MICHIGAN ENVIRONMENTAL COUNCIL

2012 ANNUAL REPORT
There is a saying at the Capitol, “If you’re not at the table, you’re on the menu.” Your generous support helps ensure that MEC is not the entrée du jour!

We are at the table engaged on a wide range of topics like energy, public lands, conservation, water, transportation, health, and planning for Detroit’s future. MEC works to ensure that the perspective and knowledge of our staff and our dozens of member organizations are heard by the legislature, the governor, and his administration.

MEC staff members serve on numerous official stakeholder groups and blue ribbon committees. We are a convener of groups, facilitating and hosting coalition meetings at our new home blocks from the Capitol. We research and write policy papers, op-ed pieces for the media, official testimony at legislative hearings and background primers for allies and member groups. We amplify those voices through social media like Facebook and Twitter and on our policy analysis blog, Michigan Distilled.

Not all of our work is sexy or makes headlines, but it is still vitally important. The Office of Regulatory Reform invited MEC to be the only environmental group at the table as they reviewed over 3,800 regulations. The final product reflected many of MEC’s suggestions.

Our issues are your issues, including:

Water

Because we are surrounded by 18 percent of the planet’s fresh surface water, the Great Lakes are always at the top of our agenda, and 2012 was no exception. We pursued policies to slow algae blooms in Lake Erie, prevent beach closing around the state, protect our world-class cold water streams, and stop the threat of invasive species. MEC worked hard, including personally lobbying the governor for the reinstatement of the Water Use Advisory Council—a stakeholder group to help improve Michigan’s award winning water withdrawal assessment tool. MEC continued its work on the discharge permit for the Detroit wastewater treatment plant, a significant source of nutrient loading into the Detroit River.

Energy

Our push for cleaner, more stable energy solutions in Michigan culminated with November’s Proposal 3 ballot issue that would have required 25% renewable electricity by 2025. Although it lost at the polls, it laid the groundwork for future improvements to Michigan’s energy portfolio. MEC was heavily involved in policy research evaluating both the cost of increasing our clean energy standard and the job creation potential of a stronger standard. We presented at numerous public meetings and hosted our own meetings on the ballot issue. Even in the wake of its defeat, support for more clean energy in Michigan remains high (over 60%) and the governor expressed support for increasing Michigan’s energy efficiency and clean energy standards.

Natural Resources

We continued to work on the disconnect between the Pure Michigan promotional ads and the legislative agenda on key conservation issues. Forty years ago, Michigan was a leader in conservation, making possible the very things Pure Michigan markets today. Many of the laws that protect our natural resources were under attack from short-sighted special interests in 2012, and MEC was on the front lines of those fights. We worked to...
minimize the damage from legislation that eroded protections for our critical sand dunes, and a bill that attempted to end the state acquisition of more public lands. MEC’s Brad Garmon was appointed to the Governor’s Blue Ribbon Committee on the future of our state parks, and to the Pigeon River Advisory Council which advises the DNR on plans, programs and activities within the 118,000 acres that make up the Pigeon River Country, also known as the “Big Wild.”

**Transportation**

The crown jewel of our transportation work was passage of legislation establishing a regional transit authority (RTA) in Southeast Michigan. It came after 25 failed attempts (a couple of them sponsored by me during my six years in the Legislature!) spanning several decades. The RTA lays the groundwork for a more reliable, convenient and affordable system of public transportation. MEC played an intimate role in getting the legislation passed. It has been a top transportation priority for southeast Michigan for decades.

**Health**

MEC continues to be engaged in key health policy issues including asthma, obesity, and lead poisoning prevention. In 2012, MEC was principally responsible for getting a $1 million appropriation in the community health budget for lead prevention programs. The victory was short-lived when the governor vetoed the appropriation due to the source of funding. Nevertheless, this was the first time in years that progress had been made in this area. Next budget, we aim to get the appropriation signed into law.

**Detroit**

Our efforts in Detroit focused on health, environmental justice, recycling and engaging the community in planning the city’s future. The Detroit Works Project, after a faulty start, developed a more grassroots, community-led conversation for input by Detroit residents. MEC’s Sandra Turner-Handy was chosen to be one of the community leaders to gather this input.

Your generous support provided the necessary resources to do our work. Without you there would be no MEC and our issues would be on the menu! Please feel free to drop in at our new home in Lansing!

Sincerely,

Chris Kolb
Introduction

The Michigan Environmental Council was on the move — figuratively and literally!

Figuratively, we moved forward on dozens of key policy fronts in 2012—building a case for stronger clean energy standards, standing firm on protections for Michigan’s freshwater resources and helping secure passage of a Southeast Michigan Regional Transit Authority. There was lots more, detailed in this report. There were numerous victories. Lots of draws. And a few losses.

