A Healthy Environment Needs A Healthy Democracy

by Gail Philbin, Chapter Director

In 2017, the Sierra Club Michigan Chapter will celebrate its 50th anniversary with a big party keynoted by U.S. Sen. Gary Peters to honor our past and look to the next 50 years. In reviewing the last five decades to prepare for 2017, one message rings loud and clear — a healthy, functioning democracy that reflects the will of the people is necessary for meaningful progress on environmental issues, whether it is fossil fuels, forest biodiversity or factory farms.

Some of the Chapter’s biggest successes, like the establishment of Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore in 1970, came about because volunteers like Virginia Prentice, Gwen Nystuen, and Douglas Scott gave hundreds of hours of their time to get educated and engaged to make an impact in Lansing and Washington, DC. We also had, in the late ’70s and ’80s, legislators like former U.S. Rep. Dale Kildee and U.S. Sen. Carl Levin who were willing to work with Sierra Club volunteers and others as well as their Congressional colleagues to pass the 1987 Michigan Wilderness Act protecting 90,000 acres of old growth forest, lakes and dunes.

Today, given the urgency of climate change and our political polarization, we need an engaged and informed electorate and a responsive government. Two of Sierra Club Michigan’s top strategic priorities are Growing Democracy and Establishing an Environmental Majority in the Legislature. We’re working on these in several ways, as you can see on p. 8 and in the special election insert featuring our endorsed candidates.

All year we’ve been raising awareness of the need for redistricting reform. People need to understand that their lawmakers have unfairly drawn districts to discourage political competition. This makes it harder than ever to achieve environmental gains. To learn how you can help, email cecilia.garcia@sierraclub.org.

In addition to district reform, we are educating Michiganders about the importance of state investment in transportation, water treatment systems, and other infrastructure with environmental and public health implications (p. 8).

A healthy future depends on a healthy democracy that enables us to effectively tackle the pressing issues you’ll read about in this Mackinac. The 2016 election season offers a perfect opportunity to take an important step towards that future.

VOTE!

Every year is an election year at the Sierra Club! Candidates for the Chapter ExCom and this year’s ballot are on pages 12-13. Please Vote!

What is green all over and turns 50 next year? See page 15
In the Spotlight

1 A Healthy Environment Needs A Healthy Democracy
2 The Battle for Clean Drinking Water Is On / Find Us Online

Group Info

4 Mitigate Climate Change
5 Battle Against Proposed Natural Gas Pipelines Continues / Sierra Club Proactive in Preventing Future Line 5 Disasters / Sierra Club Solar Partnership
6 A DTE Announces Plans to Retire River Rouge, Trenton Channel, and St. Clair Coal-Fired Power Plants
7 Clean Energy for a Beautiful Grand Haven / Get Involved!

Democracy In Action

8 Now’s Your Chance to Make a Real Difference: Vote on November 8!
9 How Green is Your State Legislator? / Priorities Michigan

Protect & Restore

10 Michigan’s Biodiversity Watch Out For That Deer / Fish Farm Update
11 Great Lakes Ecosystem Updated Report Follows Manure and Money in Michigan / Waukesha Diversion Update / Aquaculture Policy

Environmental Justice

12 Detroit Builds Green Infrastructure / Rain Gardens to the Rescue

Chapter Elections

12-13 Award Winners

Supporting Your Chapter

14 Thank You, Earthshare Donors
15 In Memory of Harold Stokes / Create an Environmental Legacy / In Memoriam: Richard J. Dunaj-Ring / We’re turning 50 in 2017 — Mark Your Calendar Now!
16 Sierra Club’s Michigan Legacy Council

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Sign up for our twice monthly Michigan Chapter update at www.tiny.cc/SCMCUpdate

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In the Spotlight

The Battle for Clean Drinking Water Is On
by David Holtz, Michigan Chapter Chair

Flint Mayor Karen Weaver hopes that the disaster of lead contamination that began in her city more than two and a half years ago and presently continues will spark a national revolution of public health reforms for drinking water. If that happens, it may be because a Flint resident, Melissa Mays, and a dozen other activists, skilled professionals and drinking water experts got together in July in Washington, DC and began the initial work of what they hope will soon become a citizen-led campaign to make America’s drinking water safer.

Getting lead-free drinking water in America has been elusive. In part, it is because it involves replacing lead water lines in hundreds of communities. Not difficult, but very costly. Replacing lead water lines costs money, but the public health price for potentially millions is much higher. According to the Centers for Disease Control, there is no safe lead level. It is a neurotoxin that causes brain damage, loss of kidney function, and nervous system disorders. This is why the community of Flint received national attention by putting a human face on lead contamination.

