

# TheMackinac

PUBLICATION OF THE SIERRA CLUB'S MICHIGAN CHAPTER • FALL 2023/WINTER 2024

## Grassroots Power Drives Michigan Chapter

By Elayne Elliott, Chapter Director

Grassroots organizing is the core of Sierra Club. Our grassroots members make us unique and help us take on seemingly impossible fights!

The fight against Enbridge's Line 5 pipeline is an excellent example of the Sierra Club's grassroots power at work. Our volunteer base-members and supporters like you understood the importance of protecting the Great Lakes and decided to act. Over the years, this effort evolved from a volunteer-led initiative to a regional campaign with the Wisconsin Chapter and Sierra Club Canada.

We've seen progress, but the struggle continues. Despite Gov. Whitmer's order to shut down Line 5 and violation of tribal treaty rights, Enbridge continues to operate the pipeline. We need President Biden to leverage the full weight of the federal government and force Enbridge to comply with Gov. Whitmer's shutdown order. To do this, we continue to work with local volunteers, the Oil and Water Don't Mix Coalition, impacted Sierra Club chapters, Sierra Club Canada, and Sierra Club's Dirty Fuels campaign. Backed by members like you, we know we have what it takes to stand against Enbridge and protect the Great Lakes. Thank you for your support.

Now, the Sierra Club is undertaking a historic transformation. We're shifting to an organizational structure that reinvests in our chapters and helps ensure our local members and supporters remain strong. We are excited to lean into regional administrative support that takes some cumbersome tasks off of Chapter leadership and helps local leaders focus on building their power. You can learn more about this transition from Michigander and Sierra Club Board Member David Holtz and

meet Michigan's new Field Manager, Andrew Sarpolis, on page 14.

Sierra Club is making exciting changes at the chapter level. Our offices are now located at 602 W. Ionia St., Lansing, MI 48933. With more staff working remotely and increased safety concerns at our prior location, we've moved to a shared space with other environmental organizations. The office building, which features solar panels and in-office composting, is within walking distance from the Capital. Additionally, we are moving *The Mackinac* to a digital format. Please make sure we have your email address on file or opt-in to the print edition on page 3.

In this edition of *The Mackinac*, you can also learn about our first in-person Lobby Day since 2019 on page 8, clean energy in West Michigan on page 7, updates on the Stormwater Specialist Training Program on page 10, opportunities to get involved in Grand Haven on page 11 and the new Executive Committee nominees on pages 12-13.



Elayne Elliott  
Michigan Chapter Director



Caption Sierra Club volunteers meet at the Capitol before heading to meet with legislators.

SIERRA CLUB PHOTO.



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Explore, enjoy and protect the planet.

# TheMackinac

FALL/WINTER  
2023-2024

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## Every Day People Make Extraordinary Results

By Anne Woiwode, Chapter Chair

For 130 years the Sierra Club has evolved and grown to meet new challenges. We've expanded our presence to every state and Canada and taken on the most pressing environmental issues as they emerged. Our founders would be astonished at how far we've gone beyond the initial efforts by a small group of concerned citizens in San Francisco in 1892.

What would be familiar to them, however, is the incredible depth of engagement by ordinary, everyday people in the Sierra Club today. Sierra Club volunteers are having an impact at the community, state, regional, national and international levels, protecting the Great Lakes and wildlands, fighting climate change and pollution, addressing environmental justice and protecting democracy. From students to retirees, shopkeepers to teachers, children to grandparents and more, Sierra Club volunteers are advocates for the planet's future, working hand in hand with our exceptional staff.

Facing the immense challenges of today and tomorrow requires all of us to work together and challenge ourselves to do what we can to leave the planet better off. As a Sierra Club member you've already taken the first step toward that critical engagement by recognizing that investing in this organization you make it stronger and more effective.

I'd urge you to also consider what more you can do by volunteering. Whether it is sending a message to your elected officials on clean energy legislation, becoming an outings leader in your local group, joining a Michigan Chapter committee, or helping with administrative work in our offices, your time is the most valuable thing we can ask of you.

Margaret Mead could have been describing those first Sierra Club members when she said "never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has." You can help ensure that Sierra Club continues to build on our extraordinary tradition, leaving the world a better place for everyone today and those who come after us.



Anne Woiwode SIERRA CLUB PHOTO

## Get The Mackinac Your Way

### *The Sierra Club Michigan Chapter is going digital!*

The Sierra Club Michigan Chapter is going digital! Starting in spring of 2024, the twice-annual Mackinac Newsletter will be switching over to a mostly-digital format. If you would like to continue receiving a printed edition, please fill out the form linked here, <https://bit.ly/optinMISC> or scan the QR code.

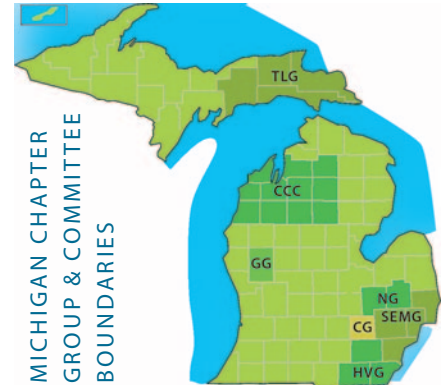
### *Plus another update...*

A graphic with a blue border and a light blue background. At the top, it says "WE ARE MAKING THE SWITCH TO DIGITAL!" in bold black letters. Below that, it says "OPT IN FOR A PRINTED VERSION HERE:" followed by the URL "https://bit.ly/optinMISC". A QR code is centered below the URL, with a black arrow pointing to it from the text "Scan me" written in a cursive font. In the bottom right corner, there is the Sierra Club Michigan Chapter logo, which includes a tree icon and the text "SIERRA CLUB MICHIGAN CHAPTER". There is also a Wi-Fi symbol icon in the bottom left corner.

A photograph of a two-story blue house with white trim and a porch. The text "We Moved" is overlaid in large white letters on the left side. In the top right corner, there is the Sierra Club logo. At the bottom, the text "NEW ADDRESS" is followed by "602 W. Ionia Street, Lansing, MI 48933".

