Dear friend,

We’ve had some big victories this year, thanks to the support of thousands of Michiganders like you. Thanks in large part to our work and your support, on Dec. 19 President Bush signed a new energy bill that will increase gas mileage standards for the first time in 20 years. The new law will ensure that cars achieve 35 miles per gallon fleet-wide by 2020, saving 1.1 million barrels of oil per day and saving consumers $22 billion at the pump. And, the new law will help promote high-performance buildings through the Commercial Buildings Initiative and help America’s cities become more energy-independent through conservation block grants.

Here in Lansing, we’re urging the Legislature to pass a bill that would require at least 10 percent of Michigan’s electricity to come from renewable sources by 2015, helping achieve Gov. Jennifer Granholm’s goal of hitting 25 percent by 2025 and jumpstarting the state’s economy with investments in clean energy. We are also calling for re-invigorating Michigan’s languishing energy efficiency program to help homeowners and businesses save energy and keep more of our energy dollars in the local economy.

Backed by momentum from other states; and our ability to make the case for the environmental and economic benefits of clean energy here in Michigan, build clean energy champions in the Legislature, educate the media, and apply relentless grassroots pressure; this package has a strong chance of passage this fall. We need to set Michigan on a path toward homegrown, clean energy as opposed to dirty, dangerous imported fossil fuels. Unfortunately, some in the energy industry and their allies in the Legislature are doing their utmost to fight these common-sense solutions, so we’re continuing to work tirelessly to promote the smart energy resources Michigan needs.

Rest assured, as important as clean energy is, it isn’t our only priority. We’ve also been working hard to ensure that we can permanently protect some of the most cherished and ecologically sensitive public lands left in the state, and we’re campaigning to limit pollution into the Great Lakes.

The victories we’ve had, the progress we’ve made and our hope for future success would not be possible but for your support of Environment Michigan. Your help is greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

—Rob Sargent, Energy Program Director
2007 brings new hope for global warming solutions in Lansing and D.C.

Hope for federal action
Early in 2007, Rep. Henry Waxman (Calif.) introduced the Safe Climate Act (H.R. 1590), a strong, comprehensive bill to limit global warming pollution to levels that current science says are needed to prevent the worst impacts of global warming. The bill would reduce total U.S. global warming emissions by about 15 percent by 2020 and 80 percent by 2050, a change most scientists agree is necessary to avert catastrophic climate change. To achieve these emission reductions, the bill calls for a greater reliance on clean, renewable energy and improved energy efficiency.

Over the year, we urged members of our state’s congressional delegation to support the Safe Climate Act. So far, Rep. John Conyers (Dearborn) has joined 141 other members of Congress in agreeing to co-sponsor the legislation.

In October, we helped shape the debate over the bill with the release of a study called “Cleaner, Cheaper, Smarter.” Under any pollution cap-and-trade program, emissions would be capped, but polluting companies would still be allowed to emit some carbon into the air or sell their allowances to other firms. We think companies should pay for their allowances. Billions of dollars could be at stake: dollars that could pad energy company profits or help move America toward a new energy future.

More than 100 leaders and organizations signed on to the report’s recommendations. Among them, former Secretary of Labor Robert Reich, the Consumer Federation of America and MoveOn.

Motion in Michigan
Here in Michigan, we’re focusing on clean, renewable energy as a solution for Michigan’s environmental and economic problems. Our reports, “Michigan’s Clean Energy Future” and “Reaping the Rewards,” show how renewables could clean up Michigan while giving a needed boost to our economy.

“When it comes to pollution, people have been paying the price for too long—breathing unsafe air, risking the worst effects of global warming, and footing the bill for cleanup,” said Emily Figdor, our chief advocate on global warming policy in Washington, D.C. “That’s why we need real solutions for global warming and our other pollution problems.”

Above: staff
After talking to more than 50,000 Michiganders and delivering more than 10,000 public comments to the governor as part of our Million Acres Project, Environment Michigan applauds the dedication of 200 acres of prairie and savanna oak natural areas in Algonac State Park.

For the first time in nearly 20 years, the governor and the Department of National Resources (DNR) recommended a wilderness area for protection; as a result, pieces of the park cannot be subject to development of any kind.

The DNR is authorized under the Wilderness and Natural Areas Act of 1972 to permanently protect up to 10 percent of Michigan’s land (about 450,000 acres), but so far has only dedicated 48,281 acres, leaving 98.9 percent of our land open for special interest abuse.

There are 18 other wilderness or natural areas still pending before the DNR for permanent protection.

“We call on the governor and the DNR to use their authority and immediately dedicate the pending 45,469 acres of unique land found throughout Michigan’s state-owned parks and forests,” said Environment Michigan’s Danielle Korpalski. “By permanently protecting these places, Michiganders can enjoy many of our most precious places without fear of mining, logging or development.”

The successful dedication of portions of Algonac State Park is a step in the right direction for our Million Acre Project.

With 3.9 million acres of state forest and almost 3 million more of national forest, Michigan is home to the most extensive public forest system east of the Mississippi River, and it is the DNR’s responsibility to protect it from hazardous practices.