Flint’s Melissa Mays was one of those courageous people who, from the day around July 2014 when she noticed her family’s drinking water came out of the faucet yellow, wouldn’t rest until something was done about it. Mays still isn’t resting, because Flint’s water crisis continues to persist. Communities across the country with lead in their drinking water won’t be safe until laws are changed. Public utilities must be required to get rid of lead pipes entirely. We need better drinking water quality standards and tougher enforcement to protect public health. Otherwise we will continue seeing people, especially those in older communities, poisoned by their drinking water.

Mays, and another volunteer, Cyndi Roper, Sierra Club’s Michigan Chapter Safe Drinking Water Representative, are working to do just that — change the nation’s drinking water laws. They, and allies from places like Wisconsin to New Orleans, know it won’t be easy. They will be up against powerful interests, including some public utilities, who until now have opposed reforms as being too costly.

It will take a national grassroots citizens campaign to make sure that our health, and that of our children, is the most important bottom line when it comes to the water we drink. So let’s get started!

For more information visit www.sierraclub.org/michigan/flint-water-disaster.
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 eight regional Groups and two 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 gail.philbin@sierraclub.org.

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<tr>
<th>Group Info</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Clearwater Conservation Committee / CCC</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>COUNTRIES: Antrim, Benzie, Crawford, Grand Traverse, Kalkaska, Leelanau, Manistee, Missaukee, Otsego, Roscommon and Wexford</td>
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<tr>
<td>MEETS: at group leader homes in Livingston County</td>
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<td>WEBSITE: michigan.sierraclub.org/crossroads</td>
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<tr>
<td>FACEBOOK: Crossroads Group Sierra Club</td>
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<td><strong>Crossroads Group / CG</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>COUNTRIES: Livingston and western Oakland</td>
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<td>WEBSITE: michigan.sierraclub.org/crossroads</td>
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<tr>
<td>FACEBOOK: Crossroads Group Sierra Club</td>
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<td>CHAIR: Lee Burton, 810-231-9045 or <a href="mailto:lee.burton@michigan.sierraclub.org">lee.burton@michigan.sierraclub.org</a></td>
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<td><strong>Greater Grand Rapids Committee / GGRC</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>COUNTRIES: Kent and Ottawa</td>
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<td><strong>Huron Valley Group / HVG</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>COUNTRIES: Washtenaw, Lenawee and Monroe</td>
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<tr>
<td>MEETS: in Ann Arbor</td>
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<tr>
<td>WEBSITE: michigan.sierraclub.org/huron</td>
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<td>FACEBOOK: Sierra Club Huron Valley Group</td>
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<td>EMAIL: <a href="mailto:HVGSierraClub@gmail.com">HVGSierraClub@gmail.com</a></td>
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<td><strong>Nepessing Group / NG</strong></td>
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<td>COUNTRIES: Genesee, Lapeer and northwestern Oakland</td>
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<td>MEETS: in Flint</td>
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<tr>
<td>WEBSITE: michigan.sierraclub.org/nepessing</td>
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<td>FACEBOOK: Sierra Club Nepessing</td>
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**Southeast Michigan Group / SEMG**

**Southwest Michigan Group / SWMG**

**Three Lakes Group / TLG**

**Central Michigan Group / CMG**

**Central Upper Peninsula Group / CUPG**

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**Central Upper Peninsula Group / CUPG**
Mitigate Climate Change

Battle Against Proposed Natural Gas Pipelines Continues
by Nancy Shiffler

Southeastern Michigan is in the pathway of two proposed natural gas pipelines, both carrying fracked natural gas from Pennsylvania, Ohio and West Virginia, across Ohio, into Michigan, and continuing into Canada. The two pipelines, ET Rover and Nexus, use essentially parallel routes that include portions of Lenawee, Monroe, Washtenaw, and Livingston Counties.

If the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) approve the projects, the corporations can use eminent domain to establish rights of way on private land for the defined route, including pipelines, compressor stations, and metering stations. Both projects have submitted Draft Environmental Impact Statements to FERC, followed by public comment periods. Ultimately, FERC is supposed to weigh the “public need” vs. potential adverse impacts of each project before determining whether to approve. The Sierra Club argues that neither project has demonstrated need or financial viability to outweigh adverse environmental impacts.

DTE Energy has a 50% interest in the Nexus pipeline via its unregulated affiliate, DTE Pipeline. DTE’s regulated components, DTE Electric and DTE Gas, have recently petitioned the Michigan Public Service Commission (MPSC) for customer rate increases that we contend would essentially subsidize the construction of the pipeline. Such actions of a regulated portion of a company subsidizing the unregulated portion are contrary to both MPSC and FERC guidelines. The Sierra Club is advocating on this issue before both FERC and the MPSC.