The work MEC does is forged in the trenches of policy creation where politics, science and personalities collide in a messy and often irrational tangle of competing interests. It’s not easy to explain. We can’t show you acreage protected like a land conservancy might. We can’t tally up new members like grassroots groups. But we can give you a good idea of the pulse of the Capitol and find the pressure points to apply our resources for maximum leverage. It’s what we have specialized in for more than three decades, and we love it!

Our “moves” were more than figurative this year. We literally moved ourselves—settling into new offices in the historic Morgan B. Hungerford House at the corner of Ionia and Pine streets. We are now only blocks from the State Capitol and close to key legislative and agency offices. It is a significant first for MEC, which has operated from kitchen tables, shared facilities and rented office space since 1980.

The 602 W. Ionia building has conference space to host meetings of member organizations, allies and other partners who need friendly convenient facilities in Michigan's Capital City. We’re making it more energy efficient, working to achieve LEED certification for Existing Buildings Operations and Maintenance, and spreading the word that MEC is a hub for the environmental community and a home away from home for our far-flung member organizations.

The goal is to use the new home as a catalyst to strengthen MEC’s influence at the State Capitol, in legislative offices and in workgroups and advisory bodies that shape the state’s environmental laws and policies.

We’ve been doing that since 1980, and we continue to prowl the legislative and agency corridors each and every workday in pursuit of smart environmental policy. We’re just hitting our stride, and we’re glad you’re here with us!
A veteran MEC staffer once explained to a newbie how the legislative process often works: “We start out supporting or opposing some bill. Then we get amendments proposed to make it better—or at least not as bad. And every other interest is doing the same thing. And it’s chaos. By the time the 22nd version of that bill is finally passed, everyone’s head is spinning. And we have to step back and ask, ‘Did we win this one? Or lose?’ And sometimes there’s really no easy answer to that question.”

The next day, we wake up and start over again. Such is the work at the Michigan Environmental Council, where tallying wins and losses is not always a zero-sum game. It’s a place where defeat is never permanent and victory is never absolute. Where you keep your friends close and your opponents closer.

**Policy Wins**

There are victories though. Policy wins. Incremental gains toward long-term goals. And legislation that is unequivocally good for Michigan’s natural resources, public health and quality of life. Those are the ones we celebrate by ringing the bronze bell that hangs in MEC’s office. We call them bell ringers. And here are some of the highlights from 2012’s winning season:

- Legislation creating a Regional Transit Authority for Southeast Michigan was passed and signed into law late in the year. The Authority opens the door for reliable public transportation systems in Detroit—the largest metropolitan area in the nation without coordinated and reliable transit. The victory came after decades of failed attempts, including two-dozen stalled legislative initiatives. MEC and the Transportation for Michigan (Trans4M) coalition were key partners in advocating for the Authority.
- The price of renewable energy in Michigan continued to drop, validating the 2008 “10% by 2015” clean energy law and creating momentum for stronger standards after 2015. The Michigan Public Service Commission reported that the 2012 cost for renewable electricity was “significantly lower in price” than coal and that efficiency programs saved ratepayers $3.55 for every $1 invested.
- Building on the Complete Streets law passed in 2008, the state’s Transportation Commission in 2012 approved a strong policy requiring that all roadway users—not just motor vehicles—be considered when building or rebuilding roads under state jurisdiction. It was a victory for cyclists, pedestrians, wheelchair users and others who will find less daunting barriers to their travels in the future.
- Speeds on Amtrak’s Detroit-to-Chicago line hit 110 mph on some stretches of track in 2012, the result of improvements championed by MEC and many others who helped get state matching grant money that led to the upgrades. Amtrak reported record ridership nationally and on several Michigan routes in 2012.
- Defense paid off when 2012 legislation that would have scuttled Michigan’s ban on yard waste in landfills died. The bill would have bankrupted composting operations, increased the growth of landfills and torpedoed an industry that provides nutrient-rich, Michigan-made products valued by landscapers and gardeners statewide.
- Governor Rick Snyder reinstated the long-dormant Water Resource Advisory Council—a public oversight body to make recommendations on water use in Michigan. MEC and others had long advocated for the Council. Late in 2012, MEC was named a member of the reconstituted Council.
A stunning legislative victory decades in the making capped MEC’s transportation policy work in 2012. The Southeast Michigan Regional Transit Authority (RTA) was created through bipartisan legislation championed by MEC and the Transportation for Michigan coalition (Trans4M), of which MEC is a founding member.

For years MEC—undaunted in the face of multiple defeats—continued to work for passage of the authority as a vehicle to support strong local economies, provide options for residents of all socio-economic strata, and to reduce congestion and pollution. The RTA is a vital step to ensure greater efficiency and effectiveness for the region’s beleaguered transit service, improve management of resources, and eventually expand services. Those goals are key to restoring vitality in Southeast Michigan—the largest metropolitan area in the nation without reliable, coordinated public transit.

It took several decades and more than 20 derailed legislative attempts to pass the RTA. The success lays the foundation for a modern system that knits together the suburbs and city and links to neighboring communities and other regions and states.

