



MICHIGAN
Environmental
Council

ANNUAL REPORT
2023

Renewal

For more than 40 years, the Michigan Environmental Council has served as a balanced, trusted advocate for the environment in Lansing. In that time we've built a reputation as our state's most credible champion for policies that protect the air we breathe, the water we drink and the places we love. We've secured powerful laws to combat lead poisoning, advance the transition to clean energy, prioritize the fight against climate change and more.



Conan Smith
President & CEO

But in recent decades, we also saw backsliding on critical protections that have left our lakes plagued with algal blooms, our cities and hometowns inundated with toxic air, and the agencies charged with protecting our natural resources unable to make and enforce critical rules.

Each year, the stakes get higher. The climate crisis is worsening. And the very resources that define *Pure Michigan* we now find tainted by PFAS, microplastics, litter, smoke and soot.

To face up to these challenges, the Environmental Council began a bold transformation in 2023. Our Board adopted a visionary strategy to make our state a national environmental leader again.



Jennifer McKay
Board Chair

This strategy is rooted in rapidly expanding, strengthening and mobilizing Michigan's network of environmental advocates—the goal is hundreds of environmental and conservation organizations working together to show decision-makers the strength of our movement.

Together we will build powerful coalitions to drive policy forward. We'll share compelling stories and craft unusually effective campaigns that draw in the many Michiganders who care for and want to protect our state. As our movement grows in force, our state will once again offer unparalleled stewardship of our land, air and water.

We are grateful to the 108 individuals who helped craft this vision and strategy, and we can already see the excitement it is generating as membership in the Environmental Council has added some 25 organizations, reaching now from Detroit to the Menominee River.

You may have noticed we have a new, fresh look: our logomark was strategically designed to connect with Michigan's rich ecological history while honoring our diverse, interconnected network of allies.

And best of all, we're watching the policy victories mount up.

Together we helped pass landmark climate legislation. That was closely followed by legislation to protect our children from the impacts of lead poisoning by ensuring they aren't exposed to toxins in their drinking water and in their homes. These projects were decades in the making.

Michigan is home to globally rare and precious natural resources. As stewards of this land and water, we have an opportunity to lead the nation in powerful environmental protections that combat climate change, sustain modern communities and empower every family to thrive.

Our movement champions smart, sound solutions to environmental challenges, and we drive those policies forward at the state Capitol, ensuring a healthy and sustainable future for every place, every species and every Michigander.



Conan Smith
President & CEO



Jennifer McKay
Board Chair

Leading Through TRAGEDY

By: Beau Brockett Jr.

On April 25, 2014, Flint residents turned their faucets on and nothing was ever the same.

That day, their city switched to a temporary water source. In the ensuing months, dangerous things began to flow into homes: E. coli, total coliform bacteria and lead. Lots of lead. Children were poisoned. Their mental, social and emotional development was stunted.

Ten years later and the Flint Water Crisis is arguably seen as the largest public health disaster of 21st-century America. While it has since ended, scars and suffering remain. But so does progress. Lots of it.

To see all that's been done, we need to look back to the families who never stopped voicing their worries; to the scientists who tested and sleuthed; and to the people who took to the Michigan Capitol.

That last group is the Michigan Alliance for Lead Safe Homes, or MIALSH, organized by the Environmental Council. On April 25, 2014, planning for its Lead Education Day was in full swing. The parents, health professionals and housing advocates that made up its members were preparing to talk to lawmakers about the threats of lead poisoning and solutions to it.

Awareness of lead poisoning had been a relatively sleepy issue since the 1970s, when lead paint was banned. Back then, most kids had high levels of the toxic metal in their blood. In the decades following, levels drastically dropped but thousands of children were still being poisoned each year across Michigan thanks, in part, to the millions of homes built before the ban.

The Flint Water Crisis brought lead poisoning back to the forefront of the American mind. MIALSH helped Michigan lawmakers understand it.

"When we first started, the vast majority of lawmakers thought lead poisoning was a thing of the past or a problem limited to our big cities," said Tina Reynolds (Wahl), the Environmental Council's founding MIALSH organizer, in 2015. "Now, state leaders from every corner of Michigan are tuning into this issue and looking for updates on progress being made in their districts."

