



MACKINAC

Volume 58, Issue 2

FALL/WINTER 2024-25



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SIERRA CLUB MICHIGAN CHAPTER

Democracy is the Foundation of Environmental Protection

By Elayne Coleman

Early 2021, the Sierra Club Michigan Chapter embarked on a strategic planning process to guide our work from 2022 to 2026. In the months prior, unfounded claims of voter fraud and efforts to prevent election certification reminded us that we cannot take democracy for granted. Our environmental laws are only as strong as the champions that uphold them. That's why protecting democracy is one of the core priorities in the Michigan Chapter's strategic plan. The following excerpt outlines our vision and outcomes:

Vision: Democracy of, by, and for all people is central to the protection of Michigan's quality of life, our Great Lakes and the planet. The Michigan Chapter commits to fighting to protect the rights of Michiganders and people nationwide to:

- *Free, fair and informed elections at all levels of government;*
- *The right to vote;*
- *Transparent and accountable government; and*
- *The equitable application of justice for all people.*

Outcomes: *The Michigan Chapter, in collaboration with the national Sierra Club and partner good government and voting rights organizations, commits to:*

Advocate for Voting Rights:

Advocate for Transparent and Open Elections:

Advocate for Easy Access to Voter Registration;

Advocate for Open Public Records and Open Meetings

Advocate for Full-disclosure of Political Donations

Advocate for Full-disclosure of Lobbying Expenditures

Adopted by the Michigan Chapter Executive Committee on November 13, 2021.

A strong democracy gives us solid ground to stand on as we fight against corporate polluters and for stronger environmental protections. You can read about our efforts at the state capitol on page 12, the fight to keep the Palisades Nuclear Plant closed on page 7, efforts to evaluate and improve water quality on page 11 and get the latest news on Line 5 on page 6.

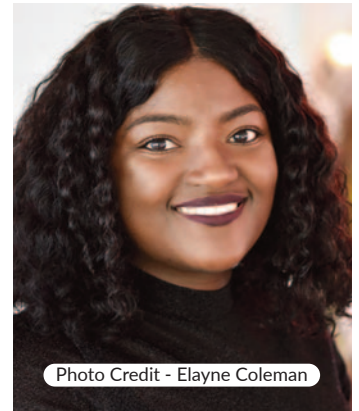


Photo Credit - Elayne Coleman
Elayne Coleman - State Director



Sierra Club members and supporters gather for a citizens' lobby day in Lansing.

Photo by Elayne Coleman

Chapter Staff

Elayne Coleman, State Director
Cara Beld, Development Manager
Cecilia Garcia-Linz, Volunteer Engagement Coordinator, 517-484-2372
Erin Preston Johnson, Community Organizer
Erma Leaphart-Gouch, Healing Our Waters Coalition Michigan Co-Lead
Christy McGillivray, Legislative and Political Director
Tim Minotas, Deputy Legislative and Political Director
Jan O'Connell, Senior Energy Issues Organizer
Marvin Roberson, Forest Ecologist
Tamara Horne, West Michigan Organizer

National Staff:

Bryan Smigelski, Michigan Campaign Organizer
Garrett Dempsey, Inspiring Connections Outdoors, Detroit

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Jean Gramlich (SEMG)	
Mike Buza (N5RG)	
Kathy English (TLG)	

Local Groups

Sierra Club groups are run by local volunteers who host educational programs, outings, political and conservation activities, and general meetings. Group activities are tied to current environmental issues important to the community and family health. Sierra Club outings and group programs are open to the public -- everyone is welcome and you don't have to belong to that group to participate.

To get involved in your local Sierra Club group or learn more about outings, please contact one of the volunteer leaders in your area. If you live in an area that does not have a local group and you're interested in starting one, please email volunteer@michigan.sierraclub.org

Learn more about our local groups by visiting sierraclub.org/michigan/local-groups

Connect with your Local Groups

Clearwater Conservation Network / CCN: serving Antrim, Benzie, Crawford, Grand Traverse, Kalkaska, Leelanau, Manistee, Missaukee, Otsego, Roscommon and Wexford counties. Connect with CCN: Vicki Olsen (cvolsen17@yahoo.com)

