June, we rallied support for these limits and defeated a proposal to overturn them in the Senate. Now, new power plants will release 90 percent less mercury into our air and water—great news for Michigan’s families, given the toxic effects mercury has on our children’s health.

The Obama administration is also moving closer to finalizing guidelines that will restore Clean Water Act protections to all of the streams and wetlands that feed the Great Lakes. As polluters oppose these commonsense guidelines, we’re talking to thousands of Michiganders, raising support for our precious lakes.

We have you to thank for these victories, as well as for our continued ability to take on polluting special interests and protect Michigan’s environment. With you by our side, we will continue to fight for clean energy, a healthier planet and a brighter future.

Sincerely,

Dan Kohler, Environment Michigan Regional Director
Right now, Michigan generates enough wind energy to power nearly 100,000 homes, lessening our dependence on dirty energy and avoiding nearly 700,000 metric tons of carbon emissions a year. But if Congress lets critical incentives die, the wind industry could come to a screeching halt. In 2012, we worked hard to prevent that from happening.

At stake: our clean energy future

Wind energy now powers the equivalent of nearly 13 million homes across the country, reducing our dependence on coal and oil. In addition, wind energy supports 75,000 American jobs, including 5,000 in Michigan. But the continued success of wind power is at risk if Congress fails to renew these critical incentives.

• Critical federal tax credits for wind power are set to expire at the end of 2012. If Congress does not renew them, the wind industry expects to lose 37,000 American jobs, and we will lose hard-won momentum on clean energy. Powerful polluting interests have been lobbying against renewal.

• In 2012, we did everything in our power to extend these crucial wind incentives. Along with our national federation and our allies across the country, we mobilized massive grassroots support for wind. As of this writing, the wind tax credits were still being debated.
Protect the Great Lakes

We should be able to swim at Sleeping Bear Dunes and bring our children to Sand Point Beach without worrying about getting sick from elevated bacteria levels. But in the last decade, polluter-driven Supreme Court decisions put more than half of the waterways that feed the Great Lakes at risk. Luckily, the Obama administration has a plan to restore protections to all our waterways.

2.2 million pounds of toxic pollution

The Great Lakes’ importance to Michigan can’t be overstated. Millions of Michiganders spend their summers basking at the beach and swimming in the lakes’ cool water, and many more rely on the lakes’ thriving fishing industry for their livelihoods. Yet despite their beauty, immense popularity and importance to Michiganders, the Great Lakes continue to be treated like a personal sewer for the region’s largest polluters.

• Two recent U.S. Supreme Court decisions left more than half of Michigan’s streams and wetlands at risk of more pollution. Even worse, in 2010 alone, 2.2 million pounds of toxic pollution were dumped into our waterways—much of which made its way into the Great Lakes.

• President Obama is on the verge of taking a major step to protect the Great Lakes by setting new guidelines that will reduce pollution to the smaller waterways that feed the lakes. But already big polluters and their allies in Congress are doing everything they can to stop him.

• We know that a win for big polluters means less protection for our treasured lakes. While we can’t compete with the biggest polluters and their well-heeled lobbyists in D.C. dollar-for-dollar, we know the public is with us, and if we can show that to our elected officials and President Obama, we can win. That’s why we’re mobilizing Michiganders to take a stand for the Great Lakes.
President poised to restore protections

- Environment Michigan 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 than 500 elected officials, farmers and recreational businesses in support of the proposed guidelines.

- Once the guidelines are final, this will be the biggest victory for the Great Lakes in a decade. But our work is not done. Many in Congress are working to stop the president from finalizing these guidelines. To counter their efforts, we’ve been building massive public support for the Great Lakes all across Michigan. We’re committed to finalizing these guidelines and protecting the Great Lakes for good.

Above: Michiganders enjoying the Great Lakes. The Obama administration is moving closer to finalizing Environment Michigan-backed guidelines that will restore Clean Water Act protections to all our waters.
Clean Air, Healthy Families

Coal-fired power plants and other industrial polluters spew hundreds of thousands of tons of dangerous pollutants and global warming-causing carbon into our atmosphere every year. In the past year, however, we’ve taken two giant steps toward fixing this.

A pair of historic victories for clean air

Power plants emit mercury pollution that can seriously endanger our health. They also pump massive amounts of global warming-causing carbon pollution into our air. In the last year, we focused our clean air campaign on cutting these two sources of pollution from power plants—and won a pair of unprecedented results.

First-ever nationwide mercury standards

Every year, coal-fired power plants spew into our air hundreds of thousands of pounds of toxic mercury, which fall to earth in the form of rain and contaminate rivers, lakes and streams. Last year, reducing mercury and other air pollution was one of Environment Michigan’s top priorities.

- In 2011, we partnered with our national coalition of allies to help motivate more than 800,000 people across America to send the EPA public comments in support of strong action on mercury—no other single EPA rule had ever received so much support.

- The Obama administration responded to this show of support by announcing the first-ever nationwide standards for mercury pollution from power plants. Then, in June 2012, the U.S. Senate rejected a bill that would have allowed power plants to continue spewing toxic mercury pollution into our air, putting 11,000 American lives at risk. Now, power plants must cut their mercury emissions by 90 percent.
EPA proposes carbon pollution standards

In addition to President Obama’s mercury pollution standards, the past year saw another historic victory for clean air: On March 27, 2012, the EPA 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.

- 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.

- However, through paid ads and armies of lobbyists within Congress, the coal industry and other corporate polluters are trying to prevent the implementation of these commonsense standards. To counter these special interests, Environment Michigan and our allies collected a record-smashing 3 million comments in support of the carbon standard.
Healthy Farms, Healthy Planet

Farms should be environmentally friendly and provide food that is safe and healthy. Environment Michigan is working to make sure the rules for conventional farms are strong enough to protect our rivers and bays. At the same time, we are helping to build the market for food from local farms that grow diversified crops using sustainable practices.

Supporting local, sustainable farms

Fresh, local food shouldn’t be hard to find. There are now more than 300 farmers’ markets across the state, but we can still do much more to expand opportunities for local, sustainable farmers. Most of the food sold in supermarkets and restaurants still comes from factory farms that abuse our environment.

- Industrial agriculture allows polluted runoff to drain into our waterways, uses excessive amounts of chemicals, and pollutes the air from long-distance shipping. Abusing our land and polluting our air and water to fill shelves with low-quality food is unacceptable. We must require factory farms to clean up their acts and simultaneously encourage the expansion of sustainable farms.

- Runoff from factory dairy farms in Michigan has polluted local waterways and may be contributing to the re-emergence of the dead zone in Lake Erie.

- Environment Michigan is working to make sure the rules for conventional farms are strong enough to protect our rivers and bays. We’re also working to encourage local agriculture by helping to build the market for food from healthy farms that grow diversified crops using sustainable practices.
We need access to more local food, not less

There is immense potential to provide food from sustainable farms to more people. We can build the market for good food and encourage more farmers to switch from growing commodity crops on chemical-intensive farms to growing food for local customers in ways that are in balance with the environment.

- We should be doing everything we can to encourage healthy, safe food and responsible farming. Unfortunately, Congress recently voted to eliminate programs that encourage local, sustainable farms. At the same time, they’re continuing to send billions of dollars to polluting factory farms.

- We should all be able to enjoy healthy food that doesn’t come from farms that pollute our air and water. That’s why Environment Michigan is working to build support for programs that encourage local, sustainable agriculture.

Local, sustainable agriculture provides a healthier, more environmentally friendly alternative to factory farms. Environment Michigan is committed to supporting programs that promote healthy, sustainable farms.