



## ENVIRONMENT MICHIGAN Your Winter Report

# A chance to restore our environment

*Wendy Wendlandt, acting president of our national partner Environment America, talks about what we've lost under the Trump administration—and how to get it back.*

Under the new Biden-Harris administration, we're eager to get back to the work of building a better world, instead of fighting to fend off backsliding. And we're looking forward to a president who will engage in that campaign with us.

Yet we also need to repair the damage done under the previous administration: undoing the Clean Power Plan; weakening fuel economy efficiency standards; allowing commercial fishing in marine preserves; lifting a ban on oil drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. The list includes at least 100 protections for the environment that the Trump administration either ended or worked to undermine. Reading through the list is like flipping through a scrapbook of favorite photographs—which someone has defaced with a Sharpie.

Thousands of Americans—advocates, attorneys, biologists, epidemiologists, engineers, socially conscious entrepreneurs, elected leaders, government regulators, organizers and, last but not least, ordinary citizens with extraordinary spirit and perseverance—have worked together to put these protections in place, abide by them, and defend them.

A couple of examples: Together, over many years, our national network's clean air advocates and climate activists helped fight for and win laws requiring cleaner cars in more than a dozen states, one hard-won campaign after another. Then we



*We rallied to the defense of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge and the wildlife—including caribou—that live there.*

promoted and won increased fuel economy standards to match those state laws at the federal level.

For a second example, in the years before online petitions, we collected a million actual signatures from Americans who wanted to keep still-wild areas in our national forests protected from mining, drilling and logging, and convinced then-President Clinton to adopt the Roadless Rule.

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Thanks  
for making it  
all possible

## 'The Fierce Urgency of Fire': Environment America Research & Policy Center hosts webinar on vital climate actions

If you're worried about extreme weather events, you're certainly not alone.

On Sept. 22, our national research partner, Environment America Research & Policy Center, hosted a webinar called "The Fierce Urgency of Fire" to discuss how wildfires,

commitment as part of Michigan's Healthy Climate Plan, signing an executive order and a companion executive directive that, together, include interim emissions reduction goals, carbon-neutral building and renovation mandates for state-owned buildings, and a decrease in government facilities' greenhouse gas emissions from electricity.

"This new goal will not only drive Michigan toward a cleaner, healthier future, but we also hope it will encourage governors and legislators in neighboring states to jump on the bandwagon," said Environment Michigan State Director Nathan Murphy.

Environment Michigan will continue to advocate for policies that will put the state on track to achieve 100 percent renewable energy.

## Environment Michigan joins lawsuit challenging the Trump administration's push to drill in Arctic National Wildlife Refuge

One of the Trump administration's last actions could end up spoiling one of America's last great wild places. We took action to save it.

On Aug. 24, Environment Michigan, a coalition of environmental organizations, and the Gwich'in Steering Committee sued the administration over its plans to begin an oil and gas leasing program in Alaska's Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. Home to polar bears, wolves, herds of caribou and more than 200 species of migratory birds, the refuge has been in the crosshairs of fossil fuel companies for decades.

"Not only will the Trump administration's slapdash and tragic plan threaten one of the world's most untamed wildlife areas, but it is also completely blind to the reality that, in 2020, dangerously extracting more fossil fuels from the ground is a fool's errand when clean, renewable energy options are rapidly on the rise," said Steve Blackledge, senior director for our national network's Conservation Program.

The suit alleges that the government's decision violates several federal statutes, including the National Environmental Policy Act and the Endangered Species Act.

Get more updates on our work online at <http://environmentmichigan.org>.

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The sky in parts of California and Oregon turned orange in September due to the nearby wildfires.

hurricanes and other extreme weather events underscore the urgent need for climate action. More than 100 people watched the presentation.

"Any time that you're faced with a huge problem, like how do we break our country and our planet's addiction to fossil fuels and decouple everything from that, it's a massive undertaking," said Johanna Neumann, senior director of our national network's Campaign for 100% Renewable Energy.

"Let's make bold steps on solar, let's make bold steps on wind, secure that progress and then do it again.

## Michigan commits to carbon neutrality by 2050

Across the country, state leaders have taken bold climate action—and now, Michigan falls among the ranks of states leading the charge on climate.

On Sept. 23, Gov. Gretchen Whitmer announced that she was committing Michigan to a 100 percent carbon-neutral economy by 2050. Gov. Whitmer announced the





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Those snapshots of environmental progress belong to all Americans.

In debates about water, air, land use, open spaces and oceans, Environment Michigan and our national network have researched problems and constructed solutions, taken our campaigns to the American people, collected public comments, and led groups of citizen lobbyists to Washington, D.C. We've lost more battles than we've won. But over the years, up against legions of well-funded lobbyists, we've beaten a lot of odds and notched some crucial victories for the environment.

Why? Because, like most Americans, we could see that America the Beautiful was in danger of becoming less open, more covered with asphalt, more polluted, more barren of animal life, more dependent on dirty fossil fuels and life-threatening chemicals, more overrun by the waste that those materials produce, and more bereft of wonder. And we could see, with our own eyes, glimpses of

the dire future that lies ahead if we do not act immediately to curtail global warming.

From the first days of the Trump administration, the president sought to un-protect the American environment—to throw the nation into reverse when it comes to the quality and sustainability of our land, water, air, oceans and open spaces. Making cars cleaner, preserving wilderness, and dozens of other important ways we've collectively protected our environment—and our children—were unravelled by the administration in four years.

Whether it's in the courts, in Congress or in the executive branch, we are resolved to restore these protections.

We've got a scrapbook with a lot of pages left to fill.

*By Wendy Wendlandt, acting president, Environment America*

*From sea to shining sea, there are so many special places Americans love—and over the past four years, far too many were threatened by actions the Trump administration took.*



Image contributions from activists with our national network



Kimball Nelson

Thank you for supporting and sustaining our work—still done at a safe social distance—to keep our air and water clean, to defend our public lands, and to protect our climate and environment for future generations.

Your action and support allows us to keep up the work you'll read about in these pages. Thank you for standing with us.



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## Your Winter Report

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### 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, Inc., a project of Environment America, Inc. 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.

## Polluting companies quick to exploit Trump administration's 'Dirty Water Rule'

Companies have been asking the government whether waterways they'd like to pollute or pave over are still protected under the Clean Water Act. In short, the answer is "no."

On Sept. 10, a report from Bloomberg Law found that polluting businesses are taking advantage of the Trump administration's "Dirty Water Rule" to gain federal exemptions for their destruction of our nation's

streams and wetlands. In effect since June, the rule has narrowed federal protection of water bodies under the Clean Water Act, and companies have won rulings that no federal protection applies for 758 out of 1,085 waterways examined by federal officials—including, more recently, much of Georgia's wildlife-rich Okefenokee Swamp.

"Wetlands and streams are crucial to the health of our iconic waters—from the Okefenokee to the Puget Sound," said John Rumpfer, senior director of our national network's Clean Water for America Campaign. "Yet the Dirty Water Rule wiped out protections for countless streams and wetlands—a move that was rebuked by the Environmental Protection Agency's own science advisors."

Environment Michigan is working to overturn the Dirty Water Rule in Congress and the courts.

*A White Heron in Okefenokee Swamp.*