For more information about fighting pipelines go to www.sierraclub.org/michigan/beyond-natural-gas-oil.

Sierra Club Proactive in Preventing Future Line 5 Disasters
by David Holtz, Oil & Water Don’t Mix Campaign Coordinator

One of Sierra Club’s top priorities in Michigan is protecting the Great Lakes by shutting down the flow of oil through Enbridge’s Line 5 pipelines in the Straits of Mackinac.

Tackling the oil industry is no easy task. However, two-thirds of Michigan voters say they oppose pipelines in the turbulent Straits. Political leaders like Attorney General Bill Schuette will eventually need to listen. Even though he has the authority and responsibility to hold Enbridge responsible for pipeline violations, the attorney general has thus far refused to hold Enbridge accountable by ending the state’s easement agreement with the Canadian transport giant.

One way to get Schuette’s attention is by making sure your community is taking a stand on Line 5. Every Michigan community has a stake in protecting the Great Lakes. More than 67 Michigan communities and tribal governments and organizations have already acted. Is your local government among those who are adding their voice? You can find out by going to www.oilandwaterdontmix.org/municipal_resolutions.

If your city, township or county aren’t on that list, you can help. Just email chapter chair and Oil & Water Don’t Mix campaign coordinator David Holtz at david@davidholtz.org. Find out how your community can join others in Michigan who want to make sure the Great Lakes aren’t Enbridge’s next oil pipeline disaster.
DTE Announces Plans to Retire River Rouge, Trenton Channel, and St. Clair Coal-Fired Power Plants

by Michigan Beyond Coal Staff

Michigan took a major step toward moving beyond coal when DTE Energy announced plans to retire the River Rouge, St. Clair, and Trenton coal-fired power plants between 2020 and 2023. Combined, these plants emit over ten million tons of climate-polluting carbon dioxide, 45,000 tons of harmful sulfur dioxide, and 12,000 tons of smog-causing nitrogen oxides.

DTE Energy Chairman and CEO Gerry Anderson said the company will look to replace those units, “with a mix of newer, more modern and cleaner sources of energy generation such as wind, natural gas and solar.”

The Trenton Channel and River Rouge power plants lack modern pollution controls. The plants are in an area of Michigan that the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) designated as “failing to meet federal air quality standards” for sulfur dioxide (SO₂). This area was named “Epicenter of Asthma Burden” by the Michigan Department of Community Health. Earlier this year, EPA proposed to designate St. Clair County as failing to meet that same standard.

“These closures will dramatically improve the health of the communities surrounding these plants, as well as provide an opportunity for a just transition for communities and workers,” said Regina Strong, Director of the Sierra Club’s Beyond Coal Campaign in Michigan. “DTE should immediately begin discussions with the community to develop a responsible transition plan including a concrete timeline and replacement investments in genuinely clean renewable energy like wind and solar, rather than another polluting fossil fuel like natural gas.”

The Sierra Club, local community advocates, EarthJustice, and other partner organizations advocated for reducing pollution from these plants on behalf of impacted communities for many years. In April of this year, Newsweek released a cover story chronicling the severe health impacts the plants have had on surrounding communities.

Pressure mounted after community members, political leaders, and clean air advocates flooded hearings calling on the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality and EPA to address the SO₂ levels from the coal plants that exceed Clean Air Act limits. It was not until very recently — 14 months after the deadline — that the state finally submitted a plan to EPA for review.

“This is what my community has been calling for, for many years,” said State Rep. Stephanie Chang. “The River Rouge plant is in my district and area residents have long suffered from the effects of many pollutants, including sulfur dioxide, particulate matter and other toxins that are the result of burning coal. The air pollution has a major and lasting impact on the health of my residents. It’s a good thing that DTE is planning to retire these plants and I look forward to working with the company, the people in my district and the workers to plan for the future of these communities.”

Sierra Club and other groups worked at the Michigan Public Service Commission to push DTE Energy to stop wasting money on economically-challenged coal plants and, instead, invest in clean energy to create jobs and economic development in Michigan. This resulted in the Commission questioning the reasonableness of DTE’s spending on some coal units.

“Coal plants like River Rouge, Trenton Channel, and St. Clair are costly, polluting dinosaurs that should be retired as expeditiously as possible. We’re gladened that DTE Energy is starting that retirement process,” said Shannon Fisk, Managing Attorney at the non-profit environmental law firm EarthJustice. “It is critical that DTE Energy not only ramps up clean energy investments, but also provides a just economic transition for the employees and communities that have relied on the wages and taxes paid by these coal plants for the past more than 40 years.”