Crossroads Group / CG: serving Livingston and Western Oakland counties. Connect with CG: Lee Anzicek (leeanzicek@gmail.com) & Lee Burton (lee.burton@michigan.sierraclub.org)

Growing Green Grand Rapids Network: Serving Kent County. Connect with GGR: growinggreen@michigan.sierraclub.org

Huron Valley Group / HVG: serving Washtenaw, Lenawee and Monroe counties. Connect with HVG: HVGSierraClub@gmail.com or Jason Frenzel (a2jasonfrenzel@gmail.com)

Nepessing Group / NG: serving Genesee, Lapeer, North Oakland, Shiawassee, Midland, Bay, Saginaw, and Tuscola counties. Connect with NG: Mike Buza (theoriginalzuba@yahoo.com) and Suzanne Lossing. (slissing@hotmail.com)

Southeast Michigan Group / SEMG: serving Wayne, St. Clair, Macomb, and Oakland counties. Connect with SEMG: Garrett Dempsey (garrett.dempsey@sierraclub.org) and Jerry Hasspacher (jhasspac@gmail.com)

Three Lakes Group / TLG: serving Chippewa, Mackinac, Luce and Schoolcraft counties. Connect with TLG: Roger Blanchard (blanchardclimate@gmail.com)

FALL/WINTER
2024-25

THE MACKINAC

Sierra Club Michigan Chapter
602 W. Ionia Street
Lansing MI 48933
Phone: 517-484-2372
Email: michigan.chapter@sierraclub.org
Website: sierraclub.org/michigan

EDITORS

Elayne Coleman, State Director
elayne.coleman@sierraclub.org

DESIGN

John Klein
john@winpublishing.com

COVER PHOTO

John Klein
johnkleinphotography.com

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Sierra Club Welcomes New Staff & a New Role

We are excited to share that two new staff joined the Sierra Club in Michigan! The Michigan Chapter welcomed Erin Johnson, Esq., community organizer, and the Beyond Coal Campaign welcomed Bryan Smigielski, Michigan campaign organizer. Additionally, Cecilia Garcia-Linz, Michigan Chapter's longtime administrative assistant, has transitioned to the volunteer engagement coordinator role. Read more about Erin, Bryan and Cecilia below.

Erin Johnson, Esq.

Community Organizer

Erin Johnson, Esq. is an unapologetically Black, lifelong organizer and unschooling mama of a 7-year-old as well as co-founder of Detroit's Urban Forest School. Erin honed her skills as an organizer and activist during her enrollment at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, where she served as President of the campus NAACP and earned a B.A. in History. She went on to the Howard University of Law where she graduated as the President of her class and has practiced law in the District of Columbia and Michigan for the past 17 years. Erin leads green stormwater infrastructure programs and conservation efforts in the Detroit area.



Bryan Smigielski

Michigan Campaign Organizer

Bryan Smigielski brings a deep mix of hands-on environmental activism and theoretical insight to his role as campaign organizer. Bryan spent his recent years leading environmental education initiatives in Detroit schools, engaging tens of thousands of students through dynamic presentations that inspired environmental justice activism and supported communities overburdened by industrial polluters with strategic nutrition and health education. In his new organizing role, he's ready to support the passionate network of already existing communities fighting for environmental justice in Detroit, and to cultivate the next generation of environmental activists.



Cecilia Garcia-Linz

Volunteer Engagement Coordinator

Cecilia Garcia-Linz is a long-time Sierra Club Michigan staff member who is deeply passionate about centering chapters and empowering our grassroots activists. Having worked with volunteers for over 13 years, Cecilia understands how challenging it can be to navigate evolving systems. As the Chapter's first volunteer engagement coordinator, she will help our members find the volunteer experience that is right for them and provide ongoing training and support to amplify their activism. To connect with Cecilia, email her at cecilia.garcia@sierraclub.org.



Farewell, Andrew, and Thank You for 11 Years

When Andrew Sarpolis joined the Michigan Chapter as an apprentice more than a decade ago, he brought the enthusiasm, energy, skill and positive outlook that made him an extraordinary leader within Sierra Club. As an exceptional organizer, advocate and campaign leader at every turn Andrew has supported communities, families and individuals throughout Michigan, particularly southeast Michigan and Lansing, in the fight to clean their air, get rid of fossil fuels, and build a sustainable future.