The RTA issue played to MEC’s unique strengths—persistence, coalition building and a “long view” of public policy that remains undaunted in the face of multiple setbacks. Pulling together advocates, policy leaders, the business community, environmentalists, local government leaders and the disability community among others, MEC through Trans4M was able to finally make a case compelling enough to draw bipartisan support and the signature of Governor Rick Snyder.

**Complete Streets**

MEC also played an essential role in the State Transportation Commission’s approval of a Complete Streets policy that will require state road planners to consider the needs of all travelers—not solely motorists—when designing or upgrading state-managed streets and highways.

Complete Streets are streets that safely serve all legal users of the roadway, from trucks, cars and buses to bicyclists and pedestrians, regardless of age or ability.
MEC and our allies met with Michigan Department of Transportation officials, generated record numbers of public comments, and submitted a strong draft Complete Streets policy which the Transportation Commission approved.

The state policy affects 10,000 miles of state-managed roadway—out of 120,000 in Michigan. MEC continues to work with local and regional partners to encourage local Complete Streets ordinances that complement the state policy. More than 80 local governments have adopted such policies or guidelines.

**Engaging the Public**

The year 2012 also saw MEC continue to make significant progress on engaging the public in transportation policy:

- The Transportation Odyssey made a three-day journey across the state using seven different public transportation providers and holding public forums in four different cities. Policy advocates and supporters undertook the Odyssey. It highlighted the many positive transportation developments including enhanced speed passenger rail, voter-approved transportation improvements in Grand Rapids and momentum around a regional transit authority for Southeast Michigan. It was the second year for the Odyssey.

- Through Trans4M, we hosted a series of 18 community listening sessions across the state. Hundreds of residents from Detroit to Houghton told planners what transportation improvements would be most valuable to them and their communities. Significantly more, and better connected, public transportation, increased bike and recreational trails, and safe roadways for all users topped the list. We continue to utilize these comments during discussions with Michigan’s legislators and state policymakers.
Working inside and outside games for clean, affordable energy

From helping craft the statewide “25x25” renewable energy ballot initiative to representing residential ratepayers’ interests at the Michigan Public Service Commission, MEC continued to advocate for strong policy reforms and sensible energy choices in 2012. The goal: A cleaner, affordable and more resilient suite of energy generation options for Michiganders.

MEC worked a two-pronged strategy—engaging the public with an ‘outside’ effort of education and advocacy while simultaneously engaging with ‘insiders’ including the governor’s staff, state legislators and energy regulators.

The outside game involved much of our work on the two broad fronts of clean energy—renewable energy and energy efficiency.

Prop 3 Advocacy
The most visible effort was our key role in working to pass Proposal 3, the renewable energy ballot initiative that would have required utilities to generate 25 percent of their electricity from renewable sources by 2025.

MEC was involved in language drafting, research and advocacy for the campaign, including:

- Coordinating and publicizing two important studies in support of the campaign: (1) a Michigan State University study on projected job creation from Prop 3 and (2) a professional cost analysis showing that renewable energy is less expensive than conventional options including coal.
- Presenting and facilitating discussions on the proposal at each of five MEC regional member meetings.
- Traveling and presenting at dozens of forums, panels, meetings and debates across the state on the issue.
- Outreach and education through media, including coordination of opinion essays in newspapers, letters to the editor and formal and informal briefings with journalists and broadcasters.
While Proposal 3 was defeated at the ballot box in November, post-election polling showed most “no” voters either were weary of a long and complicated slate of ballot issues, or objected to the constitutional change it would have required—not to the 25% target itself.

MEC is confident that the studies, data analysis and public education efforts from Proposal 3 will play a significant and positive role in future energy discussions, including those initiated by the governor in 2013.

Holding the Line
MEC had a more positive outcome in defending the state’s existing energy efficiency program from a legislative assault that would have eliminated the program. MEC worked with partners including contractors to quickly build meaningful opposition to these ill-conceived measures. State statistics showing that the program saves $3.55 in ratepayer energy costs for each $1 invested in the program helped make our case. None of the anti-efficiency bills moved forward.

MEC played an effective inside game on several other energy issues during the year:
• We continued to successfully represent residential ratepayers in Michigan Public Service Commission (MPSC) regulatory proceedings.
• MEC helped shape Governor Snyder’s post-election special message on energy and the environment. We worked with executive staff to provide useful input to the speech. The outcome was mainly good as the governor called for a lengthy fact-finding process leading to strengthened renewable energy and efficiency standards.
• MEC assisted with the Clean Energy Now anti-coal campaign. Our work mainly related to our MPSC casework—examining utility expenditures for continuing to run outdated, dirty and expensive coal plants.
• We continued to play a supportive role in MPSC’s energy optimization collaborative, which evaluates and makes recommendations on utility company energy efficiency programs and proposals.