Moving forward, residents and advocates will focus on pressuring DTE to transition to clean, renewable energy. Community residents and leaders have begun working for creating economic development in the impacted communities that includes training and transition of workers to clean energy jobs.

River Rouge, Trenton Channel, and St. Clair coal-fired power plants are the 234th, 235th, and 236th coal plants to retire or announce retirement since 2010, locking in the reduction of over 443 million metric tons of carbon dioxide emissions, the equivalent of 92 million passenger vehicles.

For more information about Michigan’s Beyond Coal Campaign, visit www.sierraclub.org/michigan/beyond-coal.
Clean Energy for a Beautiful Grand Haven
by Jan O’Connell, West Michigan Clean Air & Energy Campaign

Local Sierran’s and other energy advocates from Grand Haven participated in two Coast Guard parades held on July 30th (Kids Parade) and August 6th (Grand Parade). The main emphasis of our entries was to promote the message “Clean Energy for an even more beautiful Grand Haven.” The parades were a great opportunity to reach out to the community and others on the importance of getting beyond investing and dependence on coal & other fossil-fueled based energy generation, moving instead to a clean energy path in Grand Haven.

We planned our parade entry — everything from captain, to sailor attire, with banners and messages displayed in life-preserving rings such as “Clean Energy Rocks,” “Yes.. to Clean Energy,” “Life-saving Clean Green Energy... Buoy you’ll be happy!” And we had three Priuses red, white and blue leading our parade entry, and steering the way to clean energy.

In just over a month or so of preparation, we recruited over 50 volunteers to help with the parades. Thanks to all involved for taking time out of the summer to become part of these Coast Guard Clean Energy events!

Prior to the parades, we held two meet-ups with local members and activists in Grand Haven. Several concerns were aired and discussed, one being the American Lung Association’s Annual “State of the Air” report. Released earlier this Spring, it showed Grand Haven, Grand Rapids and Muskegon areas placing 20th in the most ozone-polluted areas in the entire U.S.

In addition to ozone, we discussed that this is an opportune time to be involved in transitioning to less expensive, clean energy technologies including Energy Efficiency. The aging energy production infrastructure that now exists in Grand Haven will be subject to increasingly strict and expensive regulations that will result in increased financial pressures on coal and fossil fueled-based energy production and their ratepayers. Clean energy is a win-win for Grand Haven residents.

For more information or to be involved in this Clean Energy Campaign contact me at 616-956-6646 or email me at jan.oconnell@sierraclub.org.

GET INVOLVED!

Like what we do? Support our work with a donation. Use the form on p. 3 or donate online at tinyurl.com/supportMisc.

Learn more about the Sierra Club and the work we do towards Environmental Justice at www.sierraclub.org/environmental-justice.
Interview with Richard Morley Barron

Chapter Political Director Mike Berkowitz recently sat down with Political Committee Chair Richard Morley Barron to ask a few questions about Michigan politics and the environment.

**MB:** What can Sierra Club members do to make a difference?

**RMB:** Everyone can do something! The most effective things you can do are donate money to the Michigan Sierra Political Action Committee (donation info is in the election guide) and/or volunteer for one of our endorsed candidates. Every dollar donated helps us contact more voters, train interns, and elect environmental champions. For details or to get involved, email mike.berkowitz@sierraclub.org or call 517-999-1305.

**MB:** How are the 2016 elections looking in general?

**RMB:** In Michigan, we have a very regressive government when it comes to environmental issues but are fighting to change that. We have many competitive races in Michigan pitting environmentalists against candidates who support corporate polluters. The Political Committee is working to elect strong environmentalists with the limited resources we have. I predict that we’ll have more environmental leaders in state and federal government after this election is over.

**MB:** What are the biggest environmental issues candidates are talking about?

**RMB:** Thoughtful environmental candidates are concerned about the serious challenges of climate change. They understand the urgent need to develop renewable energy sources, which will have the additional benefit of creating new, good-paying jobs in Michigan. Environmental leaders also grasp the vital importance of protecting our water in light of the Flint water crisis.

**MB:** How is the Michigan Chapter Political Program doing this year?

**RMB:** I’m proud to report that we are stronger than ever! We raised more money to use in the election this year than any previous election cycle. Our nationally-renowned Political Internship program is expansive and effective. We’ve trained 55 environmentally minded students from all over the state and deployed them to help our endorsed candidates win their races.

