

## Michigan Chapter Update

January 4, 2015

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### Big Changes at the Michigan Chapter

**Anne Woiwode**, director of the Michigan Chapter since 1985, has stepped into the newly created role of Michigan Chapter Conservation Director and Assistant Director **Gail Philbin** is taking over as Sierra Club's new Chapter Director.

"**Gail** and **Anne** will lead a stronger Sierra Club team in Michigan that is prepared to take on the really tough challenges of protecting Michigan's lakes, rivers, streams, air and public lands," said **David Holtz**, Chair of the Michigan Executive Committee. "This new arrangement culminates a transition process that began with the hiring of Gail Philbin and the opportunity to focus all of Anne Woiwode's extraordinary talents on the critically important tasks of protecting the Great Lakes state resources and our public health."



*Michigan Sierra Club Transition: Anne Woiwode (l) moves to role of Conservation Director as Gail Philbin (r) becomes new Michigan Chapter Director.*

Check out the [Michigan Chapter website](#) for complete information about this transition.

### Looking Back: Sierra Club in Michigan in 2014

**2014 was a challenging year for environmental protection in Michigan**, but Sierra Club's volunteer leaders and staff won some victories and laid a strong foundation for continuing in 2015. Come back for the January 18th issue to see our legislative scorecard and find out "How Green Was Your Legislator in 2014?" Visit the [Michigan Chapter website](#) or join us on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) to find out more about the Michigan Chapter priorities and work! Here are some of the highlights:

#### Beyond Coal to Clean Energy Campaign:

\* An **updated energy building code** that will reduce pollution from fossil fuels and save homeowners money on energy bills was adopted by the state of Michigan. \* Beyond Coal volunteers **Alisha Winters** and **Ebony Elmore** traveled to **DTE Energy's Annual Meeting** in northeastern Pennsylvania from their homes in River Rouge with a message that it is time to **stop polluting their community** by burning coal and move to **renewable energy and energy efficiency** (left). DTE later announced that **two units** of the Trenton Channel coal-fired power plant **will be retired**. \* **Asthma educators and health professionals** got the word out that **severe asthma and respiratory problems particularly hurt children** in schools and communities **near coal plants** in Michigan, with costly hospitalizations and even death resulting from the pollution they emit. \* After Sierra Club learned and publicized that **Lansing Board of Water and Light (LBWL)** had installed **pollution control for mercury** on their Erickson coal-fired power plant but **never turned it on**, public pressure forced the municipal utility to act, **reducing its emissions of the toxic heavy metal by 90%**. A campaign to **get LBWL to move to clean energy and get off coal** is ongoing. \* The MI Public Service Commission **Solar Working Group** pointed out the benefits of **expanding and improving residential and community utility solar programs**, which solar proponents will continue to advocate for in 2015.



**People's Climate March: September 21** Hundreds of Michiganders trekked to New York City in September to join 400,000

others joining together in the largest march demanding action NOW to address the causes of climate change.





**Protect Michigan Biodiversity and Natural Resources:**

\* A decision by the DEQ to issue a **water pollution permit for a commercial fish farm** on the main branch of the **Au Sable River** is "just plain stupid". The permit is blocked while **Sierra Club seeks to overturn it** with the help of the **Great Lakes Environmental Law Center (GLELC)**. \* The **50th Anniversary of the Wilderness Act** was celebrated this year with Congress designating 32,500 acres of wilderness in **Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore**. \* The fight over management of Michigan's recovering **gray wolf** population led to an extraordinary **effort by legislators to take away the rights of Michigan voters** to have a say through the referendum process. **Sierra Club joined the fight to restore democracy** and supported the **"no" vote on Proposals 1 and 2**. Voters agreed overwhelmingly. \* For 61 years the US Forest Service has renewed permits for the **Enbridge Line 5 oil pipeline** across the **Huron Manistee National Forest** without conducting any environmental review, and Sierra Club is demanding they follow the law. In December a **"pinhole" leak in Line 5 north of Manistique was discovered**, increasing the urgency to complete a comprehensive environmental review. \* Sierra Club's fight to **stop proposed sales of massive amounts of Michigan public lands** for limestone mining, potato farming and other private ventures will continue in 2015.



**Beyond Natural Gas and Oil (BNGO):**



\* Sierra Club **trained dozens of "fractivists"** in understanding and effectively **commenting on proposed permits for hydraulic fracturing** (fracking) for oil and gas. \* Powerful comments on DEQ proposed rules for fracking submitted by the **Michigan BNGO Committee** last summer **highlighted the many weaknesses of the state's regulations** and threats posed to water and air quality. \* The **Huron Valley, Crossroads, Nipissing and Southeast Michigan Groups** are organizing **opposition to three proposed massive natural gas pipelines** that would cross Ohio, enter southeast Michigan and **carry fracked natural gas from Pennsylvania to Ontario**. The four Groups presented written and verbal **comments to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC)** in the first round of environmental review for the proposed ET Rover pipeline. \* Sierra Club joined the **Oil & Water Don't Mix Coalition** efforts to educate the public about the threats posed by the Enbridge Line 5 oil pipeline as it **crosses the Straits of Mackinac and to seek action to shut down and remove the pipeline**.

**Protect and Restore the Great Lakes Ecosystem:**

\* **The Less=More Campaign** expanded Sierra Club's campaign to stop pollution from livestock factories and support sustainable agriculture with the release of **"Local, Healthy Food: The Real Bargain"** and video testimonials. \* The **Sierra Club Great Lakes Program** continues leading efforts to **clean up the Detroit Waste Water Treatment discharge**, fighting **privatization** of the Detroit water system, and educating on **green infrastructure and storm water** containment throughout Detroit. The Detroit Water Team taught rain barrel construction at the Chapter Retreat this year (see right). \* Sierra Club joined a **lawsuit to block an abysmally weak air pollution permit** issued to Severstal Steel (now AK Steel) after emails and documents show Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC) pressured the DEQ to weaken the permit.



**Snapshots for 2014:** Political Training, Executive Director Mike Brune visits Michigan Sierra Club, and Awards!





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