## THINK GLOBALLY AND GET ACTIVE WITH YOUR LOCAL SIERRA CLUB GROUP!

Sierra Club is the largest grassroots environmental organization in the country and the Michigan Chapter's 6 regional Groups and Committees host outings, political and conservation activities and informational programs. Members and supporters are invited to attend outings and meetings — everyone is welcome! For inquiries about activities in your area, you can also contact [sarah.tresedder@sierraclub.org](mailto:sarah.tresedder@sierraclub.org).



Sometimes people participate in a Chapter Group other than the one serving the county in which they live. If this is true for you, it's important we have this information because 1) Groups get funds based on their member numbers and 2) Groups send info to their members through lists based on their member home addresses. To change your designated Group, please contact Sierra Club National's Member Care 415.977.5653 or [member.care@sierraclub.org](mailto:member.care@sierraclub.org)

### Clearwater Conservation Committee / CCC

**COUNTIES:** Antrim, Benzie, Crawford, Grand Traverse, Kalkaska, Leelanau, Manistee, Missaukee, Otsego, Roscommon and Wexford  
**FACEBOOK:** Clearwater Conservation Committee  
**TWITTER:** @NCMClearwater  
**CHAIR:** Vicki Olsen • [cvolsen17@yahoo.com](mailto:cvolsen17@yahoo.com)

### Crossroads Group / CG

**COUNTIES:** Livingston and western Oakland  
**MEETS:** at group leader homes in Livingston County or West Oakland Counties (first Thurs of the month)  
**WEBSITE:** [sierraclub.org/michigan/crossroads](http://sierraclub.org/michigan/crossroads)  
**FACEBOOK:** Crossroads Group Sierra Club  
**CHAIR:** Lee Anzicek • [leeanzicek@gmail.com](mailto:leeanzicek@gmail.com)  
**VICE CHAIR:** Lee Burton, 810-231-9045 • [lee.burton@michigan.sierraclub.org](mailto:lee.burton@michigan.sierraclub.org)

### Growing Green / GG

**COUNTIES:** Grand Rapids and Kent County  
**MEETS:** Undetermined  
**WEBSITE:** <https://bit.ly/GrowingGreenGR>  
**FACEBOOK:** [www.facebook.com/SierraClubGGR](https://www.facebook.com/SierraClubGGR)  
**EMAIL:** [grpwinggreen@michigan.sierraclub.org](mailto:grpwinggreen@michigan.sierraclub.org)

### Huron Valley Group / HVG

**COUNTIES:** Washtenaw, Lenawee and Monroe  
**MEETS:** in Ann Arbor  
**WEBSITE:** [sierraclub.org/michigan/huron](http://sierraclub.org/michigan/huron)  
**FACEBOOK:** Sierra Club Huron Valley Group  
**EMAIL:** [HVGSierraClub@gmail.com](mailto:HVGSierraClub@gmail.com)  
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**OUTINGS CO-CHAIR:** Shonda Thoms • [sktohm@gmail.com](mailto:sktohm@gmail.com)

### Nepessing Group / NG

**COUNTIES:** Genesee, Lapeer, and North Oakland  
**MEETS:** at Mott Community College in Flint  
**WEBSITE:** [sierraclub.org/michigan/nepessing](http://sierraclub.org/michigan/nepessing)  
**FACEBOOK:** Sierra Club Nepessing Group - MI  
**CHAIR:** Mike Buza • [theoriginalzuba@yahoo.com](mailto:theoriginalzuba@yahoo.com)  
**VICE CHAIR:** Suzanne Lossing • [slossing@hotmail.com](mailto:slossing@hotmail.com)

### Southeast Michigan Group / SEMG

**COUNTIES:** Wayne, St. Clair, Macomb, Oakland  
**WEBSITE:** [sierraclub.org/michigan/semg](http://sierraclub.org/michigan/semg)  
**FACEBOOK:** Sierra Club Southeast Michigan Group  
**CO-CHAIR:** Garrett Dempsey • [garrett.dempsey@sierraclub.org](mailto:garrett.dempsey@sierraclub.org)  
**CO-CHAIR:** Jerry Hasspacher • [jhasspac@gmail.com](mailto:jhasspac@gmail.com)

### Three Lakes Group / TLG

**COUNTIES:** Chippewa, Mackinac, Luce and Schoolcraft  
**MEETS:** in Sault Ste. Marie  
**WEBSITE:** [tlgsierraclub.org](http://tlgsierraclub.org)  
**FACEBOOK:** Three Lakes Group of Sierra Club  
**CHAIR:** Roger Blanchard • [blanchardclimate@gmail.com](mailto:blanchardclimate@gmail.com)

## Meetup With the Sierra Club

Meetup is a great way to view the latest events sponsored by your local Sierra Club entity. Find the meetup page for your local group or committee below:

[www.meetup.com/Sierra-Club-Three-Lakes-Group/](http://www.meetup.com/Sierra-Club-Three-Lakes-Group/)

[www.meetup.com/Sierra-Club-Huron-Valley/](http://www.meetup.com/Sierra-Club-Huron-Valley/)

[www.meetup.com/Sierra-Club-Nepessing-Group-Michigan/](http://www.meetup.com/Sierra-Club-Nepessing-Group-Michigan/)

[www.meetup.com/Metro-Detroit-Outdoors-Hiking/](http://www.meetup.com/Metro-Detroit-Outdoors-Hiking/) (SEM Group)

[www.meetup.com/Sierra-Club-Crossroads-Group/](http://www.meetup.com/Sierra-Club-Crossroads-Group/)

[www.meetup.com/SierraClubClearwaterGroup/](http://www.meetup.com/SierraClubClearwaterGroup/)

## Sierra Club Joins Wilderness Effort

By Marvin Roberson, Forest Ecologist

Sierra Club has joined the effort to designate 20,000 acres of National Forest Land in Michigan as Wilderness.

Sierra Club has a long history in Michigan. We were the coalition leaders that passed the Michigan Wilderness Bill in 1987. This bill designated 91,530 acres of Federal Wilderness in ten different Wilderness Areas (including McCormick, my personal favorite Wilderness Area in the country).