For eleven years, Andrew served as a campaign representative for the Beyond Coal Campaign and later as the Michigan Field Manager. With his leadership, the Beyond Coal Campaign retired 90% of Michigan's coal fleet. Andrew's efforts not only helped to reduce harmful emissions but also paved the way for a cleaner, healthier future for Michigan. His work was instrumental in pushing for increased investments in renewable energy, ensuring that the transition away from fossil fuels continues with the urgency that our climate crisis demands.

Additionally, he worked extensively in Oakland County organizing volunteers and pushing local governments to make climate commitments. His organizing efforts prompted Oakland County to create their sustainability office and commit to a county-wide sustainability plan. Andrew was recently recognized by Crain's Detroit Business as a Notable Leaders in Sustainability, a testament to the profound impact he has made on Michigan's environmental landscape.

Andrew's work has not only advanced the mission of the Sierra Club but has also inspired countless others to join the fight for a cleaner, more sustainable world.

As Andrew embarks on the next phase of his career, we extend our heartfelt thanks for his years of service and dedication. We wish him nothing but success in his future endeavors and know that wherever he goes, he will continue to be a powerful advocate for the environment.



Andrew Sarpolis

Volunteer Spotlight

From community outreach, outings, lobbying and everything in between, volunteers are the key to the Sierra Club's success. In this edition of our volunteer spotlight, we proudly recognize Everyl Yankee, who volunteers at the Chapter's Lansing office.

Everyl has welcomed participants at Lobby Day, counted executive committee elections ballots and handwritten thank-you cards. Staff and visitors at the Lansing office appreciate the calming green spaces she helps maintain inside and outside the building. Recently, she served on the administrative assistant hiring committee, bringing her expertise and the volunteer perspective to the hiring process. Everyl enjoys volunteering because it keeps her connected to inspiring people and allows her to address Michigan's most pressing environmental challenges.

"The Michigan Chapter has accomplished phenomenal things, I'm proud to help support these efforts. Environmental protection is the most important work we can do right now. As a new volunteer, I was encouraged to decide what areas of conservation are important to me and what issues I want to work on. If you can, please volunteer. There are many opportunities to enrich your life and there is something for everyone." - Everyl Yankee



Everyl Yankee

Shutting Down Line 5: Legal and Public Pressure Mounts

By Anne Woiwode

This summer, a significant court ruling and public opposition to Enbridge's Line 5 pipeline supported the fight to shut down the 71-year-old Line 5 oil pipeline. In June, Wisconsin U.S. District Judge William Conley ruled that Enbridge was trespassing on the Bad River Band of Lake Superior Chippewa lands and ordered the Canadian company to shut down that section of Line 5 within three years. Enbridge has appealed, and a decision from the 7th Circuit Federal Court of Appeals is pending.

In addition, the Army Corps of Engineers (ACE) will consider a proposed reroute around the Bad River Band Reservation. An environmental review of that proposal is underway. A public comment period on the ACE review garnered more than 150,000 comments nationwide. Citizens raised concerns about the proposed 41-mile reroute, including damage to hundreds of wetlands and streams on treaty territory and watershed that are part of the treaty territory and watershed crucial to the Bad River Band.

Line 5 was projected to last for 50 years, but the proposed reroute and tunnel under the Straits of Mackinac in Michigan would extend the use of the pipeline for decades despite 33 documented leaks since 1968. After two years of delay, Michigan Attorney General Dana Nessel's lawsuit to shut down Line 5 in the straits has been returned to state court by the 6th Circuit Federal Court of Appeals, which denied Enbridge's efforts to move the lawsuit to federal court. The case had been briefed previously, and Ingham County Court judge James Jamo is expected to pick it up again this fall.

Enbridge has acknowledged that in seeking permits for the Straits Tunnel from the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes and Energy (EGLE), they significantly underreported the wetlands that would be harmed. The disclosure occurred because the Bay Mills Indian Community appealed EGLE's permits.

Sierra Club and our partners in Oil and Water Don't Mix are urging President Joe Biden and Secretary of Transportation Pete Buttigieg to exercise their authority to end the enormous threat to the Great Lakes and tribal lands and rights posed by this deteriorating oil pipeline. As Biden concludes his unparalleled presidential term, which saw the passage of the nation's strongest climate laws, we urge him to crown his career by shutting down the most dangerous pipeline in North America. Add your voice to the call for President Biden to take action.