The DNR must use the momentum from Algonac’s dedication and protect the remaining 18 wilderness or natural area locations, and then expand the program.

Hope for more wilderness areas

After the dedication of 200 acres of algonac prairie and savanna oak as protected wilderness areas, Environment Michigan is hoping to use that momentum to convince the Department of Natural Resources...
Tahquamenon Falls, one of the areas targeted by Environment Michigan for protection.

We are actively working to ensure Michigan’s wild heritage is preserved for future generations by permanently protecting pieces of Tahquamenon Falls, Warren Dunes, Ludington Dunes and Carney Fen from oil and gas drilling, mining and logging. We’ll be meeting with officials and helping to organize local citizens to protect the areas that they care about.

No Michigander wants to see our favorite places given away. These pristine areas are what define Michigan’s natural legacy and that’s why they deserve the highest level of protection.
On the 35th anniversary of the Clean Water Act’s passage, we released our “Troubled Waters” report. The report exposes facilities that exceeded their Clean Water Act permits during 2005 (the most recent year for which data is available).

By revealing the type of pollutants that industrial facilities are discharging into our waterways and the extent to which these facilities are exceeding their permit levels, we wanted to shine a spotlight on the troubled state of our waterways.

The goals of the 1972 Clean Water Act were to eliminate the discharge of pollutants into waterways and make all U.S. waters swimmable and fishable. But the report showed that 94 facilities statewide violated Clean Water Act permits 488 times in 2005.

Rep. James Oberstar (Minn.) joined our federal clean water advocate, Christy Leavitt, at the Washington, D.C., release of the report. Rep. Oberstar is the chairman of the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, the committee that will pass our bill to the full House of Representatives.

A long-time champion for clean water, Rep. Oberstar said, “We are at a turning point in history, and our responsibility to this generation and our legacy to future generations is to advance the cause of protecting the most precious of natural resources—clean water.”

Restoring the Great Lakes
The Great Lakes Collaboration Implementation Act of 2007, a comprehensive bill that would help stop sewage contamination, prevent the introduction of invasive species, and restore wetlands, was introduced by Sens. Carl Levin (Mich.) and George Voinovich (Ohio), and U.S. Reps. Rahm Emanuel (Ill.) and Vernon J. Ehlers (Mich.). The remaining members of the Michigan delegation.

“The Great Lakes are an awe-inspiring natural and economic resource, and we have an obligation to do everything we can to ensure their long-term health,” said Sen. Levin. “The lakes face a host of ongoing challenges, including threats to water quality, contaminated sediments and the impacts of more than 180 non-native species. The time is now for an ambitious commitment of federal resources to continue to protect and restore the lakes and build for the future because waiting will only make the
The comprehensive Great Lakes restoration bill will:

• Prevent sewage contamination by assisting communities nationally with improving their wastewater infrastructure.

• Stop the introduction and spread of invasive aquatic species by enacting a comprehensive national program.

• Prevent the Asian carp from entering the Great Lakes by authorizing the last line of defense against the fish—an electric barrier on the Chicago Sanitary and Ship Canal.

• Restore fish and wildlife and their habitat.

• Clean up contaminated sediment.

Environment Michigan is excited to continue working with the Michigan Delegation and the Healthy Lakes, Healthy Lives Coalition to ensure that we properly restore and protect the Great Lakes for future generations.

Protecting all of our waterways

Promising to restore protections stripped from thousands of miles of small streams and hundreds of acres of wetlands in Michigan, at least 158 members of Congress have endorsed the Clean Water Restoration Act in recent months.

Over the past five years, the Bush administration and the U.S. Supreme Court have chipped away at protections for our waterways, especially smaller streams and wetlands, by defying years of precedent and narrowly defining the Clean Water Act.

So far, Reps. John Conyers (Dearborn), John Dingell (Ann Arbor), Vernon Ehlers (Grand Rapids), Dale Kildee (Flint), Carolyn Kilpatrick (Grosse Pointe), Sander Levin (Warren) and Bart Stupak (Marquette) have co-sponsored legislation that would overturn what we call the Bush administration’s “No Protection” policy.

“Failing to protect the small streams, ponds and wetlands that feed the Great Lakes is simply foolhardy,” said Environment Michigan’s Abby Rubley. “Whatever goes in the stream ends up in the river. Pave over the wetlands and you lose the wetlands’ ability to filter pollutants before they reach larger waterways.”

Recently, the Great Lakes faced a new threat from one of the world’s largest corporations: BP. Despite BP’s marketing on its environmental reputation, the company sought—and was granted—permission to increase its dumping to 1,500 pounds of ammonia and nearly 5,000 pounds of sludge particles daily from its Whiting, Indiana refinery into Lake Michigan.

Not only would BP’s increased ammonia feed fish-killing algae blooms and its increase in toxics-containing sludge particles put more children’s health at risk, but the permit also set the dangerous precedent of being the first in years to allow an industrial discharger to increase toxic pollution into Lake Michigan.

In response, Environment Michigan and its affiliates helped organize what the Associated Press called a “firestorm” of public and political outrage. And on Aug. 23, BP publicly pledged to avoid the pollution increases allowed in its new permit.

