

GREAT MICHIGAN

2011-2012 Michigan Environmental Priorities

www.greatmichigan.org



Thank you to all the organizations that assisted in creating *Great Michigan: 2011-2012 Michigan Environmental Priorities.*

To find contact information and more of these organizations' priorities,
visit www.greatmichigan.org

Anglers of the AuSable
Arab Community Center for Economic and Social Services
Conservation Resource Alliance
Detroitters Working for Environmental Justice
Ecology Center
East Michigan Environmental Action Council
Friends of the Detroit River
Greater Grand Rapids Food System Council
Huron River Watershed Council
Kent County Conservation District
Leelanau Conservancy
Legacy Land Conservancy
Local Motion Green
Michigan Association of Railroad Passengers
Michigan Citizens for Water Conservation
Michigan Energy Options
Mid-Michigan Environmental Action Council
Michigan Environmental Council
Michigan Land Use Institute
Michigan League of Conservation Voters Education Fund

Michigan Natural Areas Council
Michigan Nature Association
Michigan Recycling Coalition
Muskegon Save Our Shoreline
National Wildlife Federation
Natural Resources Conservation Services
Northern Michigan Environmental Council
Save the Wild UP
Scenic Michigan
Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council
Trout Unlimited
Republicans for Environmental Protection
Sierra Club
Stewardship Network
Transportation Riders United
Voices for Earth Justice
West Michigan Environmental Action Council
West Michigan Strategic Alliance
Zero Waste Detroit

Not all groups represented formally endorsed the priorities presented, and views expressed on a particular issue are not necessarily shared by all.



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“The goal of protecting Michigan’s environment is to ensure that future generations can enjoy the same awe-inspiring natural resources that we’re enjoying today and to support our economic recovery. This is not a partisan or political effort—it’s about the preservation of the fabric that makes our state great. It’s about protecting and enriching Michigan’s soul.”

–Governor Rick Snyder



PHOTO BY LEISA THOMPSON

Investing in Michigan’s Environment is an Investment in our Economy

Between our beautiful lakes and forests, skilled labor force, thriving farms, and historic cities, Michigan is a great state. While we face many economic challenges, we have opportunities to save money, create jobs, and keep young people in Michigan by investing in the places and people that make our state great. The solutions posed in this book emphasize the interconnection between the health of our environment and the health of our economy. Long-term investment in our state’s innovative industries, cities, natural resources, and children are how we will jumpstart Michigan’s economy toward a better future.

Great Michigan: 2011-2012 Michigan Environmental Priorities is a continuation of the environmental community’s biennial

effort to guide decision-makers on key environmental and economic priorities. The issues and solutions presented in this book are the result of input from organizations and leaders across the state working together to ensure Michigan citizens have access to clean water, clean air, open spaces, healthy food, vibrant cities, good jobs, sustainable transportation, and safer products.

Since Michigan groups first produced a common agenda of our state’s environmental priorities, we have passed important legislative and administrative policies to protect our natural resources and the health of our citizens. In 2007, Governor Granholm issued an Environmental Justice Executive Directive which aimed to protect low-income neighborhoods that bear the disproportionate burden of the effects of pollution. In 2008, The Great Lakes Basin Compact was adopted to protect our waters, with associated legislation to manage large scale water withdrawals with a state-of-the-art assessment tool. Also in 2008, our state developed Michigan’s Renewable Portfolio Standard (RPS), which mandates that 10 percent of our state’s energy must come from renewable sources by 2015.

This year, *Great Michigan: 2011-2012 Michigan Environmental Priorities* is proud to announce our first website: www.greatmichigan.org. Visit this site for an overview of our four 2011-2012 priorities, many additional priorities, up-to-date information on related bills as they move through the legislative and administrative process, and a consistently updated guide on recommended actions on key legislation. You will also find contact information for each group that contributed their priorities.

In echoing Governor Rick Snyder, protecting our state’s natural resources is not a partisan or political effort, but a responsibility for us all to keep Michigan great for future generations. ■

2011-2012

Michigan Environmental Priorities

✓ GREAT JOBS

Jumpstart Michigan’s Economy through Clean Energy Innovation

✓ GREAT WATER

Protect Michigan Water from Unsafe Drilling

✓ GREAT CITIES

Revitalize Michigan Cities and Towns with High Speed Rail

✓ GREAT HEALTH

Help Michigan Families Protect Their Children from Toxics

“Michigan has no near-term need for more power plants. Energy efficiency programs should be our first priority resource, as they can save electricity for one-fourth the cost of a new power plant.”