Now, a new campaign is underway to designate four new Wilderness Areas in the Ottawa National Forest. These Areas total about 20,000 acres. They are Trap Hills, Ehlico Area, Norwich Plains, and an addition to the existing Sturgeon River Gorge Wilderness. The locations are shown on the map (map courtesy of Environmental Law and Policy Center).

What would Wilderness designation mean? It would not change ownership or impact private property rights. All the areas are already in public ownership, which would not change.



Hunting and fishing are currently permitted in these areas, which would not change. Hiking and camping would be allowed, as they are presently. No areas would be placed off limits to public access.

So what would change? Mechanized

use would be prohibited in these areas. This change means no wheeled vehicles, including automobiles, ATVs and mountain bikes. However, nearly a million acres of Ottawa National Forest lands would remain open to mechanized uses, as would seven million acres of public lands statewide.



Wilderness areas need to be free from disturbance and manipulation. PHOTO BY J-PHOTOS - UNSPLASH

So why Wilderness?

Wilderness protection would allow a small (less than 5%) portion of the Ottawa National Forest to be free from disturbance and manipulation. In the words of Howard Zahniser, author of the Wilderness Act, "A wilderness, in contrast with those areas where man and his own works dominate the landscape, is hereby recognized as an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammeled by man, where man himself is a visitor who does not remain."

In addition to allowing visitors to experience the environment in its natural state, Wilderness designation protects the area's biodiversity.

In the words of Jon Saari, longtime Wilderness advocate, "Wilderness is the Gold Standard of land protection."

For more information, see <https://www.keeptheupwild.com/>  
**TAKE ACTION!** Let Senator Stabenow know that you support Wilderness in Michigan! Email her using this form (from her website): <https://www.stabenow.senate.gov/contact>

### SUPPORT THE WORK OF THE SIERRA CLUB MICHIGAN CHAPTER

Enclosed is my/our gift to the Sierra Club Michigan Chapter:  
\_\_\_\_\_ \$250 \_\_\_\_\_ \$100 \_\_\_\_\_ \$50 \$\_\_\_\_\_ Other

Give online at [www.tinyurl.com/supportMISC](http://www.tinyurl.com/supportMISC)

Your donation helps provide the flexible funding Sierra Club needs to successfully advocate for Michigan's Great Lakes, wild heritage and clean energy future.

Your contribution to Sierra Club is not tax-deductible; it supports our effective, citizen-based advocacy and lobbying efforts. If you prefer to make a tax-deductible gift to support our work, contact [Elayne Elliott](mailto:Elayne.Elliott@sierraclub.org) at [elayne.elliott@sierraclub.org](mailto:elayne.elliott@sierraclub.org).

Please send your gift to Sierra Club Michigan Chapter,  
602 W. Ionia Street, Lansing, MI 48933

Instead of a check, please charge my credit card (VISA or MC) \$\_\_\_\_\_.

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Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_







## Michigan Celebrates Victory in DTE Energy Settlement

By Andrew Sarpolis, Michigan Field Manager

Michigan's campaign against coal achieved a major victory as the Sierra Club and intervenors secured a settlement agreement with DTE Energy. The agreement fast-tracks the retirement of the DTE Monroe Coal Plant by 2032 instead of 2035. Additionally, DTE will invest in renewable energy and energy efficiency, moving closer to sustainability. However, further action is needed to ensure a just transition away from fossil fuels and protect ratepayers. Here is a highlight of what we were able to win, and what needs to happen. For more detail, please visit our blog here: <https://bit.ly/44MwB1F>

Results of the DTE IRP settlement compared to the original DTE IRP plan and their current business and usual forecasts.

Graphic courtesy of Vote Solar

|  VOTE SOLAR                                     | Business as Usual | DTE's Plan | End Result          |
|--|-------------------|------------|---------------------|
|  Coal Retirement                                | 2039              | 2035       | <b>2032</b>         |
|  Renewable Buildout by 2030                     | 417 MW            | 3400 MW    | <b>3800 MW</b>      |
|  Energy Storage by 2030                         | Limited           | 360 MW     | <b>780 MW</b>       |
|  Distributed Generational Cap                   | 1%                | 1%         | <b>6%</b>           |
|  Allocation for Low Income Assistance Programs | \$0               | \$0        | <b>\$38 million</b> |

## Court Issues Major Victory in Line 5 Fight

By Christy McGillivray, Political and Legislative Director

A federal court decision ordering Enbridge Line 5 across tribal lands in Wisconsin to shut down no later than June 26, 2026, is a landmark decision in the long fight to close the 70-year-old, deteriorating fossil-fuel pipeline. The Bad River Band of Lake Superior Chippewa sued the massive Canadian pipeline company when Enbridge refused to comply with the tribe's order to remove the pipeline after the tribal council declined to renew Enbridge's expired easement. U.S. District Court Judge William Conley found that Enbridge was trespassing on the tribe's land and ordered the company to comply with the eviction order within three years.

A caveat in the order would force an earlier shutdown if a badly eroded section along the Bad River exposes the pipeline, reaching a dangerous threshold set by the judge. Tribal members and environmental advocates are particularly concerned about the potentially devastating impact of a leak in the pipeline, which would devastate wild rice ponds and fisheries downstream. A proposed 41-mile reroute around the Bad River Band lands Enbridge would not mitigate the concerns, as the new pipeline would still cross waterways upstream from these sensitive areas. The Army Corps of Engineers (ACE) is considering permits for the reroute, which a broad coalition opposes.

In Michigan, the ACE is conducting an Environmental Impact Study (EIS) to consider permit applications for a proposed tunnel under the Straits of Mackinac to house the oil and NGL pipeline. In a disappointing move, the ACE rejected extensive, substantive input on the proposed EIS, calling for consideration of climate impacts in particular, announcing plans to narrow the study to just the four-mile corridor across the Straits. Public comment will be accepted on the ACE EIS once it is released in draft form sometime in 2024.

As the Mackinac goes to press, it is anticipated that the Michigan Public Service Commission (MPSC) will make a decision this year on whether to approve the rerouting of Line 5 through the proposed Straits tunnel. In July 2022, the MPSC commissioners directed a more comprehensive study of issues around the proposal to move the pipeline into a proposed tunnel following extensive technical testimony, including concerns about the tunnel's potential explosion.