Tune in they did. Spurred by MIALSH's constant, educational and personal approach, lawmakers slowly made a state infamous for lead poisoning to one that was leading the way on ending it. At the height of the Flint Water Crisis, the nation's strongest lead limit for drinking water was set. Millions of dollars were secured over the years for home remediation.

Then, in 2023, a double whammy. Michigan became the tenth state to add lead tests to all children's checkup routines—a top priority of MIALSH. Then, it became the first state to eliminate the threat of lead-laden drinking water by committing to install filters in all schools and childcare centers. **States and cities across the nation took notice and are introducing similar legislation.**

Taken all together, Michigan's laws work to find and eliminate all sources of lead poisoning and to treat children already affected early and swiftly.

"There has not been a bigger moment in the lead poisoning fight since lead paint was banned 45 years ago," said Charlotte Jameson, chief policy officer for the Environmental Council, after the latest laws passed. "Momentum is on our side. We can make lead poisoning history, not current reality."



In October 2023, Gov. Gretchen Whitmer signed landmark legislation to ensure all Michigan toddlers will be tested for lead poisoning.

That is still our goal. We are closer than ever to eliminating lead's threat. MIALSH and the Environmental Council are working hard to expand the workforce and funding for home remediation and to quickly get sick children the care they need. Legislation has already been introduced with bipartisan support.

Ten years after the Flint Water Crisis, we're turning Michigan from a tragedy into something exemplary.

BUILDING THE *bulwark*

By: *Grace Noyola*

Like an ancient memory kept alive through tradition and renewal, the Petoskey stone anchors us in Michigan’s rich ecological history.

Coral, the ancient organism fossilized in these stones, is a communal creature. Each polyp is independent but genetically familiar, cemented to one another in solidarity. Each generation builds on the past one to form a bulwark—a reef—that protects a coast, provides safe haven for countless species, defies the relentless onslaught of the waves.

Our own community of advocates stands in unwavering pursuit of environmental protection for each and every Michigander—and that community is growing in both size and impact.

In 2023 our Environmental Council membership grew beyond 100 organizations. Considering the fact that our “council” began as just a handful of nonprofits, this is a big moment.

As our ecosystem grows and unites around common policy goals, we can advocate more effectively using our shared influence to make policy makers understand this: to take on Michigan’s environment is to take on a formidable movement.

Over the last two years, our members have asked for one thing above all else: connection. Varying in size and resources and dispersed across the state from the tip of the U.P. to our southern state line, our movement needs fast and effective avenues to ask questions, share good news and amplify action.

That’s why we created the Michigan ECOSystem—a private, digital community built exclusively for Michigan environmental and conservation organizations (ECOs) and facilitated by the Environmental Council. This new tool enables us to share real-time legislative updates as policy unfolds in the Capitol, while also offering our members direct lines of communication to us and to one another.

While the ECOSystem grows and creates new opportunities for collaboration, our team is hard at work strengthening relationships and building new ones on the ground.

In the Upper Peninsula, Movement Building Coordinator Abby Wallace is mobilizing a team of ECOs to address the serious energy challenges in our state’s most rural area. In Southeast Michigan, our Detroit team is leading the Detroit Environmental Agenda and reestablishing critical relationships with our environmental justice allies.

These connections are laying the foundation for a highly effective movement and are helping to propel big wins like the landmark climate and lead legislation passed in 2023.

And as we look to uplift our policy efforts, we also recognize that our movement is strongest when equipped with the tools it needs to drive real work in our communities.

In 2023 alone, the Environmental Council successfully shared \$363,100 with members via pass-through grants.

Collaborative projects tackled issues from energy reliability in rural communities to addressing air quality for our children through school bus electrification to tackling Areas of Concern.

Just as ecosystems in nature comprise interconnected elements, our ECOSystem represents a network of individuals, organizations and communities working harmoniously to address environmental challenges and promote positive change here in Michigan.

But our work is not done. In 2024, we look forward to growing our membership even more; Our first annual ECOSystems Conference—a gathering built by and for our members—will commence. And we’ll continue to pursue new ways to support the ongoing efforts of our movement.



it takes
EVERY ONE OF US

By: Dana C. Moore, MA, CNP & Joe Bower

Philanthropy has emerged as a powerful force for positive change in a world where global challenges are abound.

And although it's most often associated with financial donations, its true power lies in its ability to drive systemic change, address complex social issues and strengthen communities.