—Martin Kushler, Director of Utilities Program for the American Council for an Energy-Efficient Economy

GREAT JOBS

Jumpstart Michigan’s Economy through Clean Energy Innovation

Despite having no in-state coal supplies, Michigan relies on coal for more than 60 percent of its electricity generation. In 2008, Michigan spent \$1.36 billion to import this coal from other states, with much of it going to power plants over 50 years old.¹ These plants are dirty and inefficient, and will require costly upgrades in coming years.

By contrast, our state’s growing clean energy sector is reinventing Michigan’s manufacturing base and putting people back to work. The resulting products—such as wind turbines and solar panels—save energy for families and businesses while harvesting Michigan’s plentiful sources of renewable energy. It is essential that Michigan make the transition to cleaner energy and eliminate the barriers to job growth in

this area. Doing so will provide jobs within our state, save consumers money, and protect our natural resources for future generations.

The vast majority of our power plants, electricity grid, buildings and homes were built when energy was cheap, resulting in energy inefficiencies. As other states and countries modernize their energy systems, our families and businesses are being left behind. Our utility companies continue to propose huge coal-fired power plants that cost almost \$2 billion to build and operate. The Wolverine Power Cooperative recently proposed a new plant that was projected to increase rates by 60 percent. At stake is Michigan’s ability to attract new business as well as the ability of families to afford their energy bills.

Our current process for making investment decisions is slowing our transition to clean energy. A major obstacle is that Michigan does not require utility companies to conduct long-term planning. Known in the industry as “integrated resource planning,” this pushes utility companies to evaluate the full range of supply and demand options for meeting energy needs. It is a powerful tool for reducing consumers’ costs.

In 2008, the legislature did require a limited application of this type of planning. For example, investor-owned utilities (such as Detroit Edison and Consumers Energy) are only allowed to recover the cost of a new power plant if they have gone through the integrated resource planning process. In doing so, the utility must show that building the new plant is the “most reasonable and prudent” investment for consumers. However, this condition does not protect consumers of municipal or co-operative electric utilities. Our current law fails to trigger planning for investments below \$500 million. Expanding long-term planning requirements could limit future consumer rate increases.



1. Michigan Department of Energy, Labor and Economic Growth: Public Services Commission. *Michigan 2008 Energy Overview*. <http://www.dleg.state.mi.us/mpsc/reports/energy/energyoverview/>



Additionally, in 2008, the legislature required utilities to invest significantly in energy efficiency for the first time in a decade. The results have been encouraging. Every consumer dollar invested in energy efficiency programs is returning \$3.50 in avoided future energy costs. But much more needs to be done. Michigan's current standard requires utilities to reduce electricity use by 1% annually by 2012. Other states are setting goals that double or triple that amount, saving residents millions of dollars a year. However, Michigan imposes arbitrary spending limits on cost-effective efficiency programs. These limits should be removed to achieve greater energy savings.

The good news is that Michigan is steadily meeting more of its own energy needs from renewable sources. Historically, we generated a modest amount of electricity from small hydropower dams and burning scrap wood. In 2008, we mandated that utilities use 10 percent renewable energy by 2015. Due to the 2008 law, Michigan has recently seen a significant jump in the number of large wind turbines. It has also helped to drive more manufacturing of wind equipment in our state, which in turn creates jobs. In addition to small and medium-sized firms providing parts, a new turbine assembly operation has been announced near Bay City. Michigan is also attracting companies in the solar and biomass sectors. Sourcing even more of our electricity from renewable sources would spur additional investment and put Michigan citizens back to work. ■

For more information, visit www.greatmichigan.org

PRIORITY ACTIONS

- ✓ Require all significant utility investments to follow long-term resource planning.
- ✓ Eliminate the artificial cap on energy efficiency expenditures contained in Public Act 295 of 2008.