Other efforts related to energy policy during 2012 included:
• We engaged locally through the “Lansing Can Do Better” coalition to persuade the Lansing Board of Water and Light toward more enlightened energy investments. Also, Kate Madigan led MEC efforts to engage in community energy strategy discussions in the Traverse City region.
• MEC continued to house the coordinator for the Midwestern RE-AMP network of climate and energy organizations and funders. Also MEC’s David Gard was heavily engaged in network leadership through the executive and steering committees.
• MEC assisted regional partners in connecting highly credible messengers to Michigan lawmakers. In particular, Admirals Lee Gunn (US) and Neil Morisetti (UK) testified at the State Capitol on the connection between clean energy and national security.
A healthy Michigan starts with clean air, clear water, and safe communities and neighborhoods. That is why we are heavily invested in promoting public policies that protect those assets and the well-being of all Michiganders.

In 2012 MEC continued to build relationships with health partners, state agencies, elected officials and other policymakers as part of our tireless work to protect all Michiganders—and particularly children—from environmental pollutants and other health hazards.

It is not an easy task. Increasingly divisive politics jeopardize even the most sensible health initiatives. Michigan’s children continue to be poisoned by lead, even though the affliction is entirely solvable. High obesity and chronic disease rates persist. Babies of color die in higher numbers than in many other states. And the burden of toxic pollutants falls disproportionately on those who lack the political or financial clout necessary to influence decision makers.

MEC helped change that equation last year by building strength through numbers. We took leadership positions in several key coalitions, solidified our standing as a “go-to” resource for policymakers and forged new partnerships that raised the visibility of health issues.

**Lead Poisoning Prevention**

MEC led the Safe Homes/Safe Kids: Michigan Alliance for Lead Safe Housing. We set the agenda, ran monthly coalition calls, increased our membership, created a social media presence, organized legislative visits, coordinated testimony before the House and Senate Appropriations Committees and secured $2 million dollars through the budget process to fight lead poisoning.

Although the lead funding was eventually scuttled when Governor Snyder vetoed it, the coalition ended the year stronger, more determined, and more cohesive as we worked harder than ever to educate policymakers and empower new allies.

The Alliance was aided by new scientific studies linking lead poisoning to aggression, incarceration and poor MEAP scores in Detroit. These studies hit close to home and we used them to our advantage. With federal funding cuts in 2012 reducing lead grants to local health departments and nurse case managers, we also had an influx of new recruits to our cause. We laid the foundation for a budget victory in 2013 and we remain hopeful the extra
funding we plan to receive will help many Michigan families stay or become lead free.

Tackling Childhood Obesity

MEC stepped up in 2012 by shouldering more of the workload in the Healthy Kids, Healthy Michigan Coalition (HKHM) to fight childhood obesity. HKHM has over 120 influential and dedicated members from the health and fitness communities. As a member of the HKHM Steering Committee, legislative committees, co-chair of the Healthy Food Access Team, and an active member of the Community Policy Action Team, we are truly a part of the decision-making process of this coalition.

The issue is critical because obesity hits vulnerable Michigan children hard and reduces the length and quality of their lives. Lack of access to nutritious whole foods and barriers to physical activity lead to obese kids.

During the year, our Healthy Food Access Team worked with the Michigan Department of Natural Resources to encourage healthier options in state parks. We helped bring numerous state agencies and others to the table on the issue of healthy food in parks, and we hope to get concrete vendor preference language into state park contracts.

Our Community Action Team continued work on walkable school siting plans and on increasing protection for pedestrians, cyclists and other nonmotorized roadway users.

Cleaner Air and Less Asthma

Before 2012, there was little advocacy on clean outdoor air in Michigan. State and federal funding streams had shifted much air quality work to focus on indoor air quality at the expense of clean air efforts outdoors. MEC was instrumental in getting the MI Air MI Health Coalition off the ground to help fill this void.

MEC served as temporary coalition manager, coordinated coalition meetings and calls, and was part of the hiring process for a dedicated coalition manager in 2012. The MI Air MI Health Coalition grew stronger with its own website, action alerts and a social media presence. These measures helped bring outdoor air quality, clean renewable energy, and federal Clean Air Act defense work the attention it deserves.

MEC also stepped up within the asthma community by agreeing to lead advocacy work in mid-Michigan, and by plugging the Detroit Asthma Alliance into the MI Air MI Health Coalition. After the state’s ban on smoking in restaurants was passed in 2010, many local asthma groups withered on the vine. MEC is helping rebuild capacity and push the groups to expand their mission from pharmaceutical asthma management to include clean energy policy and Clean Air Act protections.
Cradled by the world’s greatest freshwater ecosystem, Michiganders are defined by water. We rely on it for recreation; economic vitality; and healthy natural systems that sustain flora, fauna, and the health of 40 million people who draw drinking water from the Great Lakes and their connecting lakes, rivers, ponds, streams, creeks and wetlands.

