

# Governing *the* Great Lakes State

A Profound  
Stewardship  
Responsibility





# *At the Heart of the World's Freshwater*

**S**ITTING AT THE HEART OF THE WORLD'S LARGEST FRESHWATER ECOSYSTEM, the Great Lakes, Michigan is a state of lush public forests and majestic state parks, abundant fish and wildlife, and economically valuable lands that require careful management and protection. The Great Lakes hold almost one-fifth of the world's surface freshwater and Michigan enjoys more than 30,000 miles of rivers and streams and approximately 11,000 inland lakes, as well as 5.5 million acres of wetlands. The state owns almost four million acres of public forest and approximately 100 state parks. Our farmland grows a diverse array of foods for global markets. The state's recreational fishery contributes more than \$1 billion annually to the state's economy and deer, waterfowl, and other hunting opportunities generate significant return to communities and the state economy. This natural wealth is an indispensable part of our quality of life, our economy, and our health.

The 45 men and women who have served as Michigan's chief executive since statehood in 1837 have been charged with assuring that the quality of natural resources and the human health and economy that depends on them is conserved for those who come after them. The person who will serve as governor of Michigan from 2007 to 2010 must not only continue that tradition, but



build on it as Michigan faces one of the most challenging economic transitions in its history.

The trials faced by Michigan's manufacturing industries and by consumers — faltering job growth exacerbated by skyrocketing energy prices — can be an opportunity if the next governor of Michigan seizes it. By articulating and leading the way toward a new energy policy that protects the environment and creates jobs, Michigan's chief executive can again vault the state to the national forefront while leaving an enduring legacy. At the same time, the governor of the Great Lakes state has the opportunity and the power to conserve Michigan's special places, including wetlands, sand dunes, forests and critical habitats; expand recreation opportunities; protect citizens, especially children, from harmful toxic substances; and assure sustainable cities and conservation of open spaces. Perhaps most importantly, the next governor of Michigan will become the leading guardian of the Great Lakes themselves.

This report provides insight on the conservation challenges and opportunities facing the state and an ambitious but achievable agenda for Michigan's next governor. The Michigan League of Conservation Voters Education Fund looks forward to strong leadership from the next governor of Michigan in these critical times for conservation.

# *Clean Energy and Energy Efficiency*

**T**HE AUTOMOBILE INDUSTRY POWERED MICHIGAN TO GREATNESS IN THE 20TH CENTURY. But now, as petroleum prices skyrocket and awareness of the impact of carbon emissions on the world environment grows, that industry is struggling to create a new generation of more efficient, domestically produced vehicles. At the same time, the majority of electricity generated in Michigan is the result of coal-burning, which has major harmful impacts on human health and the environment, including contributing to global warming. For the benefit of Michigan's citizens, natural resources and economy, the next governor must champion measures that promote and reward the use of cleaner, sustainable energy resources. Specifically:

## **1. A renewable energy standard.**

Today Michigan generates less than 5% of its total electricity production from renewable energy sources. We can and must do better by growing the wind, solar and biomass energy industries in Michigan. By targeting renewable energy for development, the state can reduce harmful mercury, sulfur dioxide, soot and smog emissions from coal burning, reduce the production of high-level nuclear waste, stimulate the manufacturing of wind and solar energy equipment, and ultimately reduce consumer utility bills. The next governor of Michigan should commit to and seek legislative approval of an enforceable state requirement that all electricity providers serving customers in the state generate 20% of their supply from renewable sources by 2020.

## **2. Strong support for energy efficiency.**

The most economical way to reduce utility bills, meet future demand, and reduce harmful emissions from coal-burning power plants is to promote proven, available energy efficiency technologies. The next governor can advance these goals by initiating legislation to fund energy efficiency programs through a public-benefits charge on all electricity use, with funds to be invested directly in energy efficiency projects with measurable short and long-term benefits support. The governor should also support legislation to require up-to-date energy efficiency standards for appliances and equipment sold in Michigan and update building efficiency codes for all sectors.