**MB:** How green is your state legislator?

**RMB:** After two years of relentless attacks on the environment from the Michigan legislature, we’ve put together an environmental scorecard to show how “green” your state legislators are. Find out if your State Representative/Senator are Environmental Champions or Pollution Promoters at tinyurl.com/SCMIScorecard.

**MB:** Where can people find more information about their voting district?

**RMB:** Check out our Election Guide (included in this newsletter) or see it online at www.tinyurl.com/2016SCMIElectionGuide.

**NOW’S YOUR CHANCE TO MAKE A REAL DIFFERENCE: VOTE ON NOVEMBER 8!**

Voting in the election is the most important thing you can do for the environment in 2016.

The Michigan Legislature is set on passing bills that directly attack the environment, threaten our water and air quality, and endanger our forests and wildlife. Who gets elected (or defeated) will determine how well our legislature safeguards the state’s natural resources and environmental health for the next two years. Make sure to check out this issue’s Election Guide or find it online at www.tinyurl.com/2016SCMIElectionGuide.

The Chapter is excited to announce our involvement in a campaign with Priorities Michigan, a network of state organizations working to improve discussion and action around the state’s budget in key areas.

Sierra Club’s efforts will focus on communicating the ways that public funding benefits human health and environmental protection. The Chapter will be offering presentations about this project and making the state budget work to benefit our issues around the state.

Courtney Bourgoin, one of our former political interns (pictured above), will be heading the Chapter’s efforts and leading trainings. For details, contact courtney.bourgoin@sierraclub.org.
Watch Out For That Deer
by Marvin Roberson, Chapter Forest Ecologist

Per the Michigan State Police, 50,000 highway deer related accidents happen every year. This tells us that by any rational standard, measurement, or scientific accounting, there are too many deer in Michigan. In the newest draft Deer Management Plan for Michigan, the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) acknowledges the high number of deer-car crashes and pronounces them “unacceptable.” However, instead of managing for less deer, it proposes to “implement programs to increase driver awareness.”

Recently, there has been a lot of controversy over wolves, even though these animals have never caused human injury in Michigan. Imagine if every year, wolves caused the 50,000 negative human interactions, most involving property damage, at least 1,000 injuries, and eight deaths (2014) that deer are responsible for. The outcry would be deafening!

WHY DO WE NEED FEWER DEER?
- **Ecological:** White-tailed deer are so numerous and voracious, their eating habits have nearly eradicated many important forest species including Northern White Cedar, Eastern Hemlock and Canada Yew.
- **Disease:** Chronic wasting disease and bovine tuberculosis have been found in our wild deer herds. These diseases flourish in high-density populations.
- **Economic:** Deer cause millions of dollars in auto insurance claims as well as crop damage.
- **Public safety:** In terms of killing and injuring humans, deer are the most dangerous animals in the world. Highway accidents occur in all of the 50 states. In 2014, Michigan ranked 10th in the U.S. with eight fatalities.

These issues aren’t caused by a few “problem” deer or human carelessness. They’re caused by too many deer. Yet Michigan intentionally manages forests to produce damage-inflicting numbers. Why? Because the main measure driving almost all deer management in Michigan is hunter satisfaction. This is different from hunter success, which is whether a deer was harvested. The state is more interested in making it easy for hunters to find and kill deer. The DNR is aware of the negative impacts yet continues to encourage herd growth to placate a declining hunter population (-15% in 2014)*.

Common sense and science tells us that there are way too many deer in Michigan. It’s long past time to start a serious dialog about this problem.

For more information, contact Marvin Roberson at 906-360-0288.

* tinyurl.com/hlcft49
Updated Report Follows Manure and Money in Michigan

by Gail Philbin, Chapter Director

National headlines this past summer touted guacamole-thick algae in Lake Okeechobee in Florida. In Michigan, sickly green algae, fed mostly by waste and fertilizer runoff from industrial agriculture operations, continues to plague Lake Erie and inland lakes — a visual reminder that in 2014, it poisoned the drinking water for Toledo and southern Michigan.

The November 2015 report by Sierra Club's Less=More coalition, "Follow the Manure: Factory Farms and the Lake Erie Algae Crisis," vividly demonstrates the link between factory farms and Lake Erie's algae problem and the role taxpayer dollars play. It features interactive maps depicting the location of 146 factory farms in the western Lake Erie watershed with the amount of waste generated, environmental violations incurred and federal subsidies received. The picture it paints is one of a watershed swimming in manure and money.

Since the report’s release, Less=More coalition members have been interviewed by numerous news outlets including the Toledo Blade and MPR's Jack Lessenbery. The coalition's Pam Taylor and Lynn Henning presented the report to audiences around the region. Pam says it has been “a game changer” in terms of getting people to understand the role of factory farm waste in the algae crisis.

