



Fall Report

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More polluter attacks on the Great Lakes

Another summer of beach closings

From Singing Bridge Beach in Saginaw Bay, to St. Clair Shores, beachgoers faced closings and advisories due to unsafe bacteria levels all summer. But at the same time, polluters and their allies in Congress fought hard to dismantle the law that has cleaned and protected our rivers, lakes and streams for 39 years: The Clean Water Act.

For the past several years, Environment Michigan has been working with our national federation, Environment America, to restore the Clean Water Act's ability to protect all of our waters. This year, the EPA acted. In April, EPA Administrator Lisa Jackson announced a plan to close loopholes created by the courts that are allowing polluters to pave and dump into the small waters that feed our lakes. The agency is also gearing up to cut sewage pollution by setting national standards.

"Legal warfare"

Polluting industries have already sprung into action. Corporate agribusiness and mining companies have all urged their friends in Congress to stop the EPA from closing the clean water loophole—ExxonMobil even threatened "legal warfare."

And then, over the summer, polluters' allies in both parties in Congress launched an unprecedented attack on the Clean Water Act. By mid-July, the House of Representatives had passed three separate measures attacking the EPA's authority to protect our waters.



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▲ St. Clair Shore faced beach closings this summer.

We saw this coming, and had already begun building a campaign to defend the EPA's clean water initiatives. All over the Great Lakes region, and across Michigan, our field organizers talked face to face with tens of thousands of Americans about the attacks on clean water. Citizens wrote to their local newspapers and sent comments to Washington, urging the EPA to stand strong for clean water.

Our beaches and lakes provide some of the best summer memories as we head into fall and winter. As we work to protect our waters, we'll be sure to remind officials in Washington that Michiganders care deeply about Lake Michigan and all our waters and want to see them protected.



Staff

take action

◀ Federal Clean Water Advocate Piper Crowell released a report on threats facing our waters.

Go online to take action for our water.
www.EnvironmentMichigan.org/action



To our members

Over the past several months, we have seen an unprecedented attack on clean water and air in Lansing and in Washington, D.C.

Efforts by our national federation and active members succeeded in blocking attempts to weaken the Clean Water and Clean Air acts. However, polluters and their allies in Congress have declared war on the Environmental Protection Agency, and the attacks will keep coming.

It's your support that makes sure we can hold the line in times like these and continue protecting our lakes, air and open space for future generations.

Sincerely,

Dan Kohler
Regional Program Director



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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.

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

Recent action

Pushing for mercury protection

This spring, the Environmental Protection Agency took major steps to cut toxic air pollution from power plants, despite intense opposition from industrial polluters and their allies in Congress. The EPA proposed the first-ever nationwide limits on mercury pollution from power plants—limits that would cut mercury pollution by 91 percent, a huge victory given mercury's effect on how kids think, learn and behave.

Polluters and their allies in the Senate have fought back; in July, many senators signed onto a bill that would delay the EPA's ability to impose such limits by at least three and a half years. We joined our national federation in calling on the U.S. Senate to oppose the dangerous proposal, instead of giving polluters a free pass to spew toxic air pollution.

Beach water testing: the good and the bad

When Michiganders flock to the beach during the summer months, some are safer destinations than others—and last year was no exception. In fact, the number of beach closings or advisories across the state jumped 6 percent last year, totaling 363. In its 21st annual "Testing the Waters" report, the Natural Resources Defense Council analyzed government data on beachwater testing results at more than 3,000 locations nationwide. The report cites pollution from stormwater runoff and sewage overflow as the major contributors and recommends better practices for reducing runoff pollution.

Judged by the percentage of the year that bacteria levels at tested beaches exceeded acceptable levels, the dirtiest beaches in 2010 included Brimley State Park and Sherman Park in Chippewa County, St. Clair Shores Blossom Heath Beach in Macomb County, and Warren Dunes Beach in Berrien County. A few of Michigan's beaches received strong marks for clean water: 11 counties, including Emmet, Mackinac, Manistee and Presque Isle, had no tested instances of unsafe bacteria levels at all during the year.