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GREAT WATER

Protect Michigan Water from Unsafe Drilling

Natural gas drilling has been known to contaminate groundwater in other states, including Pennsylvania and Wyoming, where communities have reported carcinogenic chemicals in their water supply and drinking water.¹ The chemicals found in the waterways are used in nearby natural gas wells. Michigan has the opportunity to act before we inadvertently contaminate our rivers, streams and groundwater. We can meet consumer demands while still protecting drinking water for Michigan citizens.

For centuries, Michigan's long shoreline, land, water, and people have been part of the steady progression of natural resource development. Our state's long-standing tradition of drilling for oil and gas began in the 1930s when oil and gas

reserves were discovered in Michigan's northern Lower Peninsula.² The method that has been used extensively for many years to extract gas is called hydraulic fracturing or fracking, a term specific to deep shale drilling.

Fracking is a process in which a high pressure mixture of water, sand, and chemicals is flushed down a pipeline in order to open up small fissures in the underground rock formations to release the natural gas stored there. These small fissures are then widened by the pressure of the fluid mixture, and the gas is pumped back up the pipeline to the surface.

Historically, fracking has always occurred at relatively shallow levels of 500 to 2,000 feet, and has not required a substantial amount of water to pump the gas back to the surface.

"We are terribly concerned about the millions of gallons of fresh water being used in each well because this water is coming from local groundwater aquifers. What will be the negative effects on our rivers and streams when the aquifers are depleted in such a rapid withdrawal?"

—John Walters, President of Trout Unlimited Headwaters Chapter

1. Pro Publica. "EPA: Chemicals Found in Wyo. Drinking Water Might Be From Fracking." <http://www.propublica.org/article/epa-chemicals-found-in-wyo.-drinking-water-might-be-from-fracking-825>. August 25, 2009.

2. Michigan Department of Energy, Labor and Economic Growth. "About Michigan's Natural Gas Industry: Exploration and Production." <http://www.dleg.state.mi.us/mpsc/gas/about1.htm>

Recent exploration for natural gas reserves has required deeper drilling and updated technologies to extract this gas. However, the guidelines regulating the extraction process have not kept pace. It is essential that the oil and gas industries be held to the same standards as other industries who are in the business of using large amounts of Great Lakes water.

In 2008, the Great Lakes Compact was put in place, which manages and regulates the growing amount of large quantity water withdrawals by industries. By requiring oil and gas industries to use the legislatively adopted water withdrawal assessment tool, Michigan citizens can be sure that companies engaged in fracking are living up to the same safety standards required of other industries that use large quantities of water.

Within the last few years, natural gas companies have discovered potential new gas reserves that are significantly deeper than those previously known. Unfortunately, as drilling technologies advance, not only does the amount of water use expand, so too does the quantity of undisclosed chemicals needed to extract the gas. In addition, each individual natural gas well produces millions of gallons of wastewater, called “flowback,” which is then deposited into deep injection wells. At present, these wells are not subject to the highest monitoring and testing requirements because the fluids are designated as oil and gas waste, and this designation results in less protective requirements. There are no requirements to analyze the constituents in the fluids prior to injection.

There are four major concerns with natural gas exploration in Michigan:³

1. Millions of gallons of fresh water are used to “frack.” Without proper monitoring, this massive water use may contribute to emptying wells, springs and wetlands, drops in lake levels, and reduced stream flow.
2. The chemicals that are mixed with sand and water and pumped directly through fragile aquifers to extract the gas are not required to be disclosed to the public, and may be hazardous to our drinking water.
3. If the injection wells used to contain waste water are not constructed, operated, and monitored correctly there is a risk of contamination to drinking water.
4. Harmful air emissions from construction equipment, fracking equipment, and unintentional gas leaks all pose notable threats to air quality and drinking water.

To date, while there are numerous cases of contaminated water due to natural gas exploration in other states, there have been no reported cases in Michigan. However, if deep drilling or fracking increases in Michigan without proper regulation, there is legitimate concern that Michigan’s water, wildlife, and citizens may be exposed to these hazardous

chemicals, and suffer from massive amounts of large quantity water withdrawals. Contaminated drinking water is not only a threat to our health, but may result in potential loss in property value, a decrease in tourism and economic development. We remain in a unique position to proactively prevent such contamination. ■

For more information, visit www.greatmichigan.org

PRIORITY ACTIONS

- ✓ Require the oil and gas industry to use Michigan’s state-of-the art water withdrawal assessment tool and develop site-specific standards for reviews of this tool.
- ✓ Require companies to provide full disclosure of chemicals used in the fracking process to the DNR.
- ✓ Require additional wastewater monitoring and reporting requirements.
- ✓ Require companies to use best management practices. This includes recycling water, controlling air emissions, protecting sensitive wetlands and surface waters, and preserving habitat ecosystems.