Add your voice to the thousands nationwide calling on President Biden to take steps to shut down Line 5. Go to <https://tinyurl.com/ShutLine5> to join the fight to protect the Great Lakes from oil spills from Enbridge Line 5.

## How to Support Solar Energy in Your Community

By Tamara Horne, West Michigan Organizer

Earlier this year, I worked alongside White Lake-area community members to support utility solar. Because of another group's opposition, White River Township's existing solar ordinance was ultimately amended to limit utility solar. But our grassroots group of utility-solar supporters learned a lot through the process.

Here are ways to advocate for solar energy in your municipality:

### 1. Does your municipality have a solar energy ordinance?

Call or email your clerk to ask if there is an ordinance for solar energy systems. If you do not know who your clerk is, use the Michigan Voter Information Center search to look up your clerk's contact information.

### 2. Read your municipality's solar energy ordinance.

If your municipality has an ordinance, ask where you can find the ordinance. Read the ordinance. Determine if it allows for residential solar and utility-scale solar energy systems. Let the board and/or planning commission know if you have questions or concerns and what you appreciate about the ordinance.

*Money-saving Tip: There is a 30% federal tax credit if you install a solar system on your home between 2022-2032.*

### 3. If there is no solar energy ordinance, advocate for one.

If your municipality does not have a solar energy system ordinance, ask it to adopt one. You can ask by writing a letter or speaking during public comment at a board or council meeting. Michigan State University has a comprehensive guidebook you can share with your local government.

### 4. Find allies and work together.

Ask some of your neighbors and friends if they will also write or speak up about supporting a solar energy system ordinance. The process may take several months, so you should meet regularly to talk about how you can advocate for solar energy options. Are there local businesses, farmers, or organizations that might also support solar energy options?

### 5. Learn about solar energy.

There is a lot of misinformation about solar energy, partly because fossil fuel industries pay a lot of money to create anti-solar content. Be alert and seek out fact-based information. Work together with your solar advocacy group to share accurate info with other community members.



Sierra Club West Michigan Organizer Tamara Horne.

SIERRA CLUB PHOTO



Sierra Club participated in the Grand Haven Coast Guard Parade for Clean Energy.

## Aggregate Mining Debate Becomes Flashpoint For State Legislature

### Opposition Helps Build Support For A Real Environmental Agenda

By Tim Minotas, Deputy Political and Legislative Director

Our members know the Sierra Club plays a vital role in the state Legislature.

This spring, legislators scheduled bad aggregate mining bills that would have increased air and water pollution before our other environmental priorities. Sierra Club members answered our call to action. They flooded legislative offices with calls and emails demanding opposition to these bad aggregate mining bills, making the importance of our citizen-led watchdog advocacy crystal clear to Lansing. Voters sent legislators to Lansing to enact strong polluter pay laws and not streamline polluter giveaways!

Here is the good news: We stopped the vote on the bad aggregate mining bills in committee. We are working on a good version of the bills that provide more vital air and water protections during aggregate mining. The work to stop the vote on the bad bills helped us build a strong coalition of pro-environment lawmakers and activists ready to fight for a real environmental agenda. These achievements were only possible because we have a robust and committed base of members, like you, who show our strength when asked!

Stopping bad bills is good, but we have to work even harder for our good bills. It's hard work to stand up to the secret money influencing Lansing. We need all hands on deck to get there.

More good news: Legislators have introduced the best possible renewable energy package. We have strong leaders ready to stand. Consistent citizen support from Sierra Club members like you is an absolute necessity for the successful passage of our environmental agenda into law.

### ***We need YOU:***

Sign up to talk to your legislators about why we need strong climate action, polluter accountability, and better Great Lakes Protections. <http://tinyurl.com/ytar2tmh>

## Clean Renewable Energy Update: Almost there, help us across the finish line!

### Looking forward to 2024

In the coming months, our top priority will be renewable energy legislation, but our legislative agenda is much broader in scope. After getting our renewable energy legislation across the finish line, we need to keep fighting so that regulators take our cumulative impact into account when:

- Granting permits to polluters.
- Passing strong polluter pay laws.
- Enacting expansive PFAS regulations—including product bans on PFAS to get these toxic chemicals out of our waste stream.
- Guaranteeing stronger enforcement of our environmental laws to improve air and water quality.
- Fast track the best possible implementation of President Biden and Governor Whitmer's commitment to 30x30 land and water conservation efforts.

**We have so much to do. We must expand our pro-environmental majority in the state Legislature to accomplish this impressive to-do list! We will keep building the momentum needed to ensure the health of Michiganders and Great Lakes protections.**



## Sierra Club Fights For Legislative Action on Climate Change

By Tim Minotas, Deputy Legislative and Political Director

Climate alarms are ringing everywhere. On a global scale, Earth hit its highest recorded temperature for seven days straight, and in Michigan, we've faced life-threatening air pollution from Canadian wildfires. For consecutive weeks, Detroit had some of the worst air quality in the world at times due to more extensive and longer-lasting wildfires linked to climate change. It's easy for people to feel helpless. Fortunately, we're not. We have the most critical opportunity we've ever had in Michigan to attack the climate crisis head-on.

The Sierra Club and our partners have worked in the state legislature to ensure a new reality. We have a monumental opportunity to transform Michigan's energy future. We worked with Michigan House lawmakers to introduce three groundbreaking policies that reduce carbon emissions, make electricity more affordable and reliable, and invest in Michigan's clean energy economy.

### Clean Energy Standard: Setting vital clean energy targets (HB 4759 and SB 271)

To tackle the climate crisis, Michigan must replace the fossil fuels powering our electrical grid with clean energy to achieve carbon-free power by 2035. This bill would set a strong, binding statewide target for renewable power. President Biden has set a goal for a 100% clean-power sector nationwide by 2035, which is impossible without Michigan.