Julie Falk, Creative Commons

▲ Lake Michigan

Healthy farms, healthy planet

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From the first pint of strawberries in June, to the juicy tomatoes and crunchy cucumbers of summer, down to the last crisp red apple of fall, the abundance of a farmers market is unrivaled. But fresh food that's been grown close to home shouldn't only be found on a special trip to the market.

Though there are now more than 300 farmers markets across the state—from Ann Arbor, to Cheboygan, to Kalamazoo—much more remains to be done to expand Michiganders' access to fresh, local food. That's why, along with our national federation, Environment Michigan is working to make sure local farms can grow and provide their own communities with safe, fresh, delicious food.

A system of pollution

We should be doing everything we can to encourage healthy food and responsible farming. Unfortunately, too much of the food we buy in the supermarket comes from factory farms that pollute our lakes with runoff and pollute our air by trucking food to all corners of the country. And the U.S. House recently voted to continue sending billions of dollars in subsidies to those huge farms while eliminating a program that supported small, sustainable farms.

Runoff and spills contribute to massive fish kills and unsafe swimming and fishing conditions. Much of this pollution comes from massive factory farms, which house thousands of cows or spray huge amounts of pesticides on their fields.

Environment Michigan has lobbied in Lansing and in Washington, D.C., to defend the Clean Water Act. While cracking down on polluters of all kinds is vital to keeping the Great Lakes and our other waters clean, we have much to gain by promoting local, sustainable farms.

More local food, not less

Though the U.S. House disappointingly voted against programs to help small farmers, the U.S. Senate, with the leadership of Sens. Carl Levin and Debbie Stabenow, can restore those programs and get small farmers the help they need to grow.

Over the summer, we spoke with people across the Midwest about locally grown food and built the momentum we'll need to take this campaign into the fall.

In the coming months, we'll make sure that the issue stays in the media, continue talking to people around the state, and work to show lawmakers that Michiganders want the fresh, local food we currently only find at farmers markets to be accessible enough to include in every meal.



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find a market



Online tool

To find a farmers market near you this fall, check out:

search.ams.usda.gov/farmersmarkets



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Plug into clean energy

Efficiency is the cheapest and cleanest way to cut our fossil fuel use and pollution. It seems intuitive enough: Use less energy. Save fuel, and save money.

But with the numerous federal, state, and local organizations and agencies ready to help you retrofit your homes or business by offering rebates, discounts, financing and other kinds of incentives, it can be tough to figure out where to start.

Environment Michigan Research & Policy Center designed our "Plug Into Clean Energy" guide to help you cut through the clutter and pick what works for you, so you can get on the path toward a more efficient home or business, one step at a time.

Here are five low- to no-cost things you can do right now to cut your energy use:



- 1 Replace incandescent light bulbs with CFLs to cut your lighting costs by up to 75 percent.**
- 2 Wash your laundry using cold water only.**
- 3 Plug appliances into power strips, and turn them off when not in use.**
- 4 Put aluminum foil behind radiators to reflect heat back into the room.**
- 5 Scrape—rather than rinse—dishes, and only run the dishwasher when you have a full load.**

For the full list, visit www.EnvironmentMichigan.org/center/plug-into-clean-energy

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

Environment Michigan

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BROCKTON, MA
PERMIT NO. 430

Fall Report

VOLUME 6 | NO. 2 | 2011



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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.

Going the distance for 60-mpg cars

In yet another oil spill, this past July, an ExxonMobil pipeline spilled more than 42,000 gallons of oil into Montana's pristine Yellowstone River. Now, according to one nearby resident, "You go down to where the oil is, and you don't hear anything anymore. No birds, no toads, no crickets, nothing."

In the wake of the latest spill, Environment Michigan joined a national effort to get America off oil—by making our cars more fuel-efficient, building strong public transportation systems, and investing in electric vehicles.

We saw a big victory this past summer, after we mobilized more than 10,000 people across the country to push for a 60-mpg fuel standard, and people across the country shared our "ten tips to get off oil" with friends. The Obama administration announced plans for a 54.5-mpg fleetwide standard by 2025, with the support of the auto industry.



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Our research showed that if a 60-mpg standard had been in place, the average Michigan household would have saved \$493 on gas this summer.



Read the full report, "Beating the heat with clean cars," at: www.EnvironmentMichigan.org/reports