In the coming months, Less=More will release another report, mapping the location of all 269 factory farms in Michigan. It will again focus on waste, violations and subsidies in order to quantify the burden industrial livestock production places on the water resources and residents of the Great Lakes State. Look for the report at sierraclub.org/michigan/lessmore-reports.

LESS=MORE IS A COALITION OF FARMERS, CONSUMERS AND ADVOCACY ORGANIZATIONS THAT SEEKS TO LEVEL THE PLAYING FIELD FOR SUSTAINABLE FARMERS BY CHANGING THE WAY SUBSIDIES ARE DISTRIBUTED: WWW.MOREFORMICHIGAN.ORG.

Waukesha Diversion Update

by Erma Leaphart, Sierra Club Great Lakes Program

In a precedent-setting decision, the Great Lakes – St. Lawrence River Water Resources regional body for the first time approved a diversion of Great Lakes water to a municipality located outside the Great Lakes Basin. The Wisconsin town of Waukesha will be allowed to divert water from Lake Michigan. The Great Lakes Compact contains an exception that allows an entity outside the basin but within a county that straddles the basin to withdraw water. Waukesha is such a place.

According to this “compact,” a legally binding interstate agreement created in 2008 to safeguard these magnificent shared water resources, a requesting entity must prove that they have no other options to obtain water than diverting from the Great Lakes. The current groundwater source for Waukesha is contaminated with radium, but other municipalities facing the same issue have successfully employed practices to eliminate this threat to water quality. Studies show that treating water that has high levels of radium is an “acceptable alternative” and is a safe option.

Waukesha’s request was approved despite uncertainties about what type of monitoring will take place. This is necessary in order to assure that Waukesha complies with the limits placed on it for withdrawal volumes and that no negative impacts occur to the water bodies of vulnerable low-income and minority communities where the return water passes through.

Who will bear the cost of threats to water quality? This is a case of potentially precarious environmental injustice that we will be following closely. Only time will tell.

For more information about our Great Lakes Program go to www.sierraclub.org/michigan/great-lakes-protection.

Waukesha has many industrial dairy operations that generate huge amounts of watery waste from milk house flushing, pictured here.

AQUACULTURE POLICY

Land-based agriculture isn’t the only threat to our waters — fish farming proposals are circling the Great Lakes. Michigan’s DEQ and DNR, as well as Gov. Snyder have come out against net pen aquaculture in the Great Lakes, but Sen. Darwin Booher (R-Evart) is leading the charge to allow the industry to set up and authorize regulations for at least 10 facilities in the Great Lakes, (Senate Bills 0681 - 0683). This is a bad idea.

Learn more about this issue, the National Sierra Club's aquaculture policy and the Michigan Chapter's position at tinyurl.com/aquaculturepolicy.
Rain Gardens to the Rescue is a partnership between Sierra Club, Friends of the Rouge, and Keep Growing Detroit, funded by the Erb Family Foundation.

The three-year partnership is focusing on creating rain gardens. Thirteen gardens were planted in 2015; they plan to do 15 this year and 20 next year.

Rain Gardens to the Rescue is also holding rain barrel workshops. Rain barrels have many benefits: they save you money on your water bill, provide a water source when watering is restricted, and help reduce runoff pollution.

Check out Rain Gardens to the Rescue at tinyurl.com/znp5kxq.

On a day with little or no rain, this system works quite well. Unfortunately, due to climate change, they have been experiencing heavier or more intense rain storms. When this occurs, the system becomes overwhelmed and the excess sewage/storm water mix overflows into local rivers. This is called a Combined Sewer Overflow or CSO. The CSO mixture flows from the Detroit and Rouge Rivers to Lake Erie and are a contributor to the growth of Harmful Algal Blooms (HABs) plaguing the lake.

In the past, the City of Detroit has improved sewer infrastructure by building bigger pipes and retention facilities. These “grey infrastructure” efforts are extremely expensive, resulting in higher rates that are passed on to residents and leading to water and sewerage bills that are, for too many, unaffordable. Water shutoffs are a real problem, despite creative water assistance programs. The efforts to address this are being waged on many fronts.

Fortunately, the City of Detroit is beginning to take action to reduce CSOs and to keep water rates from increasing by actively adopting green infrastructure, a less expensive approach, as an alternative to grey infrastructure.

