

Built to Last

A blueprint for a more
resilient Michigan



Let's build a more resilient Michigan



As we dust ourselves off and nurse lingering wounds from our climb out of recession, Michigan has a rare opportunity for thoughtful reinvention.

Choices we make now will ripple through our environment and economy for decades to come. Short-term thinking will only saddle us again with a brittle economy and polluted environment.

Instead, we must consider lasting consequences. Our actions today must be guided by a positive vision and high aspirations for the Michigan our great-grandchildren will call home.

Fortunately, the long game is where the Michigan Environmental Council excels.

With the support of friends like you, MEC is convincing our political leaders to take bold steps rooted in old-fashioned principles. We are showing them how Michigan can achieve enduring prosperity through conservation and prudent use of our signature assets—unparalleled freshwater resources, breathtaking coastlines, the great north woods, and welcoming neighborhoods and downtowns.

This proposal lays out how your financial support will put our experience and clout to work building a Michigan that truly values those assets—a resilient Michigan that's harder to knock down and quicker to get up.

Like the public policies we seek, your investment in MEC will pay dividends today and down the road.



Raising Michigan's fortunes on our freshwater legacy

More than 10,000 years ago, retreating glaciers put Michigan at the center of a freshwater fortune unrivaled on the planet.

Beneath our feet lie vast reservoirs to quench our thirst and water our crops. Our Great Lakes shores, quiet lakes and gurgling streams are a powerful pull for anglers, paddlers and sun-seekers.

Our world-class waters can anchor a prosperous future. But too often in our history we have been lulled by their abundance into complacency, even abuse.

Climate change is raising the cost of repeating our mistakes. Hotter summers and longer dry spells force farmers to increase irrigation. When rain comes, it's often so intense that sewers overflow into lakes and rivers. Warming streams threaten cold water-loving fish. Lake levels drop as ice-free winters increase evaporation.

These increasingly tangible challenges compel us to act boldly today to protect our water.

**Your support will strengthen the
Michigan Environmental Council's important work
on many fronts.**

- **Water withdrawals.** We play a lead role in implementing water withdrawal regulations to prevent industrial-scale farms, gas drillers and other major users from impairing our rivers and lakes. Our success will ensure enough water is available for the rest of us, including family farmers, food processors, craft brewers and other businesses.
- **Fracking.** MEC helped achieve basic safeguards against groundwater pollution from this gas-extraction technique. Now we're pushing for stronger measures to regulate water withdrawals by fracking operations and provide communities greater transparency about chemicals used.
- **Dams.** Removing unnecessary dams helps keep rivers cool, improves fishing upstream and enhances opportunities for paddlers. MEC and allies supported a recent wave of dam removals. Your backing will help us continue this important work to restore our wild streams.
- **Pipeline safety.** The 2010 oil spill into a Kalamazoo River tributary made plain the devastation a broken oil pipeline can cause. MEC is working to hold oil and gas companies accountable for preventing similar disasters in the Straits of Mackinac and across the state.
- **Improving water infrastructure.** Inadequate sewer systems cause pollution to spill into the Great Lakes and other waterways during storms. MEC is helping stop these overflows by urging local officials to invest in modern methods to filter, capture, and treat stormwater.

Thanks to friends like you, the Michigan Environmental Council has a strong track record of achieving crucial protections for our water. With your continued support, we'll ensure that future Michiganders have no shortage of amazing lakeside weekends and lazy days on the river.

Plugging in to endless energy opportunities



It's a high-stakes moment for Michigan's energy future. Coal produces 58% of our electricity but is losing its grip. Pending federal greenhouse gas limits and the rising cost of importing fuel from distant mines are among the forces pushing coal out of Michigan's midcentury energy picture. When our utilities recently tried to replace aging coal plants with new ones, lenders and regulators balked. Too risky. Too expensive.

This opens the door for Michigan to build an energy system that can stand the test of time.

In just five years, the price of renewable energy has dropped more than 50 percent, making it our cheapest form of electricity. It's also our most stable. Because sun and wind are forever free, producers can guarantee a fixed price for electricity over the life of their equipment—20 years or more. That certainty is helpful for businesses and households.

Unfortunately, our utilities have long made their money building giant power plants and burning fossil fuels. In that vein, Consumers Energy wants to build a \$750 million natural gas-burning facility near Flint.

That would allow the company to reduce air pollution by retiring some old coal plants. But burning natural gas still contributes to climate change, drilling for it puts our water resources at risk and relying on it leaves us vulnerable to price swings over time. Gas can fill gaps in our energy system, but it shouldn't be our mainstay.

Let's not simply trade one fossil fuel for another. Let's not pass today's burdens—aging infrastructure, air pollution and volatile fuel prices—on to future generations.

Your support for MEC will help us seize two urgent opportunities to put Michigan on the right course.

State regulators will soon decide the fate of Consumers Energy's proposed natural gas plant. Our energy experts are working line by line through the company's 1000-page plan to ensure it doesn't gloss over environmental damage from fossil fuels or understate the affordability of renewable power and our ability to save more energy.