And join people across the Great Lakes State to let Michigan's Senator Gary Peters know it is time to shut down Enbridge Line 5. Peters chairs the Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee, which oversees key agencies responsible for pipeline safety. He understands the threats posed by a potential massive oil disaster in the Great Lakes and now needs to lead efforts to shut down Enbridge Line 5. Find out more at this link. <https://bit.ly/47sSGEr>



Protest calling for the shutdown of Enbridge Line 5, held at the St. Clair River on North American Oil Spill Day July 25. Photo by Julie Geisinger.

Bring Cleaner Air to a Neighborhood Near You

By Tamara Horne

Have you ever stepped outside and wondered about the quality of the air? Poor outdoor air quality can affect everyone's health, from causing itchy eyes to aggravating respiratory illnesses like asthma. Knowing your local air quality empowers you to make healthier choices. And, if your neighborhood is aware of the air quality, transparency can lead to a healthier community for everyone.

Neighborhood air monitors can measure many irritants, including ozone, humidity, pollen, or particulate matter. Communities with monitors can collect data and empower residents to make informed choices that limit impacts. If ongoing pollution is detected, communities can work to address the sources, leading to cleaner air for everyone.

Some major sources of poor air quality outdoors include fossil fuel power plants, vehicle exhaust, industrial facilities,

Continued on Page 7

Protecting our Great Lakes: The Fight to Keep Palisades Closed

By Jan O'Connell

We stand at an important moment for the future of our Great Lakes as Holtec International is speeding forward with its plans to re-open the shuttered Palisades Nuclear Power Plant on the shores of Lake Michigan in Covert Township, Van Buren County.

The previous two owners, Consumers Energy and Entergy, cut ties with the Palisades facility because its aging infrastructure made it a bad business deal. Throughout its 50-year span, Palisades had a number of problems and in 2012, the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) declared the facility one of the worst in the country. Holtec acquired the plant to shut it down and decommission it, with the facility ending operations in May 2022. However, political pressure from the Department of Energy and the State of Michigan has led to more than \$1.8 billion of funding to restart the plant. These taxpayer giveaways may just be the tip of the iceberg. Holtec has requested more than \$8.3 billion from taxpayers and ratepayers to restart the Palisades Nuclear Plant.

Sierra Club argues that Holtec should not restart the Palisades plant and that much less costly clean energy sources can be more quickly and reliably developed to meet Michigan's energy needs. Operating a nuclear power plant and storing radioactive wastes on-site pose a severe threat to Lake Michigan and the millions of people who rely on the lake for drinking water, recreation and economic uses.

The NRC's environmental review moved at warp speed and Sierra Club members acted quickly to attend meetings and submit comments online. In just a few short weeks, the Michigan Chapter collected more than 100 comments urging decision-makers to halt the restart of the Palisades Nuclear Plant. There's still time to weigh in. Express your concerns at <https://act.sierraclub.org/actions/Michigan>.

In late August, an environmental coalition filed a petition for intervention in the NRC process seeking to block the project and requested a hearing on the matter. "An environmental coalition, including long-time watchdogs on perhaps the most dangerous nuclear plant in the country, and by some measures in the world, stands ready to meet the legal deadline in order to enter the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) re-licensing proceeding", stated Kevin Kamp, Radioactive Waste Specialist with Beyond Nuclear, which is leading the coalition effort. Sierra Club is not a party to this petition.

Enough is enough. Michigan and the Great Lakes region should be moving to close down nuclear power plants, not try to restart these dangerous and outdated facilities. Sierra Club urges our elected officials to stop subsidizing nuclear power and move quickly to cleaner, safer and more cost-effective energy options.

For the latest information or to get involved, email jan.oconnell@sierraclub.org or call Jan at 616-956-6646.



Bring Cleaner Air to a Neighborhood Near You - Continued

Continued from Page 6

and wildfires. Here in Michigan, there's a strong push to transition our electric utilities to 100% renewable energy by 2040. The Mackinac Center report card found we were at 12% in 2022. By shifting to solar, wind, and battery storage, we have a significant opportunity to improve our air quality.