In a recent article in the “Bridge” magazine¹, it was stated,

“In fiscal year 2016, the city will spend $6.6 million on green infrastructure projects. Several have been completed, including the construction of four bio retention gardens on vacant lots in the Cody Rouge neighborhood, which was a collaborative effort with the University of Michigan. Storm water is directed into these vegetated garden areas where it will percolate naturally into the ground. In essence, they act as natural wetlands. City officials say each of the gardens was designed to reduce storm water runoff into local sewers by 300,000 gallons annually.”

The good news is that along with the City of Detroit, city residents, the Sierra Club, and partners like the Friends of the Rouge, Keep Growing Detroit and others, we are all promoting and adopting green infrastructure practices.

The benefits related to water quality, air quality, beautification, habitats and overall quality of life are factors that will contribute to the city’s quest to become “The Greenest City in America.”

Want more information or to volunteer? Contact Erma Leaphart at 313-475-7057.

¹ Bridge article: bit.ly/2obPfLL
**Jeremy Johnson**

I am Jeremy Johnson and I am running for my first term on the Chapter Executive Committee. I have served in the Lansing office as a communications intern from 2015 to 2016 and I have previously been a political intern in 2014. I'm looking for new ways to get involved with the Sierra Club now that my internship is completed. I will graduate from Alma College with a BA in Political Science in April of 2017. In joining the Executive Committee with my political and chapter experience, I look forward to getting the Sierra Club voice heard in Michigan.

**Lacy Dawson**

The Sierra Club's mission is one that I value because of its focus on educating and involving everyday citizens in being a part of the solution to protect our planet. As the field director of a local civic engagement table, I believe citizen participation is key to eliminating all social and environmental injustices. As a steward of this great planet, and a believer in the Sierra Club, one of my dreams is to assist in efforts to increase citizen participation in supporting the mission of the Sierra Club and to leave a healthy, whole and vibrant planet for generations to come.

**Alisha Winters**

As a young vibrant adult in progress, I am actively becoming the change I wish to see in the world. I've been an active community member in River Rouge and have seen a lot get done, including the “School Siting Task Force” for our children's environment and DTE's announcement to retire coal-fired power plants in River Rouge, St. Clair, and Trenton, thanks to Sierra Club's eight-year Beyond Coal Campaign. I did my part by writing letters, attending hearings and advocating for clean air. I will continue to work hard to get the job done if I win another term.

**David Holtz**

It's been great being Sierra Club Michigan Chapter Chair for the past few years, working with talented staff and committed volunteers. We have prioritized climate-related goals while protecting the Great Lakes and our communities from pipelines and pollution. As a Sierra Club volunteer I focus much of my time on ending the flow of oil through the Straits of Mackinac and plan to continue helping lead that effort as coordinator of the Oil & Water Don't Mix campaign. My top priority, however, will be to continue expanding Sierra Club's organizational capacity in Michigan so we can get more wins!
Thomas Zerafa

I have been a resident of Oak Park since March of 2001, and prior, a 50-year resident of Detroit proper. As a member of the Franciscan Friars of S.E. Michigan, I have always been concerned for our Mother Earth and our duty to protect her for ourselves and future generations. I have been an advocate for clean energy as environmental pollution most affects the very SW Detroit where I was raised. High also on my concerns is advocating for public transportation options for our region and doing campaigning for this November’s ballot proposal. I am humbled to be asked to put my name… View Thomas’ complete bio at tinyurl.com/ExcomBallot.

Tom Turner

I believe that protecting the environment must be among our highest priorities if we value our future. I’ve been a Sierra Club member since 1996 and have been on the Ex-Com for the last two years. Currently, I’m the Co-Chair of the SEMG Political Committee and am active on the Chapter’s legislative, political and finance committees. I’d like to continue to serve on the ExCom because I’m thrilled to be associated with Sierra Club’s proud tradition and would like to continue to contribute my talents to its mission, because there is so much more work to be done.
Honoring Those Who Make a Difference Every Day

Dr. Mona Hanna-Attisha received the Bunyan Bryant Environmental Justice Award for bringing lead poisoning in the Flint public water system to the attention of state and federal officials. Dismissed and attacked early on, she pressed ahead to sound the alarm about the danger to Flint children (and adults). She has testified before Congress and is leading the long-term effort to remediate lead poisoning in Flint, study and mitigate its effects and prevent future tragedies.

Super-dedicated member and volunteer Helen LeBlanc received the Marlene Fluharty Award for her 20+ years of service in the challenging role of Chapter treasurer as well as her long involvement in the Central Michigan Group.

The Jane Elder Environmentalist of the Year Award went to State Rep. Jeff Irwin for his work with Sierra Club to introduce the first-ever legislation in Michigan to stop fracking and enact safeguards. He is also one of the legislature’s biggest pipeline opponents and has advocated shutting down Enbridge’s Line 5.