### Energy Waste Reduction: Setting cost-effective energy savings targets (HB 4761 and SB 273)

The cheapest, cleanest form of energy is the energy not used in the first place. Unfortunately, an outdated electrical grid powered by unreliable fossil fuels and homes with inadequate insulation and inefficient equipment means more energy is wasted to keep homes at safe temperatures, especially in extreme weather. This bill requires utilities like DTE and Consumers Energy to expand their commitments to reduce energy waste in Michigan homes and buildings, including a required focus on low-income communities, investments in expanding and diversifying energy efficiency jobs, and providing consumers with more affordable energy.

### Empowering the Michigan Public Service Commission (MPSC) (HB 4760 and SB 272)

The MPSC regulates investor-owned utilities by overseeing whether the companies use dirty fossil fuels or clean solar and wind to produce our energy, how much we pay for our energy bills, and utilities' response to power outages. This bill provides the MPSC with the tools to protect the public interest and achieve our climate, affordability and equity goals.

These bills represent more than just a response to the climate crisis. They present a transformative opportunity to secure a future where clean, reliable and affordable energy is a reality for all Michiganders.

The bills are set to move over the coming months. Let's seize this moment and transform our state into a national leader in climate action and equitable clean energy solutions. The urgency with which we need to move Michigan away from climate-disrupting pollution has never been greater. The work of the Sierra Club Michigan Chapter and our members is critical. Please stay engaged with our emails in the coming months to learn about specific actions you can take and commit to calling your state Representative and your state Senator and urge them to act on climate and clean energy – and keep calling until the legislature passes these bills! The utilities and fossil fuel interests won't back down, so neither can we!

For more ways to get engaged or with questions about the legislation, please contact Michigan Chapter Deputy Legislative and Political Director Tim Minotas at [tim.minotas@sierraclub.org](mailto:tim.minotas@sierraclub.org) or (517) 999-1305

### SUPPORT THE WORK OF SIERRA CLUB MICHIGAN LEGISLATIVE CAMPAIGN

Enclosed is my/our gift to the Sierra Club Michigan Chapter:  
\_\_\_\_\_ \$250 \_\_\_\_\_ \$100 \_\_\_\_\_ \$50 \$\_\_\_\_\_ Other

Give online at [bit.ly/SCMILegFund](http://bit.ly/SCMILegFund)

Your donation helps support our Legislative work at the Capitol and across the state.

**Your contribution to Sierra Club is not tax-deductible; it supports our effective, citizen-based advocacy and lobbying efforts.**

Please send your gift to Sierra Club Michigan Chapter, 602 W. Ionia Street, Lansing, MI 48933

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City/State/Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Employer: \_\_\_\_\_

Occupation: \_\_\_\_\_

## Healing Our Waters with Grassroots Engagement and Movements of Consequence

By Erma Leaphart-Gouch, Healing Our Waters Coalition, Co-Chair

"People make the world go around," or so the song says. Well, I believe this to be true.

For any movement of consequence, you'll find regular everyday folk working together with a shared vision and common goals, bringing about meaningful and equitable change. The most potent solutions address people's needs and positively impact those who have been harmed the most. Ultimately, our survival or how we live on this Earth, will be determined by how well our collective actions address those needs. Members of our society who best understand the value of one's quality of life are often those who are suffering its loss. Their voices must be heard. If we do not listen to them or care, it will spell disaster for all of us. I'm grateful for Sierra Club working with each of you, for EVERYONE.

I feel that a people-oriented, grassroots approach is evident in our work with Friends of the Rouge via the Rain Garden's to the Rescue program, where we have engaged thousands of community members that have attended rain garden or rain barrel workshops, volunteered or led rain garden plantings or attached a rain barrel to their downspout, learned to maintain rain gardens through our Stormwater Specialist Training or committed to planting a tree or native plants. We've engaged residents at block club meetings, outdoor events such as neighborhood farmer's markets, festivals, and bike and bus tours. People WANT to learn and do more to protect water quality and enjoy a healthy environment.

Our visits to Washington, D.C., during Healing Our Waters Great Lakes Coalition's "Great Lakes Day" include hundreds of people from across the Great Lakes region who actively restore the watersheds where they live, work and play. Participants are passionate about advocating for programs, laws and funding that protect the world's largest freshwater system. Their message is simple: We must restore our rivers, wetlands and lakes and protect them for our children, grandchildren and generations beyond. To learn more about the Great Lakes Conference in October 2023 visit: [www.healthylakes.org](http://www.healthylakes.org)

People make this world go round, so what you do matters! Thank you!

## Stormwater Specialist Training Program Achieves Record-Breaking Participation

By Elayne Elliott, Chapter Director

Houses of worship are amongst the largest property owners in cities. In Detroit, nearly 50% of parcels owned by places of worship are vacant lots. Vacant lots, many of which are mowed lawns, are often underutilized: communities could leverage these spaces to increase native pollinator habitat connectivity in urban areas. Many religious institutions in Detroit are installing rain gardens, which feature native plantings and divert stormwater runoff from the Great Lakes, in exchange for a monthly discount on their drainage fee. Rain gardens require specialized knowledge to ensure native plants continue to thrive while maintaining the garden's functionality.

After nearly a decade of experience through the Rain Gardens to the Rescue program, we learned that in-depth maintenance education is critical to the long-term maintenance of a rain garden. We created the Stormwater Specialist Training (SWST) program to fill this void and equip course participants with the skills they need to be independent maintenance specialists. This year, the program achieved record-breaking success with 25 participants. Following the course, we connected participants with paid contract opportunities through our partner, Friends of the Rouge.

We are so excited to continue this work, which helps us uphold the principles of Biden's 30x30 initiative and builds on existing efforts to protect the Great Lakes. The 30x30 initiative is a national effort to conserve 30% of native habitat and boost biodiversity by 2030. To learn more about 30x30 or SWST, email [glgc@michigan.sierraclub.org](mailto:glgc@michigan.sierraclub.org).



Left to right: Melissa Damaschke - Erb Family Foundation Vice President of Programs (former Sierra Club Great Lakes Program Director - OWA). Cyndi Ross, Friends of the Rouge, Restoration Manager (FOTR is Sierra Club Michigan Chapter, Great Lakes Great Communities - major partner), Erma Leaphart, Sierra Club Michigan Chapter Great Lakes Organizer (me) - Plus Co-Chair of Healing Our Waters Great Lakes



Healing Our Waters thrives because of community volunteers working on projects like Rain Barrels to the Rescue.