In response to the lack of local air quality data, some West Michigan communities have partnered with JustAir. The team at JustAir collaborates to make air quality information more accessible. In 2023, Grand Rapids residents and partners worked alongside JustAir staff to identify locations. This expanded the network of hyper-local air quality monitoring. Residents can now use the air quality dashboard to track and stay informed if the air they breathe is safe. Visit JustAir.App to view air quality data for Grand Rapids and other communities across the state.

Recently, community leaders in Muskegon County are engaging residents to determine the interest in air quality monitoring and identify potential locations. If you live in Muskegon County and want to join the discussion, contact Tamara Horne at tamara.horne@sierraclub.org. To explore adding air quality monitoring to your community, contact JustAir's Head of Partnerships, Sarah Craft, at sarah@justair.co.

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 spots on the Michigan Chapter Executive Committee. ExCom members set Chapter priorities and policies, ensure financial stability and solvency, and monitor and evaluate Chapter and Club activities. Their willingness to serve illustrates the strong commitment to grassroots activism that makes the Sierra Club the most effective environmental group in the country. Please note that due to space constraints, we asked the candidates to limit their statements to 75 words or less. If a statement runs longer than 75 words, the full statement can be found online at sierraclub.org/mi/ExComElections.

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

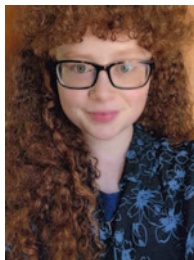
-Go online to our election web page and ballot at sierraclub.org/mi/ExComElections

-Mail in the ballot in this newsletter on p.9.

If you're voting by snail mail, you must write your Sierra Club membership number on the outside of the envelope in which you return your ballot or your vote will be disqualified. Your membership number is above your address on the back cover of this newsletter. This information will also be required for online voting. Paper ballots must be returned to the Michigan Chapter office by Dec. 1, 2024 (online voting deadline is the same).

Mickkayla Callahan

Climate advocacy, critical thinking and leadership are my passions. Over six years, I co-founded the White Lake Area Climate Action Council, served on its Steering Committee and held internships or partnerships with MICAN, WMEAC and the Sierra Club. With a business degree in marketing and ongoing graduate studies in HR Management, I will use my passion and experience to help the Sierra Club spread climate awareness, preserve the environment, and prevent climate change.



Yousef Rabhi

As a lifelong environmental activist, long-time Sierra Club member and current Co-Chair of the Michigan Chapter, I have devoted my life to the struggle for a better, more just planet. In my 14 years of elected public service both as State Representative and County Commissioner, I sponsored bills to protect our groundwater, force polluters to pay, set a 100% renewable energy standard, expand access to home solar and ban PFAS in consumer products, among others.



Marty Habalewsky

I joined the Chapter ExCom in 2020 and received the Theodore Roosevelt Award for political leadership. I serve on the Chapter's Legislative and Political committees and am the past chair of the Blue Water Committee. With a background in public relations, sales and marketing, I've worked with four Michigan governors. As a citizen lobbyist and a witness in Sierra Club lawsuits, I helped secure \$1 million from St. Clair County Commissioners to address landfill odors.



Andrew Sarpolis

I served on staff at the Michigan Sierra Club, most recently as the Michigan Field Manager. While there, I helped to manage the Sierra Club's award-winning Beyond Coal Campaign and field programs in the state. Now, I am looking to use the knowledge and experience I have built to continue to help support the Chapter on the executive committee as a volunteer leader. I have a background in nonprofit management, campaigns, and community organizing.



Vote For Michigan Chapter Executive Committee Members

Jamie Simmons

I am an environmental activist, social worker, and restorative justice advocate with seven years in the just energy transition movement. I initially worked with the Sierra Club during the Build Back Better Campaign while working for MICAN and held roles with NPR's Michigan Radio. Now, I am a program manager at Elevate. I center the Jemez Principles, believe in bottom-up organizing and understand that environmental justice intersects with the social and systemic issues affecting Michiganders.



Anne Woiwode

For four decades I've worked to protect our state and the planet through the Michigan Sierra Club. I had the honor of working for the Michigan Chapter, and continue to serve as a volunteer leader, because our unique grassroots nature is critical to win the fight against climate disruption, to protect the Great Lakes, and ensure a legacy of protected wild lands for all future generations. I would appreciate your vote!