Environmentally Concerned Citizens of South Central Michigan received the White Pine Award for their invaluable work to document factory farm pollution and educate consumers and elected officials about the problem. Their research has been the basis for two groundbreaking reports by the Sierra Club-led Less=More sustainable agriculture coalition.

Anne Woiwode and Cyndi Roper received the Chair’s Award from Chapter Chair David Holtz for their work on the Sierra Club’s Flint Response Team, formed to help Flint grassroots groups involved in the water crisis.

Crossroads Group Outings Chair John Wilson has been named the Vince Smith Outings Award recipient for his work to expand the group’s outings program. Since 2011 he has planned and led at least 25 outings each year, making them fun and educational, and coming well-prepared and armed with his famous chocolate treats to share.

Three of the awards given out at the retreat went to some of the Chapter’s most dedicated and longest-serving volunteers. Pictured here are (left to right) Anne Woiwode (Chair’s Award), Ed Steinman (inaugural Ed Steinman Digital Excellence Award), and Helen LeBlanc (Marlene Fluharty Award).

Researcher Dave Schwab of the University of Michigan’s Graham Sustainability Institute was recognized with the Burton V. Barnes Award for his modeling of oil spill impacts in the Straits of Mackinac that helped build public awareness of the potential hazard posed by Enbridge’s Line 5.

Three Environmental Journalism Awards were given out this year. Reporter Lindsey Smith of Michigan Radio received the broadcast version for her December 2015 documentary on the Flint water crisis, which was instrumental in exposing how the lead contamination happened. Writers Ron Fonger of the Flint Journal and Nancy Kaffer of the Detroit Free Press both received the print award for their reporting of the crisis.

East Lansing Mayor Mark Meadows is the recipient of the Theodore Roosevelt Political Leadership Award for his valuable service at three levels of the Sierra Club. He is on the political committees of the Chapter and the national Club as well as the chair of the Central Michigan Group’s political committee.

Edward Steinman has donated so much time and expertise to keeping the Chapter’s website alive and well and maintaining our email lists and other digital details that we named an award after him. Then we gave it to him. He is the first recipient of the Ed Steinman Digital Excellence Award.

The Cougar Award goes to Courtney Bourgoin, the founder of Spartan Sierra Club at MSU. She worked on Theresa Abed’s campaign as one of the Chapter’s political interns and as our communications intern, she revitalized our social media efforts.

Eighty-eight-year-old Anne Schmoller won the Life of the Party Award for baking goodies (including her world-famous toffee) for Chapter functions. She is Chapter Director Gail Philbin’s mother.

We wish to thank all the individuals who support our work each year through payroll deduction via EarthShare of Michigan. If you have just completed your annual payroll deduction campaign at work, and Earth Share of Michigan wasn’t listed as an option, please call 800-386-3326 to discuss how you and your fellow employees can support the Sierra Club Foundation – Michigan Chapter and other earth-friendly organizations at work. For more info, visit the website www.earthsharemichigan.org.
In Memory of Harold Stokes

We want to recognize and honor Mr. Stokes, who was a longtime Sierra Club member and activist from the Detroit area with the foresight to include the Michigan Sierra Club in his estate plans. Harold had worked on countless social and environmental issues fighting for clean air and water in southeast Michigan.

In his over 40 years of grassroots activism he was a fixture at a myriad of public meetings, hearings and campaign rallies. He campaigned against the proposed Detroit incinerator and became a staunch ally in this fight. Harold was also an official intervenor in the Nuclear Regulatory Commission permitting process for Detroit Edison’s third nuclear plant.

Harold Stokes knew, like Rachel Carson who made the first bequest to the Sierra Club, that his life’s work was only the beginning, and that his contribution would not be as valuable if future generations did not build upon what he started.

His vigorous activism was an inspiration for all.

In Memoriam:
Richard J. Dunaj-Ring
JUNE 21, 1952 - JUNE 14, 2016

Richard loved the outdoors and was a passionate teacher who taught the sciences at Southfield Lathrup High School. He had a great concern for his students and it was clear he had made a great impact on his students who called him DR. His colleagues as well as his students stated that Richard was a very kind soul. He was also described by his students as beyond cool, unbelievably motivating and magnificent!

He passed on just a week before his retirement — he is gone too soon. Memorials to the Michigan Sierra Club were suggested and many made contributions in his honor and memory.

A beautiful soul is never forgotten!
The Sierra Club’s members and supporters are 2.4 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.

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. Please join us in thanking the current Michigan Legacy Council members:

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• Ms. Mary Anne Beltzman
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