PHOTO BY ERMA LEAPHART-GOUCH



## Still Creating Waves & Momentum in Grand Haven

By Jan O'Connell, Senior Energy Issues Organizer

In the past year, the City of Grand Haven has made a series of very proactive and aggressive energy, climate and sustainable actions. In the Summer of 2022, the city formed the Sustainability & Energy Commission (SEC), consisting of a handful of Sierra Club members and key energy activists in its 13-member body.

A subcommittee of environmental warriors from the Sustainability & Energy Commission quickly began fundraising to raise \$100,000 to establish a Grand Haven Area Community Energy Plan and acquire a top-notch energy consultant as a major player and leader in developing the plan.

The three main goals of the Community Energy Plan are determining the carbon footprint of the Grand Haven Board of Light & Power's service area, setting strategies to create greater efficiencies in the city, and developing a plan and strategy for achieving a successful Community Energy Plan.

In about half a year, the Community Energy Plan Task Force applied and received grants from two local foundations, the Grand Haven Community Foundation and the Loutit Foundation, and a grant from the Michigan Dept of Environment, Great Lakes & Energy. The Task Force also obtained a major contribution from the City of Grand Haven that matched the other three significant grants and an excellent contribution from the City of Ferrysburg, helping them surpass the hundred thousand dollar goal. A big shout out to the wonderful support the above entities provide to the Grand Haven Area Community Energy Plan!

With these great fundraising results, a request for proposal was sent out, bringing in many proposals that have been whittled down to the top three energy consulting firms: MI Energy

Options working w/Five Lakes Energy, then Garforth International & Public Sector Consultants. The Task Force will soon select the winning bid.

Grand Haven has created waves and momentum resulting in the closing and removal of the Sims coal plant from Harbor Island, public pressure forcing the utility to discard plans for constructing a gas plant, and now moving forward with a Community Energy Plan. If you have any questions regarding Grand Haven's Energy Plan, or if you would like to start up an Energy Plan in you community, email [jan.oconnell@sierraclub.org](mailto:jan.oconnell@sierraclub.org) or call Jan at 616-956-6646.

**WE ARE MAKING THE SWITCH TO DIGITAL!**

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<https://bit.ly/optinMISC>

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SIERRA CLUB  
MICHIGAN CHAPTER

## VOTE FOR MICHIGAN CHAPTER EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEMBERS

The seven Michigan Chapter Sierra Club members listed on these two pages are running for four at-large seats on the Michigan Chapter Executive Committee (ExCom). ExCom members set Chapter priorities and policies, ensure financial stability and solvency and monitor and evaluate Sierra Club activities in Michigan. Their willingness to serve illustrates a strong commitment to grassroots activism that makes Sierra Club the most effective environmental group in the country. Due to space constraints, candidates have to limit their statements to 100 words or less.

**Vote for no more than four candidates. You can cast your vote in one of two ways:**

**-Go online to our election web page and ballot at <https://forms.gle/afAhdVdFymUDta1s6l>**

**-Mail in the filled in ballot on page 13 of this newsletter.**

Sierra Club membership numbers are required to vote by USPS mail or online. Find your eight digit membership number above your address on the back cover. To vote by mail write your member number on the outside of the envelope. Only joint memberships can cast two votes, or the ballot will be disqualified. Paper ballots must be received at the Michigan Chapter office by Dec. 1, 2023 and votes online must be cast by 11:59 p.m. on Dec. 1, 2023.

Questions or concerns about the ballot should be directed to [anne.woiwode@michigan.sierraclub.org](mailto:anne.woiwode@michigan.sierraclub.org).

### John Rebers

I have been a Sierra Club member for more than 30 years. I became an active member of the Central Upper Peninsula Group soon after it formed in the 1990s, serving as Group Chair for much of the time the group was active. We organized trail cleanups at Little Presque Isle, and had outings at Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore, Isle Royale National Park, and the Sylvania Wilderness. The CUP Group focused on forestry and mining issues while active. Although we no longer have an active group, I would be interested in getting involved in the Chapter ExCom.



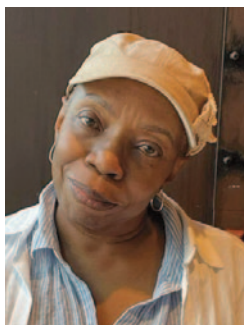
### Will Garcia

I am running to serve on the Executive Committee to bring a unique and often unheard perspective to the board – the perspective of environmental workers. As a Solid Waste Program Specialist for Washtenaw County, I have been responsible for managing over two million pounds of hazardous household waste since 2018. In addition to program management, I physically collect people's unwanted pesticides, mercury and other hazardous materials for end-of-life management. Environmental activism must be anti-racist, coalition-building, and rooted in solidarity to work for all of us. If I have the privilege of being elected, I am ready to get to work!"



### Rhonda Anderson

Rhonda Anderson is a lifelong activist that became involved in the environmental movement in the late 1990s. Rhonda was instrumental in working with community leaders and residents to bring forth settlement agreements with Marathon Refinery that reduced toxic emissions and brought an air monitor to the only public school in Detroit's 48217 community. She boasts more than 30 years of experience as a community and environmental justice organizer and is the recipient of Sierra Club's Virginia Ferguson and Mike McClosky awards. Her varied experience, background and skills will assist ExCom in working in environmental justice and rural communities throughout Michigan.



### Jerry Hasspacher

Dedicated to preserving forests and combating climate change and early experience attempting to preserve 320 acres of wild land led me to join Sierra Club in 2005. Noteworthy contributions include establishing the Warren Cool Cities Group and the Warren Environmental Advisory Committee, initiating the Green Cruise bike rides, delivering 212 environmental presentations to students and adult groups, and advocating for Belle Isle's Dark Sky Park status. My goals involve exploring ways to engage volunteers, supporting efforts to reign in road commissions, encouraging cities to adopt Climate Action Plans, educating the public about the benefits of electrification, and much more.