More than 18 percent of the world’s fresh surface water surrounds us. It is a blessing and a unique stewardship responsibility. That’s why the Michigan Environmental Council works tirelessly to protect our state’s signature natural resource. In 2012 we helped leverage money to reduce the flow of sewage and other contaminants into the lakes, made progress in strengthening safeguards for risky natural gas operations, and worked to craft stronger pollution discharge rules for the Detroit wastewater plant.

**Improving Sewer Infrastructure**

MEC was at the table in 2012 helping to leverage stranded funding for stormwater control and green infrastructure projects.

Hundreds of millions of dollars of unspent cash from a 2002 voter-approved bond issue was languishing. The money was supposed to help upgrade sewer infrastructure and reduce the flow of sewage into waterways. MEC recognized that local communities—with budgets devastated during the recession—were unable to provide the matching dollars necessary to leverage the money. It sat idle. So we went to work.

A legislative task force crafted a new framework for the bond money—making money more readily available for communities to use for stormwater control using green infrastructure and mitigation banks for wetlands. The new guidelines also emphasized a greater reliance on asset management plans and maintenance of crucial existing infrastructure.

MEC helped secure bipartisan passage of the changes in the Michigan legislature. The work was decidedly unsexy, but exactly the kind of behind-the-scenes accomplishment MEC is known for.

**Detroit Wastewater**

The arcane permitting process for Detroit’s massive wastewater treatment plant was another venue where MEC made a positive, if unpublicized, impact on water quality last year.

Plagued with noncompliance problems over the past decade, discharges from the plant contribute to algae growth and other problems plaguing Lake Erie and other downstream waters.

MEC worked with a coalition of environmental groups from Southeast Michigan, Ohio and the region to ensure that a new discharge permit for the plant was designed to improve performance and reduce
harmful discharges into the Detroit River and downstream destinations including Lake Erie. The coalition was successful in shaping a final permit significantly more protective than its predecessor. It focuses on resolving water quality problems earlier in the process, encourages less-costly green infrastructure solutions to sewage overflows, and reduces the plant’s phosphorus discharge limits.

**Fracking Regulation**

MEC, along with partner organizations such as Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council, continued to pressure the administration to better regulate natural gas hydraulic fracturing (fracking) operations in Michigan. State regulators have adopted some of our suggestions—requiring drillers to utilize the state’s water withdrawal assessment tool and install monitoring wells between gas rigs and nearby water wells, for example.

But we kept the heat on the administration to modernize rules in light of a new era of fracking that uses more than 100 times more chemicals and groundwater than ever before. Disclosure of chemicals, closure of regulatory loopholes, and required use of tracer chemicals are among MEC’s asks.

The drumbeat for updated regulations got some traction in 2013, when legislation including many of our suggestions was introduced.

**Water Use Regulation**

In December of 2012, MDEQ Director Dan Wyant reconstituted an advisory council to oversee water use regulation in Michigan. MEC had lobbied for years to have the Water Use Advisory Council re-established to help provide both expert and citizen input into water use decisions in the state. Earlier versions of the council helped design our water use assessment process.

The advisory body serves a crucial role in making sure Michigan is using the best science available to manage the state’s signature resource. The council has established subcommittees on technical underpinnings, environmental monitoring, conservation practices, and water users committees.
Lansing power brokers were not kind to Michigan’s natural resources in 2012, chipping away at landmark laws like the Critical Dunes Act and establishing arbitrary caps on state land ownership among the most egregious assaults.

MEC and our allies threw our collective weight against these bills to no avail, although we were able to soften the blows of some legislation with successful amendments and language changes.

The setbacks are not permanent though—a lesson we’ve learned in three decades of give-and-take at the Capitol. So we continued to work behind the scenes with other like-minded leaders and policymakers to craft new blueprints, visions and guiding documents that will ground us as we renew the battles to protect Michigan’s natural assets.

We have no choice. We are inextricably connected with the land, air and water that define Michigan. Our natural resources are the backbone of our economy, identity, health and quality of life. We have a unique stewardship role to safeguard these natural assets for future generations, and we will pursue that goal with renewed vigor as we engage with a changing cast of lawmakers and other policymakers in Lansing. Some of that work in 2012 included:

Blue Ribbon Committee on State Parks and Outdoor Recreation

MEC’s Brad Garmon was appointed by Governor Rick Snyder to serve on a 16-member panel charting
a new vision for the protection and restoration of our state’s natural, recreational and cultural resources. MEC’s contributions can be found throughout the strategy, from creating a “Pure Michigan Places” program to developing Signature Parks in our major cities, to linking up with the Michigan Economic Development Corporation’s regional strategy. Along the way, we also made presentations like “The Role of the Outdoors in Talent Attraction: Economics and Ideas for Michigan’s Rural Communities” in Traverse City and pulled the Michigan Recreation and Parks Association into the movement through the “Greater & Greener: Re-Imagining Parks for 21st Century Cities” conference in New York City.