## **3. Strong support of cleaner-burning biofuels as a source of new jobs.**

The use of soybeans, vegetable oils, corn and other non-conventional materials as feedstocks for a new breed of vehicle fuels has great promise if done properly. The next governor of Michigan can literally put the state on the road to a new era by directing the Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC) to support the development of the biofuels industry. MEDC should make financial assistance available to cost-effective biofuels manufacturing and processing facilities that create jobs in Michigan. The governor should also issue an executive order requiring a portion of the state government fleet of vehicles to run on biofuels.

**4. Support for the successful transition of the automobile industry to vehicles that achieve greater efficiencies and run on cleaner fuels.**

Michigan's position as the epicenter of the global auto industry gives the state an important role in supporting and rewarding decisions by auto manufacturers and suppliers that promote this transition. The next governor can help by supporting tax credits and other benefits for companies that manufacture advanced technology vehicles and parts for cleaner vehicles, including hybrid vehicles, flexible-fuel vehicles, high-efficiency conventional vehicles and others. The governor should also work with our Congressional delegation in Washington to support federal policy reforms including tax breaks and other benefits for the purchase by consumers and large fleet operators of advanced technology vehicles built by Michigan companies.



MATT FEDORCHUK

**5. Require coal plants to upgrade pollution control technology to reduce emissions of mercury by 90% by the year 2015.**

So long as we continue to generate significant electricity from coal burning, we must work to reduce the environmental and public health impact of mercury, which contaminates fish and puts the health of sensitive populations, especially children, at risk. Improved pollution control technology will add minimally to utility rates while helping reflect the true societal cost of mercury and other emissions from coal-fired power plants.

# Water Protection

**M**ICHIGAN'S WATER WEALTH CANNOT BE TAKEN FOR GRANTED. This precious resource is both vulnerable and exhaustible. Michigan learned in the 19th century that the state's vast white pine forests were a finite resource, and in the 21st century, we must realize that water is also finite. It is Michigan's job to assure the conservation and protection of all waters, ranging from groundwater aquifers that supply 40% of the state's population with drinking water, to streams, rivers, wetlands and the Great Lakes. The next governor can build upon Michigan's historic water leadership.

**1. Support state passage and implementation of the proposed Great Lakes Compact.** In 2005, the Great Lakes governors and the premiers of Ontario and Quebec agreed to a regional pact that toughens policy on water exports while promoting water conservation within the Great Lakes Basin. The next governor of Michigan should call for state ratification of the compact as well as additional measures reaffirming public control of all waters and increasing water conservation incentives.

**2. Call for the conservation of existing wetlands and the restoration of 250,000 acres of wetlands over the next 10 years.** Wetlands are valuable pollution filters and flood control mechanisms as well as valuable fish and wildlife habitat. They provide ecological benefits worth billions of dollars. Michigan has lost half of its original wetland base. Conserving and restoring wetlands through

a combination of strong law enforcement and financial incentives — particularly to encourage agricultural landowners to enroll marginal lands in wetland and stream buffer restoration programs — should be a top priority of the next governor.

**3. Control phosphorus and other pollutants that have promoted the resurgence of algae blooms in our lakes and streams.** Michigan took bold action against laundry detergent phosphorus in the 1970s, helping revive Lake Erie and reducing algae blooms statewide. Today, diverse sources of phosphorus, including animal waste runoff, fertilizers, septic tanks, sewage overflows and dishwashing detergent are contributing to renewed algae problems. The state should set strict limits on phosphorus in products like fertilizers and dishwashing soaps, and provide landowner incentives for the reduction of runoff containing phosphorus.





**4. Lead the fight to control Great Lakes invasive species.** More than 160 invasive species in the Great Lakes have cost taxpayers billions in control costs, damaged ecosystems, and put sport fishery resources at risk. The chief route of invasion is the ballast water of oceangoing vessels that discharge into the Great Lakes. A 2004 Michigan law requires the state Department of Environmental Quality to require permits for the discharge of ballast water to control wastes. The governor should support full implementation of this law, while also calling for a strong national and U.S./Canadian ballast water standard to thwart further invaders. The governor should also support funding for physical barriers to prevent the introduction of Asian carp to the Great Lakes from the Mississippi River system and full funding of sea lamprey control.