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3. Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council. “Natural Gas Drilling and Water.” <http://www.watershedcouncil.org/learn/hydraulic-fracturing/files/Natural%20Gas%20Drilling%20and%20Water.pdf>



GREAT CITIES

Revitalize Michigan Cities and Towns with High Speed Rail

Reliable and fast statewide passenger rail—complete with updated technology, tracks and depots—will boost Michigan’s economy and ensure that our state is a leader in the movement toward high speed rail. Michigan is now presented with an opportunity to accept \$161 million in federal funds to improve the speed, reliability, and efficiency of our rail system. In order to receive these funds, we must pass a rail bonding bill to provide \$40 million in state matching funds.

High speed rail that connects our cities and towns will put our economy back on track. The benefits of leveraging state money to draw \$161 million in federal grants are many: increased revenue to our local economies, utilizing our state’s skilled workers to create jobs, improving commuting and travel options for Michigan residents, and attracting more

tourists to Michigan, with a safe, convenient and fast way to travel. In addition, high speed rail will contribute to cleaner cities through reduced air pollution and carbon emissions.

In order to compete with the changing infrastructure in transportation across the country, Michigan can no longer afford to only be a car-and-highway state. Investing in high speed rail would move our state forward, and we would reap the economic and environmental benefits. A recent study by the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) estimates that rail routes cost the state \$7 million per year and return about \$62 million,¹ which is an excellent return on investments.

High speed rail in Michigan will contribute to more than 57,000 permanent jobs in the Midwest and support 15,200 jobs

“Investing in high speed rail is a priority for Michiganders to build our economy. We need to assure the Federal Railroad Administration that those federal dollars will not only build infrastructure, create jobs, and promote tourism, but help reinvent Michigan in the process.”

—John Langdon, Michigan Association of Railroad Passengers, Governmental/Public Affairs Coordinator

1. Michigan Association of Railroad Passengers. “MARP testimony before the Michigan House Transportation Sub-Committee” <http://www.marp.org/?p=1309>

during the 10 years that the system is under construction.² If Michigan turns its back on available federal funds, the money will instead be sent to fund high speed rail projects in other states such as California, which will enhance their already prospering high speed rail development.

By providing the necessary matching funds through a state bond, the \$161 million in federal funds will be used to improve the rail network that connects Chicago, Kalamazoo, Jackson, Ann Arbor, Dearborn, Detroit, and Birmingham. The current service from Detroit to Chicago is one of the nation's most heavily used outside of the East Coast. With speeds up to 110 mph, the trip from Detroit to Chicago could decrease from 5-7 hours to about 3.5 hours. Furthermore, with an eventual connection to Traverse City, Grand Rapids and other urban areas, Michigan families will have far more mobility between tourist destinations within our state. Connecting our cities and towns with fast and convenient methods of travel will only help to revitalize our local economies.

In a recent nationwide poll, 64% of Americans said they somewhat or strongly support using state funding for high speed rail projects, and a similar number support using federal funds.³ In 2010, many Michigan citizens attended statewide public forums to discuss possibilities for high speed rail, showing that Michiganders want faster, more reliable, and convenient transit between cities. We cannot afford to let this opportunity pass us by. ■

For more information, visit www.greatmichigan.org

PRIORITY ACTION

- ✓ Pass a rail bonding bill to provide \$40 million in state matching funds to receive \$161 million in federal funds to improve the speed, reliability, and efficiency of our rail system.

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² Wisconsin Public Interest Research Group. *Connecting the Midwest: How a Faster Passenger Rail Network Could Speed Travel and Boost the Economy*. September 9, 2010.

³ Harris Interactive. "More Than A Third Of Americans Aware Of High Speed Rail Projects In Their State." <http://www.harrisinteractive.com/NewsRoom/HarrisPolls/tabid/447/mid/1508/articleId/700/ctl/ReadCustom%20Default/Default.aspx>. February 24, 2011.