Michigan DNR Strategic Land Planning Process

Before the ill-advised bill capping state ownership of land reached the governor’s desk, MEC and our allies were able to secure key changes that eliminated some of the worst parts of the new law. Changes included the provision that makes the cap temporary while the Michigan Department of Natural Resources undertakes development of a strategic plan for a long-term vision for state land ownership. The governor picked up this point in his Special Message on the Environment in late 2012. The future development of the land plan, and its eventual presentation to and approval by the Natural Resources Commission and the state legislature, provides a great opportunity for environmental, conservation and recreation groups to engage in this conversation going forward.

Sense of Place Council Transportation Connections

MEC’s Brad Garmon served as the co-chair of the Sense of Place Council’s workgroup focused on state policy change. In that capacity, he was able to bring Smart Growth America into Michigan as a technical consultant on transportation projects with the Michigan Department of Transportation. The project ties directly back to several Sustainable Regional Communities Planning grants that MEC helped facilitate or promote through our relationships with federal partners and regional planning agencies.

During 2012, MEC also:

- Utilized our new office in downtown Lansing to host regular meetings of the Michigan Climate Coalition and joined the group’s steering committee;
- Became a steering committee member of the newly reorganized Michigan Rural Council; and
- Secured a seat on the Pigeon River Advisory Council, where we engage directly with conservation leaders, DNR staff and state and local policymakers on critical issues that impact Michigan’s “Big Wild.”

PHOTO: BRAD REED

PHOTO: TODD REED
Creating vibrant, just and workable solutions to rebuild Michigan’s biggest and most populous city was a vital part of the Michigan Environmental Council’s urban and environmental justice agenda during the year. We helped initiate a citywide dialogue on a plan to move Detroit forward; continued to work toward citywide curbside recycling; and fought for smart solutions to challenges, including lead-poisoned children, low-income utility shutoffs and urban agriculture, among others.

MEC Community Outreach Director Sandra Turner-Handy is the engine driving MEC’s work in the Motor City. She worked throughout 2012 as a process leader and outreach ambassador for the Detroit Works Project that developed recommendations for the city’s future. Those Detroit Future City recommendations were published in early 2013 with myriad environmental recommendations that will enhance living conditions, improve public health and safety, and empower Detroiters to forge their own future.

The community outreach was vital, particularly coming on the heels of earlier engagement efforts that alienated many residents. And it played uniquely to MEC’s strength as a convener of people and a clearinghouse for ideas and dialogue. The new engagement process was true and authentic, changing the dialogue from contentious to cooperative and engaging more than 160,000 residents.

MEC made progress on many other fronts in the City of Detroit during the year, including:

- Continuing our leadership role with the Zero Waste Detroit coalition. The coalition implemented an outreach and education plan to increase curbside recycling in the city, and has gained the attention of powerful state and city leaders. Governor Rick Snyder called for a substantial increase in Michigan’s recycling efforts during a speech in late 2012. The coalition is working to make Detroit the epicenter of the governor’s initiative.
- Work on the statewide Michigan Environmental Justice Coalition to develop metrics that the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality can use to measure progress in the areas of environmental justice and public participation.
- Working through the Detroit Food Policy Council to enhance urban agriculture opportunities in Detroit. The council helped develop the city’s first urban agriculture ordinance, and continues to work on food and urban farming issues that are part of a revitalized Detroit.
- Assisting the work of the Motion Coalition in Detroit, working to bring education of and awareness to childhood obesity and related issues.
Michigan’s environmental heroes often fly below the public radar. They work passionately and tirelessly for the satisfaction of preserving a special corner of their community or making incremental gains in the arena of public policy or education.

The Michigan Environmental Council decided in 2001 to begin formally recognizing the most effective and diligent defenders of Michigan’s natural resources. The goal: Put the spotlight on these extraordinary heroes. One day each year, we set aside our work and gather the environmental community to recognize two awardees and their invaluable contribution to moving Michigan forward.

In 2012 our winners made big differences, but on very different scales.

Working on stages as hallowed as the White House and as familiar as the University of Michigan campus, Rosina Bierbaum earned the Helen & William Milliken Distinguished Service Award—Michigan’s highest environmental honor.

Bierbaum did two decades of environmental policy work for Congress and the White House, including several years in the Office of Science and Technology Policy in the Executive Office of the President of the United States. In 2001 she took over the University of Michigan’s School of Natural Resources, where she helped create an interdisciplinary approach to break the disconnect between science, academia, business and the real world. She left that dean’s post in 2012.

Blair Miller, who earned the 2012 Petoskey Prize for Environmental Leadership, also made a big difference—on a smaller and more tangible scale.

Miller was the force behind the restoration of a long-forgotten stretch of public trail and greenway near Vermontville, 25 miles southwest of Lansing. With bulldog-like tenacity, Miller fought to dismantle formidable administrative and political barriers to the trail restoration and did much of the work himself. The project included restoration of a trestle spanning the Thornapple River and a connection between the local high school and downtown business district.

