



## Clean air victory will protect public health

### New standards will cut mercury pollution from power plants

Backed by an outpouring of public support, the EPA secured new rules to reduce mercury and other toxic air pollution, despite continued attacks from polluters and their allies in Congress.

The Environmental Protection Agency this winter finalized a new rule to reduce mercury pollution from coal-fired power plants, while another rule that would reduce emissions survived a dangerous attack from the Senate.

Both are major victories, particularly for Michigan, where we rank 10th in the country for total mercury pollution released by power plants. But our work isn't done, as the Mercury and Air Toxics Standard and the Cross-State Air Pollution Rule continue to face strong resistance.

Kentucky Sen. Rand Paul attempted to block the new rule with a bill that would have barred the EPA from implementing such a standard ever again. The Senate narrowly rejected the bill in November, thanks in part to votes from Michigan Sens. Debbie Stabenow and Carl Levin.

Here in Michigan, Attorney General Bill Schuette sided with polluters by joining a multi-state lawsuit attempting to block the Mercury and Toxics Air Standard, finalized in December.

### 800,000 against mercury

The attacks on clean air continue despite demonstrated support from the public. Environment Michigan played a significant role in helping to generate the most



▲ Environment Michigan's Jessica Surma is joined by Rep. Hansen Clarke at the release of our "Danger in the Air" report.

public comments EPA has ever received, in support of the Mercury and Toxics Air Rule. More than 800,000 Americans spoke out against mercury pollution.

Environment Michigan has come out strongly against the level of mercury in our air and water. According to a recent Environment Michigan report, one in 10 American women now has blood

mercury levels that are high enough to put her child at risk of brain damage if she becomes pregnant.

Once implemented, the rules are expected to save more than 50,000 lives each year. Our staff and members will continue to lead the charge to protect these regulations and to push for the strongest clean air rules possible.



### more online

To read "Danger in the Air" and other Environment Michigan reports, visit [EnvironmentMichigan.org/reports](http://EnvironmentMichigan.org/reports)



## To our members

Over the years, my colleagues and I—along with members like you, who make our work possible—have made some real progress toward protecting the air we breathe, water we drink, and our special places.

That’s why it was so troubling in 2011 to see the worst assault on the environment of our lifetimes, possibly ever. Extremists in Congress are releasing attack after attack, often hidden in other legislation, that would reverse environmental protections we’ve worked so hard to achieve.

Fortunately, the response from a concerned public has been strong, and you’ll read in this season’s updates how we’re forging ahead and countering this reckless legislation on all fronts. As always, I thank you for supporting us, and I’ll be counting on you in the future to continue defending the places we love and values we share.

Sincerely,

Dan Kohler  
Regional Program Director

## Recent action

### Obama’s 54.5 mpg proposal moves forward

This summer, the Obama administration announced a plan to require cars and trucks to meet a 54.5 miles per gallon standard by 2025. In November, the administration opened a public comment period on the proposed standards—the first step toward making them a reality.

The standards mark the biggest step America has ever taken to fight global warming—and benefits would also be felt closer to home. Michigan families would have used 2.6 million fewer gallons of oil and saved \$9 million over the Thanksgiving holiday if today’s vehicles met the 54.5 mpg standard, according to an Environment Michigan report.

Unfortunately, the National Auto Dealers Association is lobbying to weaken the standards, and their allies in Congress are vowing to block it. Our staff and members are urging the Obama administration to seize this opportunity to get America off oil and stop global warming.

### Solar jobs provide bright spot in dim economy

Solar energy is one of the bright spots in the U.S. economy; employment grew by 6.8 percent last year—almost ten times faster than the rest of the economy.

The good news came from the National Solar Jobs Census 2011, which our national federation, Environment America, released in partnership with the Solar Foundation. “This report shows that solar jobs are putting people to work across the country to repower our economy while protecting our environment and our health,” said Courtney Abrams, Environment America’s clean energy advocate.

Michigan has a surprising amount of solar potential, averaging more peak sun hours than solar leader Germany, and Environment Michigan is working to bring more of those solar jobs to our state to take advantage of that resource.

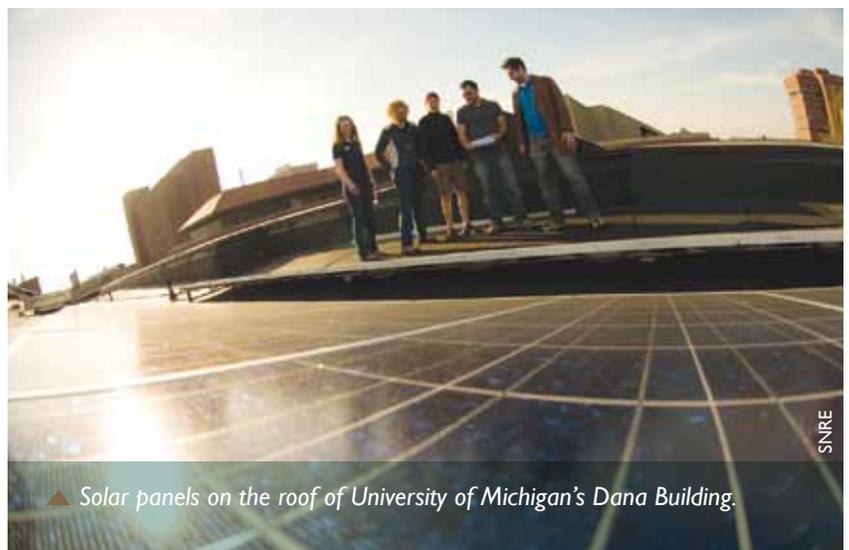
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▲ Solar panels on the roof of University of Michigan’s Dana Building.