Philanthropy possesses a transformative power that involves a deep commitment to social change, leveraging financial resources, knowledge skills, networks and innovation.

Among the reasons for our state's hope are the many ways you, our friends and donors, support us.

It has enabled our policy priorities to become the law of the land:

Every one- and two-year-old child in the state will now be tested for lead poisoning. Every school and community center will be outfitted with drinking water filters to protect kids from lead and PFAS. More than \$800 million will help build healthy affordable housing.

That is, in part, because advocates like you understand how important it is to have a consistent professional presence in the state Capitol defending our environment. Polluters and people who would trade public health for profits were there every day.

Thanks to your support, so were we.

Tom Schupbach and Kathy Songer have supported us for seven years. In this time, he has come to know our staff, programs and impact—and his investment has grown accordingly.

Like you, Tom loves this place that we call 'home' and is passionate about protecting it.

Q: Why are you passionate about the environment?

A: I have had an interest in the out of doors since childhood. Family vacations to northern Michigan were certainly the beginning. Can there be a better introduction to nature than the woods, lakes and streams of northern Michigan? How many adults can trace their value of nature to those childhood experiences?

Q: What most excites you about what we're doing at the Environmental Council?

A: I am always impressed with your priorities. No organization has the depth and breadth when it comes to environmental issues in Michigan. Your programs focus on all the citizens of Michigan from Detroit to the Keweenaw, from wilderness areas to urban spaces, and from PFAS to passenger trains.

Q: Why is right now a critical moment for advocates to support organizations like ours?

A: The Environmental Council understands Michigan's environmental history. They remind us of our leadership on environmental issues. They help us remember who we are and how we can move forward. As this century continues to unfold with the complex threats of climate change, there is not a more timely need to support action on these issues.



Tom Schupbach and Kathy Songer near their home in Roscommon County.

We are deeply grateful for Tom, Kathy and all of you who have been and continue to be our friends and benefactors over these years.

As the stakes continue to rise in the fight against climate change, we must equip ourselves with the resources to enact a bold environmental agenda. We simply cannot do that without your support and without growing our supporter base.

Greatness is in our nature. And our greatest promise is our partnership with you. We thank you and invite you to continue on this journey with us as we work tirelessly to champion lasting protections for Michigan's air, our water and the places we love.

FINANCIALS SUMMARY

2023 Statement of Activities

revenue

GRANTS WITH 2023 RESTRICTIONS	\$1,895,243
GRANTS WITH 2024 OPERATIONS	\$780,000
DONATIONS	\$445,463
ENDOWMENT SUPPORT	\$392,500
MEMBER DUES	\$5,453
PROGRAM & SERVICE FEES	\$4,513
INTEREST & MISC. INCOME	\$52,394
GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS & FEES	\$180,073

TOTAL \$3,755,639

expenses

PERSONNEL	\$1,404,926
OPERATIONS	\$184,348
PARTNER GRANTS	\$264,258
MPSC INTERVENTIONS	\$175,560
PROFESSIONAL FEES	\$318,495
TRAVEL & EVENTS	\$56,745
CONTINGENCY PROVISIONS	\$100,010

TOTAL \$2,504,342

2023 Statement of Financial Position

assets

UNRESTRICTED CASH	\$995,551
GRANT RESTRICTED NET ASSETS	\$1,351,356
ACCOUNTS RECEIVABLE	\$786,550
OTHER CURRENT ASSETS	\$147,694
BUILDING & EQUIPMENT	\$472,383
NET-UNRESTRICTED ENDOWMENT ASSETS AT FAIR MARKET	\$2,711,062

TOTAL ASSETS \$6,464,596

liabilities

ACCOUNTS PAYABLE	\$28,838
ACCRUED LIABILITIES	\$93,195
CUSTODIAL LIABILITIES	\$1,295,054
TOTAL LIABILITIES	\$1,417,087
GRANT RESTRICTED NET ASSETS	\$1,351,357
ENDOWMENT NET ASSETS	\$2,227,181
TOTAL UNRESTRICTED NET ASSETS	\$217,674
NET SURPLUS	\$1,251,297

TOTAL NET ASSETS \$5,047,509
TOTAL NET ASSETS & LIABILITIES \$6,464,596

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We appreciate the generous donors that supported us in 2023. Your partnership makes our work possible!

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 and places we love*



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