Past winners of the Milliken Award are Steve Hamp, Peter Stroh, Peter Wege, Marty Fluharty, Peter Karmanos, Congressman John Dingell, Congressman Vernon Ehlers, Mary C. Brown, Bunyan Bryant, Ph.D., Lana Pollack, Faye Alexander Nelson and Rebecca “Becky” Humphries.

Past winners of the Petoskey Prize are Debbie Romak, Alison & David Swan, Diane Hebert, Terry Swier, Michelle Hurd Riddick, Don A. Griffin, Lynn Henning, Carol Drake, Rusty Gates, Margaret Weber and Ken Smith.
MEC’s strength at the State Capitol flows from the breadth and diversity of its 70 member organizations throughout the state. In 2012 we welcomed three dynamic new groups to the coalition—two protectors of Michigan’s streams and lakes, and a leader in the automotive field.

The Center for Automotive Research is a nonprofit dedicated to analyzing issues related to the future of the global automotive industry. Their work includes unbiased economic and systems modeling research, development of new manufacturing methods, and advising on public policy with an eye toward building consensus among diverse groups.

The Clinton River Watershed Council aims to protect and improve the health of the Clinton River, assuring that its natural, economic, and recreational value enhances the quality of life of those who live, work, and play in the Clinton River watershed and Lake St. Clair.

The Michigan Waterfront Alliance is a unified voice for protecting Michigan’s water resources for future generations by active participation in the legislative, legal and regulatory processes.

Working together, MEC’s members and allies are a powerful voice for Michigan’s future!

Our Member Groups

OUR MEMBER GROUPS IN 2012

4 Towns Citizen Action Team
Alliance for the Great Lakes
Anglers of the Au Sable
Arab Community Center for Economic and Social Services (ACCESS)
Brownstown Land Conservancy
Center for Automotive Research – Automotive Communities Partnership
Citizens for Alternatives to Chemical Contamination
Clean Water Fund
Clinton River Watershed Council
Concerned Citizens of Acme Township
ConservAmerica
Detroit Audubon Society
Detroit RiverFront Conservancy
Dwight Lydell Chapter of the Izaak Walton League of America
East Michigan Environmental Action Council
Ecology Center
Environment Michigan Research & Policy Center
Environmentally Concerned Citizens of South Central Michigan
Friends of the Cedar River Watershed
Friends of the Detroit River
Friends of the Rouge
Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians
HARBOR Inc.
Huron River Watershed Council
Kalamazoo Environmental Council
Kalamazoo River Cleanup Coalition
Lapeer Land Conservancy
League of Michigan Bicyclists
League of Women Voters of Michigan
Legacy Land Conservancy
Liaison for Inter-Neighborhood Cooperation
LocalMotionGreen
Lone Tree Council
Michigan Association of Railroad Passengers
Michigan Audubon Society
Michigan Botanical Club
Michigan Citizens Against Toxic Substances
Michigan Citizens for Water Conservation
Michigan Coalition on the Environment and Jewish Life
Michigan Energy Options
Michigan Interfaith Power and Light
Michigan Land Trustees
Michigan Land Use Institute
Michigan League of Conservation Voters Education Fund
Michigan Mountain Biking Association
Michigan Natural Areas Council
Michigan Nature Association
Michigan Nurses Association
Michigan Organic Food and Farm Alliance
Michigan Recycling Coalition
Michigan Trails and Greenways Alliance
Michigan Trout Unlimited
Michigan Waterfront Alliance
Mid-Michigan Environmental Action Council
Midwest Energy Efficiency Alliance
Muskegon Save Our Shoreline
NAACP – Michigan State Conference
Northern Michigan Environmental Action Council
Romulus Environmentalists Care About People
Scenic Michigan
Sierra Club, Michigan Chapter
Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary
Six Rivers Regional Land Conservancy
Southeast Michigan Land Conservancy
Stewardship Network
Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council
Transportation Riders United
Upper Peninsula Environmental Coalition
Voices for Earth Justice
West Michigan Environmental Action Council
Who We Are

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Lisa Wozniak
Michigan League of Conservation Voters Education Fund

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James Clift, Policy Director

Andy Draheim, Director of Finance & Development

Elizabeth Fedorchuk, Communications Specialist

Tim Fischer, Deputy Policy Director

David Gard, Energy Program Director

Brad Garmon, Director of Conservation & Emerging Issues

Kate Madigan, Development Specialist

Hugh McDiarmid, Jr., Communications Director

Andrew McGlashen, Development Associate

Allie Muchmore, Special Projects Associate

Tina Reynolds, Health Policy Director

Sandra Turner-Handy, Community Outreach Director

AFFILIATED STAFF

Anusuya Das, RE-AMP Associate

Jeremy Emmi, Midwest RE-AMP Coordinator

Kathryn Gray, Transportation for Michigan Coordinator
Our donors: Telling MEC’s story through their trust and commitment to a better Michigan

Our financial supporters give to MEC because they care deeply about Michigan’s amazing outdoor places, our families’ health, the vitality of our communities, and the long-term resilience and beauty of the Great Lakes State.