Investing in Michigan's High Speed Rail will:

- Create jobs for Michigan manufacturers, engineers, skilled laborers, and suppliers.
- Generate tourism and economic revenue in the state by connecting Michigan cities and Midwestern regions.
- Increase transportation options for state residents by providing fast, convenient, and reliable services.
- Encourage downtown development in cities and towns across the state.
- Contribute to cleaner cities through reduced air pollution and help lower carbon emissions.
- Protect Michigan's natural resources by promoting urban development.



GREAT HEALTH

Help Michigan Families Protect Their Children from Toxics

Children are our future and, as a society, it is our responsibility to protect their health. Unfortunately, current federal and state laws do not adequately protect Michigan's children from toxic chemicals in products. There are over 80,000 chemicals on the marketplace including lead, BPA and phthalates. The Environmental Protection Agency has been able to require testing on just 200 chemicals and only five have been regulated for safety.¹ In 2010, both the House and Senate introduced federal legislation to fix the Toxic Substances Control Act (TSCA)—the act responsible for regulating chemicals in the marketplace. However, this legislation has been slow moving, putting a greater need at the state level to disclose and regulate chemicals.

Out of a large sample of children's products tested recently, a third of them contained lead, mercury, cadmium, bromine, and even arsenic.² Exposure to these chemicals can have long-term health impacts on young children. These chemicals can end up in our bodies, our wildlife, and our Great Lakes ecosystem.

Children are the most vulnerable to toxic chemicals because their bodies develop so quickly. Healthy development

can be easily disrupted with low dose exposure to toxic chemicals at critical stages in the womb, as babies, and as children. Proven medical testing repeatedly finds toxic, industrial chemicals in umbilical cord blood, breast milk, infants and young children. Many of these chemicals are linked to cancer, reproductive problems, and developmental disorders.

Families have no way of protecting their children from these toxic chemicals because manufacturers are not required to list what chemicals are present in their products. As consumers, we have a right to know what we are purchasing; however, we are currently unable to differentiate between a contaminated product and a safe product—not by sight, price, brand, or country of origin. That is why it is critical for Michigan to protect its most vulnerable citizens, our children, from the toxic chemicals commonly found in children's toys and products.

Michigan spends nearly \$6 billion every year treating children's illnesses like asthma, lead poisoning, cancer, and developmental disorders due to toxic chemical exposure.³ Legislation that adopts a state list of the most harmful

1. Safer Chemicals Healthy Families. "The Health Case for Reforming the Toxic Substances Control Act" http://healthreport.saferchemicals.org/PDFs/The_Health_Case_for_Reforming_the_Toxic_Substances_Control_Act.pdf. January 2010.
2. HealthyStuff.org. "Healthystuff.org Findings." <http://www.healthystuff.org/departments/toys/about.findings.php>
3. Michigan Network for Children's Environmental Health and Ecology Center. *The Price of Pollution: Cost Estimates of Environment-Related Childhood Disease in Michigan*. June 2010.





PHOTO BY LEISA THOMPSON

chemicals found in children’s products, and requires large manufacturers and importers of children’s products to disclose their use of these chemicals will allow the marketplace to work as intended. This will give consumers the information they need to make informed purchasing decisions. Companies who manufacture safer products will have a competitive advantage over those who continue to use known, harmful substances. In 2010, more than 20 independent toy store owners signed on in support of legislation that requires manufactures to disclose their use of toxic chemicals in children’s products. It is time for Michigan legislators to support the same important goal.

While we cannot completely eliminate children’s exposure to toxic chemicals commonly found in toys and household items, we must empower consumers to proactively protect their children. Michigan families are asking for information on toxic chemicals in children’s products so they can make informed purchasing decisions and protect their children from harmful chemicals. ■

For more information, visit www.greatmichigan.org

“As a consumer and a parent, it can be frustrating when trying to make a decision on which products are safe for my child. This is the next generation, and we have no way of knowing what the long-term consequences of chemical exposure will be.”

–Michele Murto, Concerned Mother

PRIORITY ACTIONS

- ✓ Adopt a state list of the most harmful chemicals found in children’s products.
- ✓ Require large manufacturers and importers of children’s products to disclose their use of these chemicals.

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