**5. Effective controls on pollution caused by factory farms.** A significant increase in factory farms, also known as concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFOs), has polluted many Michigan rivers and lakes with manure runoff and affected the health and quality of life of nearby residents. These operations generate far more pollution than traditional family farms, but federal agencies have been reluctant to enforce strong pollution control requirements. Michigan's governor must assure a level playing field for family farms, as well as protection of human health and the environment, by supporting passage and vigorous enforcement of factory farm pollution controls.

# Protecting Our Health

**W**HEN RACHEL CARSON AWOKE AMERICA TO THE DANGERS OF MODERN SYNTHETIC CHEMICALS IN 1962's

*SILENT SPRING*, her research included the discovery that DDT use in Michigan was causing massive die off of birds. Research soon suggested that chemicals with characteristics similar to DDT could cause cancer, interfere with the development of children's brains and bodies, and have other human health impacts. Michigan became a battleground over the use of long-lasting chemicals that build up in fish and wildlife, and the state was the first in the nation to cancel most uses of DDT in 1969. The state also took aggressive action to deal with PCBs, mercury and other contaminants that threaten human health in the 1970s and 1980s. But the continuing introduction of toxic chemicals into commerce without testing, and the lack of aggressive research into alternatives, means that Michigan residents are exposed to hundreds if not thousands of poisons that reduce IQ, cause behavioral problems, and result in early mortality. Michigan's next governor must resume the tradition of strong leadership in preventing, not just responding to, environmental health threats.

**1. Support green chemistry.** For more than a decade, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has given prizes to researchers and companies that pioneer the research of environmentally benign substitutes for toxic chemicals. But both the nation and the state have failed to embrace green chemistry in a meaningful way. Michigan can create jobs and

reward innovation through both gubernatorial and legislative action. The governor should issue an executive directive calling for a state green chemistry program and should call for funding of green chemistry research through Michigan's businesses and universities.

**2. Protect children from harmful toxic chemicals.** Toxic substances are a particular concern to the health of children, who are more vulnerable than adults. The governor should:

- Support a ban on lindane, a toxic chemical banned for use on agricultural products and dogs but still used to treat head lice in children.
- Revive and improve programs warning parents and women of child-bearing age of contaminants in sport and commercial fish, including mercury, PCBs and dioxins, and methods of safely preparing fish to minimize human health exposure.
- Implement state law and policy providing for posting of pesticide applications in schools, day care centers and other places where children spend significant time.
- Sign an executive order directing the state Departments of Environmental Quality and Community Health to take steps to protect children from toxic chemicals through parental education, reformed risk assessment methods, and other measures.



**3. Foster a stronger pollution prevention ethic.** The burden of health care costs continues to increase for both the citizens of Michigan and employers. The incidence of environmentally-associated asthma and other diseases resulting from environmental exposures is growing. Michigan needs to do a better job at focusing on environmental health and reducing the exposure of Michigan residents to toxic chemicals. The governor should support a state law making pollution prevention and sustainable business practices the methods of choice for reducing environmental health problems.

**4. Reform chemical policy.** We can no longer afford to assume that chemicals, like people, are innocent until proven guilty. Too many harmful substances have been introduced to commerce without adequate testing beforehand.

- While national reform is needed, Michigan's governor should be a leader in the call for chemical policy reform that includes stricter testing requirements for new chemicals.



- Michigan should not wait for federal action, but should move aggressively to ban substances that are known to be associated with human health effects, including some chemical fire retardants, heavy metals and other materials.