Few, if any, contribute to MEC for recognition or credit. So why did we devote 2 of the 24 pages in this annual report to a list of our supporters? Because this document tells the story of MEC’s work in 2012, and that story would be woefully incomplete if we left out the generous individuals and businesses listed on pages 22 and 23.

They—you—make possible the work we do and the progress we made last year. Without you, there’s no story to tell—no MEC 2012 Annual Report.

We also include that list out of pride. Nothing reflects better on MEC than our donor list—its breadth and depth and the quality of the people and institutions whose names appear on it. As we look to attract new supporters to help us grow and become stronger, your endorsement carries a lot of weight. The trust you place in us by investing in MEC is a powerful statement about our value to you, and to your state.

Finally, we list every MEC donor in this report because it reminds all of us—supporters, member groups, staff, board of directors members, and everyone else who reads this report—that we’re in this together. Our donor list is a testament to the fact that many talented, connected and concerned individuals are doing their part. It gives us hope and inspires us to set our sights for Michigan’s environment even higher.

It was another successful year for MEC financially. We met our revenue goals; balanced our budget; and received a clean bill of health from our auditors. We purchased a permanent home for our organization; watched our endowment grow with the market; and maintained a strong asset balance.

All the financial numbers look good. But, in this case, the numbers don’t really tell the story. Our donor list does.
STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES
For the 12 Months Ended December 31, 2012

UNRESTRICTED OPERATIONS

REVENUE
Grant Support $2,311,080
Annual Giving $121,714
Events $108,841
Endowment Support $134,984
Great Lakes Endowment Support $7,500
MEC Action Fund Support $160,000
Member Dues $15,350
Interest and Miscellaneous $5,682
TOTAL REVENUE $2,865,151

EXPENSE
Compensation $1,205,417
Professional Fees $120,410
MEC Payments to Member Organizations $199,124
Non-Member Sub-Grant Contractors $785,717
MEC Energy Policy Passthrough $234,210
Office Expenses $179,104
Travel, Seminars and Events $120,068
TOTAL EXPENSE $2,844,050

UNRESTRICTED OPERATIONS  $21,101

EXCESS REVENUE

TEMPORARILY RESTRICTED OPERATIONS

Awarded Grant Revenue $2,197,648
Endowment Giving $1,406
Endowment Net Earnings $175,152
Action Fund Giving $0
Action Fund Net Earnings $13,403
Transfers to Unrestricted Operations -$2,329,482
TEMPORARILY RESTRICTED OPERATIONS $58,127

EXCESS REVENUE

ENVIRONMENTAL ACTION FUND ACTIVITY
February 22, 2005 through December 31, 2012

BEGINNING BALANCE $0

ADDITIONS
Transfers from MEC unrestricted net assets $0
Contributions: Cash $175,300
Contributions: Pledges $105,000
Earnings and Capital Appreciation $29,149

DEDUCTIONS
Management Fees $5,310
Transfers to support MEC unrestricted activities $252,312

ENDING BALANCE $51,827

STATEMENT OF NET ASSETS
December 31, 2012

ASSETS
Unrestricted Cash Assets $807,605
Temporarily Restricted Assets
   Cash Certificates of Deposit/Money Market $487,985
   Grants Receivable $842,500
Unrestricted Property Net Assets (Bldg & Equipment) $485,751
Endowment Net Assets at Fair Market Value $2,000,043
Action Fund Assets at Fair Market Value $51,827
Prepaid Expense $12,628
TOTAL ASSETS $4,688,339

LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS

TOTAL UNRESTRICTED LIABILITIES $833,146
Total Temporary Restricted Net Assets $1,330,485
Total Endowment Net Assets $2,000,043
Total Action Fund Net Assets $51,827
Total Unrestricted Net Assets
   Unrestricted Net Assets $284,403
   Unrestricted Property Assets $188,435
TOTAL NET ASSETS $3,855,193

TOTAL LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS $4,688,339

PERE MARQUETTE FUND ENDOWMENT ACTIVITY
December 4, 2000 through December 31, 2012

BEGINNING BALANCE $0

ADDITIONS
Transfers from MEC unrestricted net assets $300,000
Contributions: Cash $1,600,849
Contributions: Pledges $260,000
Earnings and Capital Appreciation $566,247

DEDUCTIONS
Management Fees $60,152
Transfers to support MEC unrestricted activities $666,901

ENDING BALANCE $2,000,043

PHOTO: TODD REED
THANK YOU FOR
Supporting Our Work in 2012

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Community Foundation for Southeast Michigan
Detroit Economic Growth Corporation
Ecology Center
Energy Foundation
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Fresh Energy
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Thanks to Ludington photographers Todd & Brad Reed who donated the use of cover images and many of the photographs used in this publication. These, along with many others, are featured in their new book, Tuesdays with Todd & Brad Reed: A Michigan Tribute.