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**Michigan  
Environmental Council  
Policy Priorities  
2017–2018**

**Refocusing the  
State of Michigan  
on Protecting  
Public Health**





# MICHIGAN ENVIRONMENTAL COUNCIL will focus on the following top priorities in the 2017-2018 legislative session.

*These policy priorities were developed in collaboration with our member organizations from throughout Michigan. A complete list is available at [environmentalcouncil.org](http://environmentalcouncil.org).*

## Protect our shared waters

To safeguard drinking water and water quality, Michigan must protect groundwater, combat growing algae blooms in our lakes and improve water quality monitoring to decide where best to spend scarce resources.

- Prevent nutrient loading from failing septic systems by adopting a statewide septic code and requiring septic-system testing when homes are sold.
- Identify a new source of funds for water quality monitoring, protection and remediation to replace current environmental bond funding, which will be mostly exhausted by 2017.
- Preserve and restore floodplain and wetland features that allow heavy rains to replenish aquifers, rather than discharging nutrients into waterways. Ensure that wetland mitigation banking regulations prioritize protection for existing public and private wetlands.
- Begin the process of decommissioning the 63-year-old pipeline under the Straits of Mackinac and determine what steps should be taken to protect the Great Lakes from a devastating oil spill in the future.

## Move toward sustainable agriculture

With a new Director of Agriculture Policy at MEC, we will work with greater capacity and renewed energy toward a more sustainable agricultural sector in Michigan.

- Expand adoption of agricultural best practices to reduce farm runoff.
- Address gaps in the regulation of large confined animal feeding operations.
- Develop a comprehensive plan to help address the loss of pollinators.

## Reinvest in our crumbling infrastructure

MEC's infrastructure focus will be on addressing the need for access to clean drinking water and adequate sewer and storm-water capacity for all Michigan residents.

- Improve communication to residents regarding their drinking water and invest in communities to help remove lead service lines from their drinking water infrastructure.

- Help local governments to address combined sewer overflows and stormwater management by increasing the adoption of green infrastructure.
- Engage with communities statewide to find out what they need to more effectively work for clean drinking water.

## Enhance Michigan's public health

We will continue to work to end lead poisoning in Michigan—with the proper resources, that goal is achievable. We will also work to improve children's health, outdoor air quality, access to healthy food and opportunities for physical activity.

- Require universal lead testing for all children in Michigan, where today only 20% of kids are tested for lead exposure.
- Revise Michigan's Lead and Copper Rule to make it the most stringent in the nation and most inclusive of the public, and make Michigan's drinking water program a national model for excellence.
- Secure additional funds to expand the pilot 10 Cents a Meal program, which helps schools buy more local, fresh foods for their cafeterias.

## Protect and celebrate Michigan's natural resources

We will continue to challenge attacks on public lands and harmful exploitation of our forests and waterways for short-term gain and will seek ways to drive more state investments in the long-term protection and celebration of our key landscapes and natural resources.

- Protect access to Michigan's public lands by lifting the legislative cap on the amount of land the state can own and ensuring the public has a role in deciding when state-owned public land is sold or deemed "surplus," especially when large amounts of state land are pursued by private interests.
- Become the first state east of the Mississippi River to establish a state Office of Outdoor Recreation to improve the quality of recreation experiences for all users.
- Support the acquisition of more public land in the southern Lower Peninsula, and invest in urban parks, waterfronts and connected greenways that provide underserved communities in and around our major cities with safe, convenient access to open space and natural resources.

## **Advance transportation solutions**

MEC will work with our member groups to build the system Michigan needs to compete in the new economy and provide all residents with mobility and access to opportunity.

- Establish a diverse coalition to engage in issues and shape policies related to autonomous vehicle technology, with a focus on potential impacts on the environment, current transit systems and underserved populations.
- Collaborate with biking advocates across the state to protect cyclists by improving legislation, promoting protected bike lanes and planning next steps for electric bikes.
- Better connect our state by rail through continued work on the Coast-to-Coast passenger rail system and support for the Ann Arbor–Traverse City and Washtenaw–Livingston lines.

## **Work for better government**

MEC recognizes that an open government that is responsive to the concerns of residents is of utmost importance for the health of people and the environment.

- Support the environmental justice executive order by working to revamp the DEQ's public hearing processes.
- Implement a new Environmental Quality Commission to oversee the work of the DEQ.
- Open the Legislature and the Governor's office to the Freedom of Information Act.

## **Promote environmental justice**

Environmental justice (EJ) is part of all environmental issues, from protecting our air and water to having functional public transit and access to good, healthy food. Living in a clean, safe, and healthy community should be a basic human right.