With your backing, MEC and our legal team will present the compelling case for moving fossil fuels to the margins of our energy system and bringing reliable, cost-effective clean energy front and center.

We'll take that same case to the State Capitol as policymakers contemplate Michigan's next move when current clean energy standards peak in 2015. They require 10% of our electricity to come from renewable sources and energy savings of 1% each year.

Governor Snyder agrees with us that Michigan must move beyond these standards to remain competitive. With your support, we will urge lawmakers to act decisively to plug Michigan into the endless power of sun and wind and squeeze more work out of every kilowatt.



Making the right moves for Michigan's future

Michigan's transportation system is the opposite of resilient.

We drive nearly 100 billion miles a year.

When filling up the tank gets more expensive, Michigan families struggle to reach jobs. Prices for food and other necessities creep out of reach. Visitors to our world-class vacation destinations change plans.

By expanding public transit options we can better link people to jobs, visitors to vacations and products to customers. We'll buffer our economy against rising fuel prices, support great downtowns and curb air emissions that contribute to climate change and health ailments.

Investing in transit also will make Michigan more appealing to our nation's new wave of wealth generators. Entrepreneurs and executives want rail connections that let them work while breezing between urban centers like Ann Arbor and Grand Rapids. The creative young workers they seek are drawn to dynamic communities where they don't need a car to enjoy a vibrant lifestyle.

With the support of friends like you, MEC and our allies are transforming Michigan's transportation system into a seamless, safe and reliable network of trains, buses, bike paths and roads.

Among our many recent victories, we led a successful campaign last year for approval of a regional transit authority (RTA) for Metro Detroit. It will coordinate existing transit services and bring new ones online, giving the region an integrated modern system. After 23 failed attempts over 40 years, an RTA looked unattainable. The unprecedented alliance we pulled together finally got the job done.

Having this new structure in place led federal officials to release \$25 million in grants for the M-1 Rail streetcar project in Detroit.

Such progress is encouraging, but we need your help to overcome challenges ahead.

For example, officials in Southeast Michigan recently approved two projects to widen I-94 and I-75. Their plans would increase pollution in residential areas already plagued by poor air quality and cost billions in taxpayer dollars that could be better spent fixing crumbling bridges and improving public transit options.

Expanding highways won't help the 135,000 Detroit-area households that have no motor vehicle. Without reliable public transit, it takes those families an average of more than 90 minutes to reach 72% of the area's jobs, according to the Brookings Institution. They live at the fringes of our economy.

MEC rallied stiff public opposition to the expansions, making it clear to local officials that Michiganders want more 21st century transportation options, not bigger roads. With your support, we'll continue to amplify the growing chorus calling on our leaders to keep Michigan's transportation system moving in the right direction. Top priorities include:

- **Protecting** new legislative proposals to fund public transit and blocking raids by politicians who want to use existing transit funding to build unneeded roads;
- **Adding** to our nation's-best total of 90 communities with local Complete Streets ordinances, which help ensure that road projects serve all users including pedestrians and cyclists;
- **Promoting** new public transportation services that move us conveniently around town and connect our coasts and major metro regions; and
- **Highlighting** hybrid and electric vehicle technologies and turning back attempts to heap new taxes on them.

Delivering on the Pure Michigan promise

Michigan added economic muscle in the late 19th century by cutting down pines and digging up copper.

As the ghost towns dotting northern Michigan make clear, it's not the 19th century anymore. A resilient future can't be built on boom-and-bust economics.

Fact is, timber and mineral extraction bring communities only short-term growth. When companies get what they came for, they move on and take the jobs with them.

Michigan's special places, on the other hand, retain their power to attract and inspire visitors as long as we protect them.

With your support, the Michigan Environmental Council is working to demonstrate to our political leaders that any strategy for lasting economic strength must fully value our Pure Michigan assets: waterfalls and forests, trout streams and trails, dunes and freshwater seas.

Unfortunately, entrenched industries and shortsighted lawmakers are pushing for policies that treat our forests like lumberyards at the expense of local towns and villages. They even want to strip biodiversity from the toolkit state natural resource experts use to manage public lands.

That's short-term thinking at its worst. Without biodiversity, continued climate change or a new pest could wipe out entire tracts of timber in a blink.

Healthy forests, on the other hand, can forever support a wood-products industry that puts food on the table for loggers, paper producers, furniture makers and others. They filter air and water. And unspoiled woods laced with quiet trails and full of wildlife are among Michigan's signature attractions for talented young workers and families seeking a lifestyle rich in outdoor recreation.

Meanwhile, worldwide demand for precious metals has spurred a new mining era deep beneath the forests of Michigan's north coast. These projects use techniques that threaten to pollute Lake Superior and its pristine tributaries.

When the boom inevitably goes bust, communities near the mines will need sturdy economic feet to stand on.

Your financial support will strengthen our work to help Michigan's rural communities

build opportunities on the enduring natural wealth that surrounds them instead of settling for flash-in-the-pan growth.