# Progress on clean water, clean air in jeopardy

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Over the past year, with the public's attention focused on the economy, anti-environmental extremists in Congress have quietly launched an all-out attack on the laws that protect our waters, as well as the air we breathe and the places we love.

Here in Michigan—with the Great Lakes, our 11,000 inland lakes, and thousands of miles of rivers—water is a big part of what defines our state. We've made so much progress protecting these beloved waterways over the years, including recent action by the EPA to restore national Clean Water Act rules. But that protection is under fire.

It's the most radical, reckless attack on our environment in our lifetimes—and it's happening under the radar, through provisions slipped into massive budget bills.

## Anti-environmental measures pepper new federal laws

Polluters and their allies in Congress have doubled down on their efforts to weaken or eliminate environmental protections. Lobbyists for mining companies, developers and corporate agribusiness have lined the halls of Congress to lobby for rollbacks, and it often seems as if every piece of must-pass legislation is a vehicle for anti-environmental riders.

According to U.S. Rep. Henry Waxman, in the House alone, lawmakers have cast an incredible 191 votes on measures that would block the EPA from keeping our waters clean, making our air safer to breathe, protecting places we love, or enforcing other environmental protections.

In February, the House rammed through a budget bill that took aim at our rivers and streams, our air, and funding for some of America's most beloved places, from Maine's Acadia National Park to Washington's Mount Rainier. In August, the U.S. House passed a bill containing 39 separate environmental attacks.

## 170,000 Americans stand strong for our waters

Fortunately, by harnessing the power of public support, we've successfully blocked these attacks so far. Our canvassers have gone door to door in communities across Michigan, along with those of our sister groups across the country, educating more than 500,000 people over the last year on the importance of clean water protections. Our activists sent in 170,000 supportive comments to the EPA. With the Senate rejecting several of the worst proposals this fall, the tide may be starting to turn.

As election season approaches, the rollback attempts will surely get worse. But Environment Michigan and our allies will continue to expose these attacks and mobilize public support so our decision-makers will stand up for clean water.

We'll keep you informed, so you can let your lawmakers know where you stand. Visit our new website to sign up for action alerts: [www.EnvironmentMichigan.org](http://www.EnvironmentMichigan.org).



## How are they voting?

Find out how your representatives in Congress are voting on the environment.

Visit our online scorecard at [www.EnvironmentAmerica.org/scorecard](http://www.EnvironmentAmerica.org/scorecard) and select Michigan.



Daniel Ray Photography, Flickr

## Interview: EPA Administrator Lisa Jackson

*EPA has recently worked on several clean air standards including the Mercury and Air Toxics Standard and the Cross-State Air Pollution Rule. Can you explain what these standards mean for the average family?*

These new Clean Air Act standards mean cleaner, healthier air for American families. The Mercury and Air Toxics Standards and the Cross-State Air Pollution Rule are part of a series of common-sense steps under the Clean Air Act to reduce emissions of mercury, acid gas, particulate matter, arsenic and other harmful chemicals from some of the biggest polluters in the nation.

These reasonable steps will provide dramatic protections to our children and loved ones—they will save tens of thousands of lives and prevent hundreds of thousands of asthma and heart attacks.

*What's the best way for our supporters to express their opinions on these issues?*

Unfortunately, we are at a point where we have to remind some leaders in Washington to put the health of their constituents above the wish lists of special interests. Speaking directly to those who want to undermine common-sense environmental protections is one of the best ways to stand up for your right to clean air and clean water.

Read the rest of our conversation with Lisa Jackson on our website.

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# Environment Michigan

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## Winter Report

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### 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.

## New growth for Michigan's sustainable farms

Sustainable agriculture has grown from a collection of visionary farmers to a viable market sector. Farmers markets are taking off in Michigan, where their number has grown from 90 in 2001 to 300 this year, according to a recent editorial in The Detroit News.

But 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.

Environment Michigan supports legislation that would build the market for food from local farms, and support healthy farms that grow diversified crops using sustainable practices.



Dan Bruell

◀ *A farmers market in Ann Arbor.*

*To learn more about our healthy farms campaign, visit us online at [www.EnvironmentMichigan.org](http://www.EnvironmentMichigan.org)*