▲ The Whiting, Indiana refinery where BP wanted to increase their dumping.
Renewing Michigan and America with clean energy

Calling for clean energy in Lansing
At the State Capitol, citizens, lawmakers and auto industry insiders stood with Environment Michigan’s policy staff and canvass team and declared: “now is the time for a strong, clean energy policy!” We didn’t have to wait long for the first action.

Standing with Sen. Jim Barcia (Bay City), Rep. Terry Brown (Cass City), and former Auto Executive Frank Zaski, Environment Michigan delivered more than 8,600 public comments to House Speaker Andy Dillon calling for immediate action on clean energy policy. Zaski presented a petition signed by more than 300 auto industry insiders who want lawmakers to harness our state’s manufacturing strengths and develop a clean energy industry in Michigan.

This call to action resulted from Environment Michigan’s more than 100,000 conversations with Michiganders about clean energy. Citizens, faith-based organizations, public health advocates, businesses, consumer organizations and conservation groups have joined us in calling for the Legislature to adopt clean energy policies. Because Michigan has an opportunity to leverage its industrial might and become a global alternative energy epicenter, more than 55 lawmakers have sponsored strong clean energy bills already this session.

In June, House leadership announced a clean energy package and took the first step in moving Michigan toward a better energy future. The Energy and Technology Chairman Frank Accavitti (Eastpointe) and House Speaker Andy Dillon (Redford Twp.) announced a plan that would call for a renewable energy goal of 25 percent by 2025 and 10 percent by 2015, which would allow Michigan to begin to break the grip that fossil fuels and nuclear power have on our state.

“Twenty-four states have a Renewable Energy Standard and over thirty have utility energy efficiency programs. Michigan has neither and is missing out on the potential for thousands of jobs and billions in investments,” said Kim Pargoff, energy advocate for Environment Michigan. “However, decision-makers are beginning to see that Michigan must lead the way, not stand in the way of clean energy development that will grow our economy, improve our air quality and protect the Great Lakes.”

Calling for clean energy in Washington
At the end of the year we had some
Clean, homegrown energy sources such as wind could meet Michigan’s energy needs without pollution or reliance on imported fossil fuels.

Environment Michigan applauded members of our state’s congressional delegation for their role in the Dec. 6 U.S. House vote on clean energy legislation. The bill would have required utilities to get 15 percent of their energy from clean, renewable sources and raised the gas mileage standards to 35 miles per gallon. We backed both steps, most notably by building support to make sure the 15 percent renewable energy standard stayed in the final bill.

Unfortunately, in the face of veto threats from the White House and powerful opposition from oil and coal interests, the Senate pulled the plug on the renewable standard. But the president signed into law new gas mileage standards that will mean that cars get an average of 35 miles per gallon by 2030.

We’ll be working to get Michigan’s delegation behind the renewable energy standard in future energy bills.
Despite the many benefits national forests provide, historically, their value has been measured solely by the timber products they produce. Through subsidies to the timber industry and road construction at taxpayers’ expense, the Forest Service has sold timber from national forest land to timber companies at such a low price that the agency loses millions of dollars each year.

In the short term, the timber companies, mining companies, and energy companies stand to benefit from attacks on protections for roadless forests, making millions at taxpayers’ expense. However, it is the long-term losses to the American public that we need to consider.

Our national forests protect clean water, preserve undisturbed wildlife habitat, and provide backcountry recreational opportunities for millions of Americans. Unfortunately, only a fraction of these forests remains undisturbed by extractive industries: 16,000 miles of roads already traverse their acreage.

In 2001, our staff and their allies won a remarkable victory with the enactment of the Roadless Area Conservation Rule, which placed 56 million acres of pristine forest land off-limits to road-building, mining, and virtually all logging. Unfortunately, the Bush administration stripped away this vital protection in an effort to give away these pristine forests to the timber industry and other powerful special interests.

Fortunately, a federal court decision by Judge Elizabeth LaPorte blocked the Bush administration’s efforts and reinstated the protections established by the 2001 Roadless Rule.

Roadless areas in dollars and cents
Michigan’s national forests provide the state with valuable revenue.

Our September report, “Worth More Wild: The Value of Michigan’s Roadless National Forests,” catalogued the many ways that roadless areas are worth more than the logs they could become. The report lays out the case for protecting roadless areas from logging, drilling and mining—not only for their natural beauty and intangible benefits, but for the actual dollar value these places represent. Lodging and rentals, drinking water and wildlife-watching are among the many revenue-generating activities that annually bring $4.1 billion to Michigan.
Environment Michigan Supporters

Citizen support is the cornerstone of Environment Michigan and the Environment Michigan Research & Policy Center. Thousands of Michigan citizens supported Environment Michigan by making membership contributions in 2007. The members listed below were particularly generous in backing the organization’s research and advocacy. Names that appear in italics denote our monthly supporters. These members provide stability to the organization’s resources through our monthly giving program.

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Development Committee members supported the organization with contributions of $1,000 or more.

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Foundation Support
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