## Ebony Elmore

I am a lifelong River Rouge resident and organizer. As a child, I was inspired by Captain Planet and visits to national parks to become an activist for climate justice. I've spent 10 years with the Sierra Club lobbying for change, shutting down a coal plant, leading health efforts for NAACP, and increasing membership. My biggest accomplishment is owning the first eco-friendly daycare and education service in my hometown. With Sierra Club's support at our annual "It Takes a Village Youth Fest," we passed out 1,000 backpacks and sustainable resources in the Tri-City Area. I'm honored to be nominated for the Executive committee. I'll work hard to educate and advocate for change with like-minded individuals.



## Jacob Welch

Many of you don't know me yet as this is my first official rodeo with the Sierra Club, but I have been involved with environmental activism as soon as I could read. As a young person, it is important that we champion the fight for environmental sustainability and preservation for all generations. I have seen the energy that my peers care about the issue, and I'd like for us to tap into that.



## Mark Meadows

The protection of the environment has motivated me my entire adult life. My work as Assistant Attorney General representing the DNR, DEQ and serving on AG Kelley's Environmental Task Force were the result of my commitment to that task. I carried that forward in my personal life, with policies the City adopted while I was East Lansing's Mayor from 1997-2005 and 2015-2019. During my service in the Michigan House from 2006-2012, I promoted the agenda of the Sierra Club in my many leadership positions. I currently serve as Chair of the Chapter's Political Committee, and am a member of the Chapter Executive Committee and the Sierra Club National Political Team, serving as Chair of the Federal Endorsements Committee.



### SIERRA CLUB MICHIGAN CHAPTER 2023 EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE BALLOT

Vote for no more than four (4) candidates. The second column of boxes is for the second member of a joint membership only.

|                         |                          |                          |
|-------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| <b>JOHN REBERS</b>      | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <b>RHONDA ANDERSON</b>  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <b>WILL GARCIA</b>      | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <b>JERRY HASSPACHER</b> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <b>EBONY ELMORE</b>     | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <b>JACOB WELCH</b>      | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <b>MARK MEADOWS</b>     | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

#### Clip out and mail your ballot to:

Michigan Chapter Sierra Club  
Attn: Chapter Elections  
602 W. Ionia Street  
Lansing, MI 48933

Write your Sierra Club Membership number on the outside of your envelope to validate your ballot (membership number is above address on the back cover of newsletter).

**Your ballot must be received on or before  
December 1, 2023.**

## Sierra Club Grows With A Bold New Restructuring

By David Holtz

After joining Sierra Club as a staff member several years ago, I asked a long-time national leader of my new organization to describe what it was like working with the country's oldest, largest grassroots environmental group. Sierra Club, she told me, "was like a big green caterpillar: when you get all of its many legs moving, our energy and momentum can be unstoppable."

Today, as we face the climate fight of our lives and new opportunities for a green economy, Sierra Club's ability to relentlessly mobilize citizens will be more unstoppable in more places.

When the national Sierra Club Executive Director Ben Jealous took the helm early this year, he began accelerating a bold organizational change for Sierra Club grounded in grassroots power building and rooted in our 64 local chapters like Michigan, a plan that puts more legs in play to power our climate fight.

A significant focus of the new Sierra Club restructuring is ensuring we have a staff director in all 50 states, including red and purple places where local Sierra Club volunteers will have unique abilities to lead the climate fight. Eighty seven percent of large-scale renewable energy projects will be in places where Sierra Club didn't have a state director. Now that's changing.

Moreover, where there were once seven different field models and duplicative structures, we are now organized into four regional hubs with field staff supported by communications, digital, fundraising and other capacities. Michigan, for example, is in the central region along with states like Illinois and Wisconsin and will draw on more national resources for campaigns like the movement to get Enbridge's Line 5 oil pipelines out of the Great Lakes. Michigan and other local chapters will continue setting local priorities.

"Our success depends on two things," says Executive Director Jealous. "Continuing to build and execute the best campaigns to save our planet and wild places and also centering and investing more in our traditional work of leading soul-changing outings and winning righteous local fights. One is the great must-win global existential imperative of our times. The others are how we nurture and grow the Sierra Club and our movement."

Being Sierra Club's best self means building and expanding core strengths and keeping all our many legs moving forward together to save our planet. That's particularly important given the time frames in the new federal climate law to get money out the door to build a new green economy.

"We are retooling for this climate moment, and that means retooling to be strong everywhere across the country," says Jealous.

## We Welcome Andrew Sarpolis

Amidst one of its most significant transformations in a decade, the Sierra Club is shifting more resources to support chapters and is introducing a new staff department and staff member in Michigan – the Field Department and Field Manager, respectively. This addition aims to complement the existing chapter structure, and will not change any volunteer chapter roles or responsibilities. Instead, it will invigorate our efforts and provide even more support to our existing work and new campaigns.

With great enthusiasm, we welcome Andrew Sarpolis (pronouns: he/him) as the new Michigan Field Manager at Sierra Club. Andrew's passion for climate justice and his decade of experience as an organizer for the Sierra Club's Beyond Coal Campaign in southeastern Michigan and Lansing make him a great fit for this role.

A lifelong Michigander, Andrew's love for the outdoors began in the Boy Scouts. From an early age, he enjoyed getting outside and cycling, gardening and hiking in the mountains. Before joining Sierra Club, he interned with (at that time) State Representative Rashida Tlaib, and worked on political campaigns for environmentally-conscious candidates.

In his capacity as Michigan Field Manager, Andrew will work in collaboration with Chapter Director Elayne Elliott and support field staff working to build out the climate movement and our community organizing efforts. From organizing events in local communities to mobilizing people for action, organizers play a key role in supporting our work and bridging national campaigns and local engagement. The Field Department will work closely with our organizers to support them and the chapter as we move into one of the most critical climate moments ever in Michigan.

Let us extend a warm welcome to Andrew as he embarks on this vital role, helping shape a new field department for the Sierra Club in Michigan. Together, we will continue our unwavering commitment to environmental stewardship and the fight for climate justice.

### New Network Alert



Growing Green is a Sierra Club network reaching out to communities in Grand Rapids and Kent County, encouraging natural lawns & native gardens for neighborhoods!