- Develop a checklist to ensure EJ considerations are incorporated into government decision-making.
- Develop EJ metrics for resident participation in the regulatory process.
- Restructure the state EJ directive to meet current needs.

## **Capture valuable products from Michigan's solid waste stream**

MEC will work to make as rapid and efficient as possible Michigan's transition from a landfill-first solid waste management approach to an emphasis on recycling, composting and other beneficial uses of valuable materials.

- Establish a new county planning system that requires goals for waste utilization/conversion and tie that goal to any authorization to expand landfills.
- Create a new funding mechanism for all solid waste oversight, education, grants, and county planning.
- Develop a system for the perpetual care of closed landfills.

## **Continue Michigan's transition to cleaner energy**

With a new law in place to achieve 15 percent renewable energy in Michigan by 2021, improve energy efficiency and maintain the current net metering program through 2018, MEC will work to ensure the law is effectively implemented.

- Increase efforts to lower utility bills by eliminating energy waste and decreasing peak demand in the summer.
- Continue to support solar energy projects at the residential and community level, especially by encouraging enrollment in net metering programs.
- Encourage robust public input on designing a fair tariff for privately generated solar power.

## **Combat climate change and mitigate its potential impacts**

With a changing climate already influencing Michigan's weather, ecosystems and infrastructure, MEC will support efforts to minimize the impacts of climate change on public health and our natural resources.

- Implement strong efficiency and renewable energy policies at the state and local level immediately as part of a broader transition away from fossil fuels entirely by 2050.
- Pass policies that encourage businesses and residents to increase efficiency and install renewable energy, reward them fairly for producing their own clean power and streamline the process for installations.
- Work with state agencies and support budget allocations that assist them in efforts to evaluate and prepare for potential climate impacts.



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# **MICHIGAN ENVIRONMENTAL COUNCIL MEMBER GROUPS**

## **Working Together to Protect Michigan's Environment**

### **ACCESS**

- Alliance for the Great Lakes**
- Alliance to Halt Fermi 3**
- Anglers of the Au Sable**
- Au Sable River Watershed Committee**
- Citizens for Alternatives to Chemical Contamination**
- Citizens for Oil-Free Backyards**
- Clean Water Fund**
- CLEARCorps / Detroit**
- Clinton River Watershed Council**
- Concerned Citizens of Acme Township**
- ConservAmerica Education Fund**
- Detroit Audubon**
- Detroit RiverFront Conservancy**
- Dwight Lydell Chapter of the Izaak Walton League of America**
- East Michigan Environmental Action Council**
- Ecology Center**
- Environmentally Concerned Citizens of South Central Michigan**
- Friends of the Cedar River Watershed**
- Friends of the Detroit River**
- Friends of the Jordan River Watershed**
- Friends of the Rouge**
- Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians**
- Great Lakes Mediation**
- Groundwork Center for Resilient Communities**
- Huron River Watershed Council**
- Kalamazoo Environmental Council**
- Kalamazoo River Cleanup Coalition**
- Kalamazoo River Watershed Council**
- Lapeer Land Conservancy**
- League of Michigan Bicyclists**
- League of Women Voters of Michigan**
- Legacy Land Conservancy**
- Liaison for Inter-Neighborhood Cooperation**
- Lone Tree Council**
- Michigan Association of Railroad Passengers**
- Michigan Audubon**
- Michigan Botanical Club**
- Michigan Citizens Against Toxic Substances**
- Michigan Energy Options**
- Michigan Interfaith Power and Light**
- Michigan Land Trustees**
- Michigan League of Conservation Voters Education Fund**
- Michigan Nurses Association**
- Michigan Organic Food and Farm Alliance**
- Michigan Recycling Coalition**
- Michigan Trails and Greenways Alliance**
- Michigan Trout Unlimited**
- Michigan Waterfront Alliance**
- Mid-Michigan Environmental Action Council**
- Midwest Energy Efficiency Alliance**
- Muskegon Save Our Shoreline**
- NAACP – Michigan State Conference**
- Northern Michigan Environmental Action Council**
- Preserve the Dunes**
- Romulus Environmentalists Care About People**
- Scenic Michigan**
- Sierra Club, Michigan Chapter**
- Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary**
- Six Rivers Regional Land Conservancy**
- Southeast Michigan Land Conservancy**
- Stewardship Network**
- Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council**
- Transportation Riders United**
- Upper Peninsula Environmental Coalition**
- Voices for Earth Justice**
- West Michigan Environmental Action Council**