# Land Stewardship

**M**ICHIGAN'S APPROXIMATELY 36 MILLION ACRES OF LAND ARE A GREAT LEGACY AND RESPONSIBILITY. Proper stewardship of that land supports our economy, well-being and the Michigan way of life. Policies that promote livable cities and discourage urban sprawl help protect sensitive lands far from our major cities. For the last half-century, land development patterns—and state taxpayer dollars—have fostered suburban growth and farmland loss as cities declined. Righting that through a balanced state land-use policy is an important challenge for the next governor, who should:

**1. Foster smart community growth policies.** The governor should support state financial incentives for smart community growth plans, including coordinated planning by multiple units of government in a single area.

**2. Reward communities that work to protect open space and farmland.** The governor should call for state matching funds for communities that enact PDR (purchase of development rights) programs for landowners, including farmers, willing to sell development rights on land likely otherwise to be developed.

**3. Renew funding for brownfield cleanup and redevelopment projects.** These funds help restore contaminated lands in urban areas for reuse by commercial, industrial or residential projects. Brownfield funds from the 1998 Clean Michigan Initiative are now largely exhausted and must be replenished by new funding sources.

**4. Support public transit options that spur urban economic growth, make cities more livable, and reduce open space development pressures.**

The governor should:

- Call for the full allocation of the 10% of Michigan's transportation funds that can be made available for non-road transportation options such as transit.
- Create a new process for addressing traffic congestion issues that requires that transit be considered first, car-pooling and ride-sharing incentives second (including dedicated carpool lanes), and any additional road expansion or lane additions as a last resort.
- Support legislation enabling communities to initiate local or regional funding mechanisms for transit.

**5. Oppose the proposed sulfide mine in the Upper Peninsula.** Kennecott Minerals has submitted a mining permit application under Michigan's as-yet untested sulfide mining law for the development of the first recognized sulfide metallic mine in the history of the state. This mining application proposes to develop a sulfide mine under one of Michigan's most important trout streams in the Upper Peninsula. Because this application fails to meet the protection criteria of state law and rules, and because sulfide mining risks at this site are too great to a region dependent on a thriving economy based on tourism and recreation, the governor should oppose the permit.

# Public Lands

**T**HE GOVERNOR OF THE STATE, THROUGH THE STATE DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES AND OTHER AGENCIES, is a trustee of a public estate that exceeds four million acres of parks, forests, and other lands. In that role, he or she can play a decisive role in protecting the quality of our publicly-owned natural resources and the economic and recreational benefits they provide. The governor should:

**1. Fight to protect and grow Michigan’s Constitutionally-mandated Natural Resources Trust Fund, which provides funds to purchase public recreational and environmentally important lands.** A legal challenge to the fund threatens its ability to provide \$30 million or more annually for state and local public lands acquisition and development. The governor should also consider measures to expand the purchasing power of the Trust Fund through bonding or other measures.

**2. Direct the Department of Natural Resources to revive the state’s 34-year-old natural areas program.** This would end an 18-year-backlog in the designation of natural areas on state-owned lands, thus assuring protection of some of Michigan’s “crown jewels,” including sand dunes, prairies and other important habitats.

**3. Promote sustainable state forest practices.** Michigan taxpayers and public officials have spent more than a century restoring our forests after the destructive timber harvest of the late 1800s. That investment has paid off with public forests that generate tens of thousands of jobs in forestry and tourism, among other industries. Increasing pressure on state forests for timber at the expense of other forest values puts this heritage at risk. The governor should direct the Department of Natural Resources to move forward with designation of outstanding “old-growth” forest areas for long-term protection, while resisting excessive timber harvest on state lands, which undermines fish and wildlife habitat and recreational values.



# Recycling Waste

**M**ICHIGAN BECAME A PIONEER IN RECYCLING WHEN VOTERS APPROVED A DEPOSIT ON BEER AND SODA

CONTAINERS IN 1976. Michigan's "bottle bill" has helped achieve a 97% recycling rate for affected containers. But other forms of waste generation continue to increase, while imports of trash to Michigan landfills (including large amounts of Canadian waste) continue to burden the state's environment. Michigan can solve its waste problems through a combination of innovation, economic incentives, and control of the garbage dumped here. The next governor should:

**1. Support dumping charges on trash landfilled in Michigan to eliminate the cost disparity that attracts out-of-state waste.** Michigan's artificially low landfill disposal costs make the state a magnet for waste from faraway places. The revenue raised from dumping charges should support local waste prevention and recycling services.