**Email:** [growinggreen@michigan.sierraclub.org](mailto:growinggreen@michigan.sierraclub.org)

**Facebook:** [www.facebook.com/SierraClubGGR/](https://www.facebook.com/SierraClubGGR/)

**Website:** <https://bit.ly/GrowingGreenGR>



In Memory of  
**James 'Jim' Berkey**  
1944- 2022

Jim Berkey was a very humble, good-hearted and kind person and was deeply committed to protecting the natural world. During his lifetime, Jim planted hundreds of trees, many of them on his 60-acre homestead in the northern lower peninsula town of Herron where Jim and Cindy resided for many years. With Jim's love for trees and the Northern woods, they also purchased property in Paradise, MI where, of course, Jim planted more trees. He also planted trees at other Michigan sites, such as a Sierra Club cedar tree planting along the AuSable River in Grayling.

Jim was very supportive of the work of the Michigan Sierra Club, attended a couple of our Executive Committee Meetings in the Northern reaches of Michigan, and has been a longtime and very-generous donor to the Chapter even after they left the state and moved south to his family's longtime homestead in Delta, Ohio.

Jim and his wife Cindy also supported many other environmental and humanitarian organizations.

This quote below is a true description of Jim Berkey..



*"The true meaning of life is to plant trees,  
under whose shade you do not expect to sit."*

*Nelson Henderson*

## What will your legacy be for Michigan?

*Care for the environment today and tomorrow! Your bequest enables the Chapter to continue to protect the natural splendor of Michigan's forests and waterways for years to come.*

Bequests to the Michigan Chapter support conservation work in the state where you reside. Planned Gifts are particularly important to the Chapter as they can provide significant resources to allow continued conservation activities over an extended period of time. For more information about placing the Michigan Chapter in your estate plans or if you have already made provisions to do so, please let us know so we can acknowledge your generosity. Contact Elayne Elliott, Chapter Director, at [elayne.elliott@sierraclub.org](mailto:elayne.elliott@sierraclub.org) or by phone at 313-574-0494.

A graphic with a blue border and a light blue background. At the top, it says "WE ARE MAKING THE SWITCH TO DIGITAL!" in bold black letters. Below that, it says "OPT IN FOR A PRINTED VERSION HERE:" followed by the URL "https://bit.ly/optinMISC". A QR code is centered below the URL, with a curved arrow pointing to it from the text "Scan me". At the bottom right is the Sierra Club Michigan Chapter logo, which includes a tree icon and the text "SIERRA CLUB MICHIGAN CHAPTER".



The Sierra Club's members and supporters are 3.8 million of your friends and neighbors. Inspired by nature, we work together to protect our communities and the planet.

The Club is America's oldest, largest and most influential grassroots environmental organization.

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## Supporting Your Chapter

### Sierra Club's Michigan Legacy Council

Sierra Club established its Michigan Legacy Council to honor individuals, groups and organizations making significant gifts to the Michigan Chapter. Their partnership and commitment to our work leaves a lasting legacy. This list is current as of our publication date. Please join us in thanking the current listing of Michigan Legacy Council members:

#### **FENS & SAPLINGS** **\$500-\$999**

- Carrie Aikman
- Andrew Atwood
- Martha Brownscombe & Jay Rosen
- Rose Burke
- Peggy Bocks
- Gillian Carey
- Laurie Chaney
- Abigail 'Abby' Clark
- Patricia & Bernard Cooney
- Connie Crowenwett
- Melvin & Mary Ann Czechowski
- Michelle Deatrack
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- David & Carol Diephuis
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- Earthshare Chapters
- Elayne Elliott
- Erb Family Foundation
- Cheryl Evola
- Daniel Farough & Manjola Cabej
- Mr Mark Ferguson
- Kenneth Gamble
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- Mr Chester Sternicki
- Janet-Sue Strait
- Timon P Tesar
- Dawn Thomas
- Ati & Jennifer Tislerics
- Laura Trizenberg
- Charles Van Zoeren
- Regina & John Wilson
- Anonymous Donor (3)

#### **STREAMS & WHITE PINES** **\$1,000-\$2,499**

- Joyce Arakelian
- Bradley Arvin
- Richard M Barron
- Stuart Batterman
- Peggy Bocks
- David Bolig
- Elaine A Bridges
- Lee Burton & Roberta Shaw-Reeves
- Joanne Cantoni
- Margaret Clarke
- Michael R Clark M.D.
- Allison Cooper
- Estate of Esther Dean
- Larry Deck & Pat Frey
- Margaret Flynn
- Joanne Domres Folsom
- Frank & Emily Gobright
- Chris & Tamela Hamilton
- Denise Harris
- David Henney
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- Margaret Idema
- Richard & Katherine Kinas
- Jay Korinek
- Samuel & Patricia Lacina
- Rob Macgregor
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- Michigan League of Conservation Voters
- Rita Mitchell & Ed Steinman
- Thomas & Jill Newhouse
- Kathy Nohr
- Jan & Dennis O'Connell
- Gail & John Philbin
- Stanley & Connie Rajnak
- John & Janice Rebers
- Harriet Ribbens
- William & Elizabeth Salot
- Serge Schillio
- Dr Sherman & Julie Shultz

- Henry S. Spenski Jr
- Villabeth Taylor
- Ken & Mary Thompson
- Todd S Wilkinson
- Anonymous Donors (3)

#### **RIVERS & GROVES** **\$2,500-\$4,999**

- Myrna Hitchman
- Helen & Al LeBlanc
- Gwen Nystuen
- Anonymous Donors (1)

#### **DUNE & SHORELINES** **\$5,000-\$7,499**

- Jim Hewitt
- Nancy Shiffler
- Kathy Sneden

#### **MARSHES & PRAIRIES** **\$7,500-\$14,999**

- Mr & Mrs Larry Bell
- Mike Keeler & Sherry Hayden
- Jean Gramlich

#### **GREAT LAKES & GREAT FORESTS** **\$15,000+**

- Ceci Bauer & Tim Flynn
- Thomas Buhr
- Estate of William & Kathleen Davis
- Mr John R Hunting
- Jenkins Foundation
- Estate of Magdalena Herkhof
- Estate of Dorothy MacKay
- Estate of Patricia Teter
- Wege Foundation
- Tom & Anne Woiwode