



A great effort to protect the Great Lakes

Advocates build support to safeguard our waters

This summer, Environment Michigan made protecting the Great Lakes its top priority campaign. Comprising 90 percent of the fresh surface water of North America, the Lakes are the lifeblood of our ecology, economy and way of life.

But the Great Lakes depend on countless streams and wetlands that provide clean water and habitat for fish and wildlife. Unfortunately, nearly half of the streams and 1 million acres of wetlands in Michigan are now at risk from development and pollution because the Bush administration and the courts have begun excluding these waters from protection under the Clean Water Act.

Restoring protection to our waterways

To reverse this “no protection” policy, Environment Michigan is working to pass the Clean Water Restoration Act—a bill in Congress that would protect all waters in the Great Lakes ecosystem. And our sister organizations in other Great Lakes states are doing the same.

“The Great Lakes can only be as healthy as the streams and wetlands that feed them,” said Christy Leavitt, federal clean water advocate for Environment Michigan. “That’s why this law is so critical.”

So far, we’ve made important progress. The Clean Water Restoration Act has 177 co-sponsors in the House, including Reps. Dingell, Ehlers, Stupak, Kildee, Levin, Kilpatrick and Conyers, and 21 in the Senate, including Sens. Levin and Stabenow. And



▲ *The Clean Water Restoration Act would help protect some of our most pristine waterways.*

in April, the bill was heard in committees in the House and Senate.

But there’s still work to be done. Environment Michigan and our allies are making sure that uncommitted lawmakers are hearing public support for Great Lakes protection. At press time, our field operation had contacted more than 100,000 citizens about the campaign. And on Capitol Hill,

our advocates had met with more than 50 members of Congress and their staff.

And, on the weekend of July 4th, Rep. Dingell joined Environment Michigan and the Huron River Watershed Council at an event near the Huron River to urge his fellow congressmen to protect the Great Lakes by passing the Clean Water Restoration Act.



more online

Links to additional content are posted at: www.EnvironmentMichigan.org/newsletters/fall08.

Visit our Web site for the latest news on our efforts to pass the Clean Water Restoration Act.



To our members

By the time you read this, the election will be just around the corner. I don't know about you, but I'm excited. Despite the candidates' attacks and counterattacks, there's real hope for change—just in time, as we're facing enormous environmental challenges.

After our own review and careful consideration, we endorsed Sen. Barack Obama for president, due in large part to his commitment to a clean energy plan that can solve global warming. We're working to register, persuade and turn out enough voters to make the difference on Election Day.

As Nov. 4 nears and you make your own final decisions, we hope you consider our endorsement. We believe that an Obama administration offers all of us our best opportunity to build upon the progress we've made together for our environment.

Thanks again for your support.

Sincerely,

Rob Sargent
For Environment Michigan

Recent action

Senate Republicans block global warming bill

On June 6, the Senate voted 48-36 to move forward on the Boxer-Lieberman-Warner Climate Security Act, falling short of the necessary 60-vote threshold and ending consideration of the global warming bill before it was able to come to a vote. Environment Michigan and our allies had been working over the past year to strengthen key provisions in the bill. In the end, what could have been a solid first step toward a comprehensive global warming bill failed to overcome opposition from powerful polluting industries.

The Senate Republican leadership, backed by their special interest allies and a presidential veto threat, used procedural maneuvers to obstruct the bill, including forcing Senate clerks to read aloud every word of the 492-page bill.

After the vote, Environment Michigan's Global Warming Program Director Emily Figdor told the media, "Faced with an urgent problem that demands action, the Senate passed the buck. Next time around, the polluters and their allies in Congress won't get off so easy."

Michigan Senate drops the ball on energy bill

In July, the State Senate passed a bill that marks a serious setback to our participation in America's new clean energy economy. The Senate's new energy bill fails to provide support for renewable energy or energy efficiency; it will also make it easier for utilities to build new coal and nuclear plants in Michigan.

"By creating loopholes that allow energy companies to sidestep clean energy development in favor of more dirty and dangerous coal and nuclear power, the senators who voted for this bill have done a serious disservice to Michigan's environment and economy," said Environment Michigan's Rob Sargent.

"We hope that House and Senate leaders can work together to restore integrity to this bill," said Sargent. "If not, they should go back to the drawing board."

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▲ The Senate's energy bill will pave the way for more nuclear and coal power plants in Michigan. Above, Enrico Fermi Nuclear Power Plant, near Monroe.