**2. Support expansion of the deposit law to include water bottles and juice containers.** These beverages were not a major part of the waste stream in 1976, but contribute significantly to roadside litter and landfilled waste. A deposit on these containers will help clean up Michigan's landscape and promote reuse of scarce resources.

**3. Support legislation requiring the recycling of electronic wastes.** Discarded computers, televisions, cell phones and other devices contain hazardous metals and can

contribute to environmental contamination when landfilled or incinerated. Michigan should require recycling of these materials to reduce health and environmental impacts. The costs of electronic waste recycling should be borne by manufacturers of products that create the waste.

## Environmental Justice

**T**OO OFTEN, THE BURDEN OF POLLUTION AND RESOURCE DEGRADATION FALLS ON THE ECONOMICALLY DISADVANTAGED AND RACIAL MINORITIES IN MICHIGAN.

Every citizen has a right to live in a clean and healthful environment. Michigan's governor should sign an executive order assuring that environmental justice is a critical consideration in the state's review of pollution permits and other environmental actions.

# *Investing in Natural Resources and Our Air and Water*

**C**ONSERVATION AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION WERE DECLARED A “PARAMOUNT PRIORITY” OF THE STATE IN OUR 1963 CONSTITUTION. That priority now receives less than 1% of the state’s annual general fund budget, and the actual dollar amount of general fund dollars provided to the Departments of Natural Resources and Environmental Quality has continued to decline in recent years. While fee increases and other special sources of funding offset some of these losses, the next governor of Michigan must lead in assuring that our state’s natural assets — and their major economic, recreational and spiritual values — are protected with adequate funding. Inadequate conservation funding is like poor home maintenance. Today’s savings could lead to a leaky roof, a deteriorating structure or even worse in years to come. Perhaps no other challenge is greater than the decline in state budgetary investment in our natural resources.

The next governor must lead the fight against unwise proposals that would limit state revenues and necessary spending, and handcuff the ability of state government to protect the air, water, land, and other natural resources. The governor must also call for and lead the way in development of a long-term conservation strategy for the state that includes innovative new funding sources.

## *Conclusion*

To move Michigan forward in conservation and environmental protection, we need to be looking to the future instead of the recent past. We need to take back our state from Canadian trash haulers, energy companies, international water brokers, and others threatening our quality of life and our health. They have given Michigan jobs that disappear, pollution that stays, and little hope of a brighter future. The governor of the state can build a better future for Michigan, one that protects our families and our natural resources and creates new, more permanent sources of economic growth. The governor needs to help Michigan invest in clean power, recycle more and protect our landfills from out-of-state dumping, and protect the Great Lakes for now and all time.



# *2006 Michigan League of Conservation Voters Education Fund*

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*“THE ULTIMATE TEST of man’s conscience may be his willingness to sacrifice something today for future generations whose words of thanks will not be heard.”*

—GAYLORD NELSON, FORMER GOVERNOR OF WISCONSIN,  
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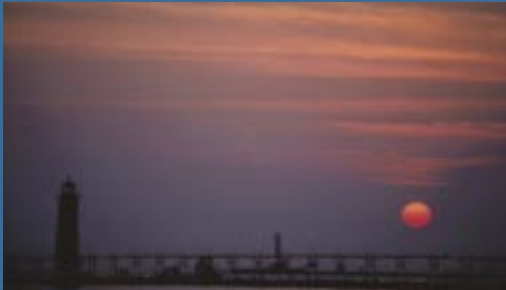
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is a non-partisan organization that works to promote a healthy and vital Michigan by preserving and protecting our air, land and water through public education and civic engagement.