With your help we will:

- **Hold** mining companies to high environmental standards and ensure they give communities a fair share of the wealth beneath their feet;
- **Leverage** the full potential of our forests as an economic development tool by promoting a comprehensive and forward-looking management approach; and
- **Protect** other sensitive natural places like our fragile sand dunes, where thoughtless development threatens unique ecosystems and unrivaled beauty.



Putting healthy people at the heart of a thriving Michigan

The most important feature of a thriving Michigan is people healthy enough to fully enjoy it.

At the Michigan Environmental Council, we recognize that a healthy environment is a primary building block for strong bodies and sharp minds.

Consider asthma, obesity and lead poisoning, conditions with direct environmental links that are so prevalent in our children today. They inflict heartbreaking personal suffering. They also act as a weight around the neck of Michigan's long-term economy.

More than 6,700 children in our state exceed federal blood lead standards. A study of Michigan students directly linked lead exposure to poor performance on standardized tests. Its effects on cognitive function cost Michigan an estimated \$4.85 billion per year—a figure that doesn't include expenses related to special education and high rates of incarceration.

With your help, MEC is making real strides in strengthening proven lead-prevention programs. We led a coalition that earlier this year secured \$1.25 million in the state budget to make homes safe for affected families. We also have enlisted dozens of businesses and other partners to help make the case for more aggressive investment in lead cleanups.

Asthma, too, takes a brutal toll on Michigan's kids and economy. The cost of childhood asthma directly linked to the environment is estimated at \$88.4 million.

One notable culprit is Detroit's trash incinerator. Children near the facility are hospitalized for asthma at three times the national rate. The Department of Environmental Quality is finally signaling it will get tough on the incinerator's operators after MEC and allies rallied hundreds of calls from citizens to report pollution. We also are helping to starve the incinerator of fuel by expanding curbside recycling citywide.

Your gift will help us build on this momentum to improve health throughout Michigan by promoting public polices and innovative programs that:

- **Enhance parks and outdoor recreation opportunities** in cities and suburbs so Michiganders can safely get active and stay fit;
- **Put healthy food on tables** of people who need it by supporting community agriculture efforts, removing barriers to gleaning programs that reduce food waste and bringing healthy foods to state parks; and
- **Curb air pollution** from other sources by advancing policies that reduce traffic congestion and replace dirty power plants with clean energy.

With your support, we'll continue showing our political leaders that Michigan's future depends on healthy people, that an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure and that prevention starts with a healthy environment.

Rolling up our sleeves for a Michigan built to last



The Michigan Environmental Council's behind-the-scenes work can be hard to explain, but our track record speaks for itself.

Our supporters have made possible landmark reforms such as the Great Lakes Compact, our state's clean energy laws and Southeast Michigan's new regional transit authority—a transformative achievement forty years in the making.

Now we need your help to seize make-or-break chances to build the resilient Michigan described in this proposal.

**[Please visit our donate page](#)
to make a tax-deductible donation to the
Michigan Environmental Council today.**

Your support will help us protect our signature natural assets as the enduring foundation of a Michigan built to last. Your gifts to MEC provide us the resources we need to:

- **Make connections.** With our new home just blocks from the Capitol, MEC serves more than ever as a hub for Michigan's environmental movement. Every day in our gathering spaces we discuss strategy with representatives

of our 70 member groups, meet with other advocates to strengthen diverse coalitions or sit down with political leaders to promote sound policies.

- **Set the agenda.** MEC's solid reputation among decision makers earns us a seat at many of the tables where environmental policies first take shape. We sit on state-appointed panels to outline management of public lands, monitor water withdrawals, oversee energy-efficiency efforts and shape food policy, among others. We were the only environmental group Governor Snyder asked to sit on a committee to review and revise more than 3,800 state regulations. When Detroit officials needed help engaging citizens in planning the city's future, they turned to us.
- **Shape the conversation.** Our policy pros are consistently quoted in newspapers, interviewed on radio shows or tapped as experts at public forums. We cut through the ideological fog and set the record straight on environmental issues. We leverage our strong relationships with leading journalists at major news outlets while embracing the power of social media to deliver our messages.

This work is seldom glamorous. Victories are often years in the making. What keeps us going isn't just the worry about what would happen to our environment and economy if MEC and our allies didn't show up every day. Our chief motivation is the conviction that, with the right moves now, we can do some monumental things.

We can make passenger rail a reality in Michigan. We can power our homes and businesses with wind and sun. We can transform languishing rural communities into thriving towns where visitors embark on outdoor adventures and locals find new opportunities to build lasting wealth.

But we can't do any of it without you.

We stand confident that Michigan is poised for a great future.

Thanks for standing with us.

Michigan Environmental Council Member Groups

Working together to protect Michigan's environment

- 4 Towns Citizen Action Team
- Alliance for the Great Lakes
- Anglers of the Au Sable
- Arab Community Center for Economic and Social Services (ACCESS)
- Au Sable River Watershed Committee
- 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 Au Gres-Rifle Watershed
- Friends of the Cedar River Watershed
- Friends of the Detroit River
- Friends of the Rouge
- Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians
- Great Lakes Mediation
- 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
- 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

Michigan Environmental Council

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