Grand Canyon National Park wins mining reprieve

On June 25, in a move initiated by Rep. Raul Grijalva (Ariz.), the House Natural Resources Committee ordered the Bush administration to halt new mining activity on 1 million acres surrounding Grand Canyon National Park, a victory for Environment Michigan's campaign to protect the Grand Canyon from toxic mining.

From its jagged red cliffs to the winding Colorado River, the Grand Canyon stands as one of America's most prized natural treasures. Unfortunately, the Grand Canyon is facing a growing threat from mining pollution. As the price of gold and uranium has climbed, mining companies have dramatically expanded their plans to drill near the Canyon.

Hardrock mining—used to gather gold and uranium—uses highly toxic chemicals, such as cyanide, which pollute the ground and water surrounding a mine. Mining within five miles of the national park would destroy the scenic views, water quality and priceless wildlife habitat that hundreds of thousands of park visitors enjoy every year.

Claims within five miles of Grand Canyon National Park exploded from just 10 claims in January 2003, to 1,130 in 2008, according to Bureau of Land Management records. Several companies, such as Vane Minerals, had planned to move forward with mining for uranium just three miles from the border of the park.

Eleventh hour protection

As the corporate land grab snowballed, threatening to permanently damage the Grand Canyon, Environment Michigan and our allies looked for a way to put on the brakes.

We found it in a little-known provision that allows the House of Representatives' Committee on Natural Resources, in an emergency situation, to compel the Secretary of the Interior to stop new mining claims in a specific area for up to three years.

Unfortunately, the emergency resolution is only a temporary fix. Comprehensive mining reform is needed to protect the Grand Canyon and all of our national parks. Currently, the Mining Law of 1872 governs all hardrock mining on public lands. The 136-year-old law requires no environmental reviews, views mining as the single best use of public lands, and gives mining companies rights to mine the land for pennies on the dollar.

Pushing past the mining industry

In December 2007, the House passed an Environment Michigan-supported mining bill that would protect lands near national parks from mining waste. But it has proved tougher going in the Senate, where the mining industry holds enormous clout with key legislators.

To overcome mining industry influence, Environment Michigan—together with our allies from Environment America, our national federation—ramped up its field campaign. In the past several months, we've helped to build a coalition of more than 160 groups, generated media in 13 states, and collected thousands of petition signatures asking Congress to permanently protect the Grand Canyon and all of our national parks.



news

Report cites dangers of drilling

According to a new report from Environment Michigan, "Drilling Our Conservation Heritage," new oil drilling operations pose a serious threat to our public lands. Read the full report online.



Gas mileage standards too low, too slow

As prices at the pump hit previously unimaginable highs this summer Environment Michigan championed policies that would reduce America's dependence on oil and chart a course for a cleaner, smarter energy future. But President Bush and Senate Republican leadership dragged their feet on new mileage standards, pushing for more offshore drilling instead of more investment in clean energy.

In December 2007, Congress passed Environment Michigan-backed increases in gas mileage. The law requires the Bush administration's National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) to set "the highest gas mileage standard technologically and economically feasible." In June of this year, NHTSA Administrator Nicole Nason proposed the slowest and lowest standard allowed under the law—35 mpg by 2020.

"Administrator Nason's explanation is that people don't want cars that get better gas mileage," said Energy Program Director Rob Sargent. "But the agency's calculations are based on the notion that gas costs \$2.32 a gallon and Americans aren't concerned about our dependence on oil!"

Environment Michigan called on NHTSA to conduct public hearings to listen to citizens' concerns about dependence on oil, global warming, and the high price at the pump. In June, Energy Advocate Ben Schrieber delivered thousands of public comments on the proposal to NHTSA.



For the latest news on our campaign to bring more fuel-efficient vehicles to Michigan, visit our Web site: www.EnvironmentMichigan.org.



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Environment Michigan

Mission Statement

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 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.

Credits

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Victory for the Upper Peninsula

In June, the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) approved a resolution to designate Carney Fen as a Natural Area—permanently protecting 2,326 acres of forest and marsh in the Upper Peninsula. The decision caps a longstanding effort by Environment Michigan and our allies to protect the area from logging and encroaching development.

Located in Escanaba State Forest, Carney Fen features 24 species of orchids, as well as opportunities for hunting, hiking and enjoying the beauty of the U.P.

Environment Michigan is now calling on the DNR to protect other pristine areas under the state's 1972 Wilderness and Natural Areas Act—including Tahquamenon Falls, Lake Superior State Forest and Wilderness State Park.



Environment Michigan is working to protect some of our most treasured places, such as Tahquamenon Falls, under the state's Wilderness and Natural Areas Act.

Read more online at:
www.EnvironmentMichigan.org.