Randy Young

My background aligns with the Sierra Club's mission. I hold degrees in Environmental Health, Marine Environmental Science, and Coastal Oceanography. I worked as an environmental scientist at the EPA before transitioning to academia, where I taught Environmental Science and Biology for over 25 years. Currently, I'm Associate Dean of Science at Macomb Community College. I've served on the Clinton River Watershed Council board for several years, including time as board president and interim director.



Please include your name and membership number in the space below.

Name:

Membership Number:

SIERRA CLUB MICHIGAN CHAPTER 2024 EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE BALLOT

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

MICKKAYLA CALLAHAN

MARTY HABALEWSKY

YOUSEF RABHI

ANDREW SARPOLIS

JAMIE SIMMONS

ANNE WOIWODE

RANDY YOUNG

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. Please visit sierraclub.org/mi/ExComElections or contact member.care@sierraclub.org if you need help finding your membership number.

**Your ballot must be received on or before
December 1, 2024**

What is a Rain Garden?

By Erin Johnson

Detroit is Michigan's most populous and impervious city. To offset this, the Sierra Club Michigan Chapter is working to ensure green stormwater infrastructure, like rain gardens, flourishes across metro Detroit.

What is a Rain Garden?

Rain gardens are beautiful, functional spaces filled with native plants that absorb and store rainwater. They help reduce stormwater runoff, prevent local flooding, and support pollinators. Detroit's combined stormwater overflow system and wastewater treatment plant manage millions of gallons of water. We must do our part to reduce stormwater runoff and pollution in our local rivers and the Great Lakes.

Rain Gardens as Green Stormwater Infrastructure

Rain garden installations are a great opportunity for communities, residents, institutions and governments to utilize green stormwater infrastructure. Volunteer-led rain garden installations unite communities while harvesting rainwater, managing localized flooding, deepening knowledge of native plants and protecting the Great Lakes. Through programs like Rain Gardens to the Rescue and Storm Water Specialist Training (SWST), the Michigan Chapter, alongside Friends of the Rouge, leads rain garden education, installation, and workforce development across Southeastern Michigan. Read more about Rain Gardens to the Rescue and Storm Water Specialist Training below.

Rain Gardens to the Rescue - Celebrating 9 years and counting!

Celebrating 9 years, Rain Gardens to the Rescue educates southeast Michiganders on the benefits of rain gardens and how to create them. The Michigan Chapter and Friends of the Rouge engaged 15 participants in workshops and installed 11 gardens throughout Detroit and Dearborn in August and September! As you see more and more rain gardens throughout Southeastern Michigan, be sure to enjoy both their beauty and the green technological support they offer us and our planet!

Storm Water Specialist Training (SWST)

The 2024 SWST program, hosted at St. Suzanne Cody Rouge Resource Center, equips community members with the skills to manage and maintain rain gardens. Through hands-on training and lectures, participants learn about green stormwater infrastructure, native plants, and the tools needed to support Detroit's green future. This year, the program expanded to three cohorts, with more than 50 students completing the course.

*Questions about bringing a rain garden to your home or community?
Please email Erin Johnson at erinp.johnson@sierraclub.org.*



June 2024 SWST graduates celebrate their accomplishments with instructors Erin Johnson, Community Organizer and Matt Connors, Restoration Coordinator at Friends of the Rouge.

Watershed Health Project Collaboration

By Erma Leaphart

In November 2021, the Sierra Club Michigan Chapter participated in a series of workshops for the Advancing Southeast Michigan: Co-development of Socio-environmental report cards for the Clinton, Detroit, Huron, River Raisin, and Rouge Rivers project. Supported by the Erb Family Foundation, this initiative led to report cards that will enhance understanding of watershed health and increase collaboration to better serve the people and environment in Southeast Michigan. This project aimed to create a comprehensive understanding of the region's environmental and socio-economic conditions while engage community members and experts.

The workshop provided an opportunity to “co-design the framework for a series of report cards to assess the ecological, social, cultural, and economic health of the region now and into the future.” People with many years of watershed protection work were involved in the process.

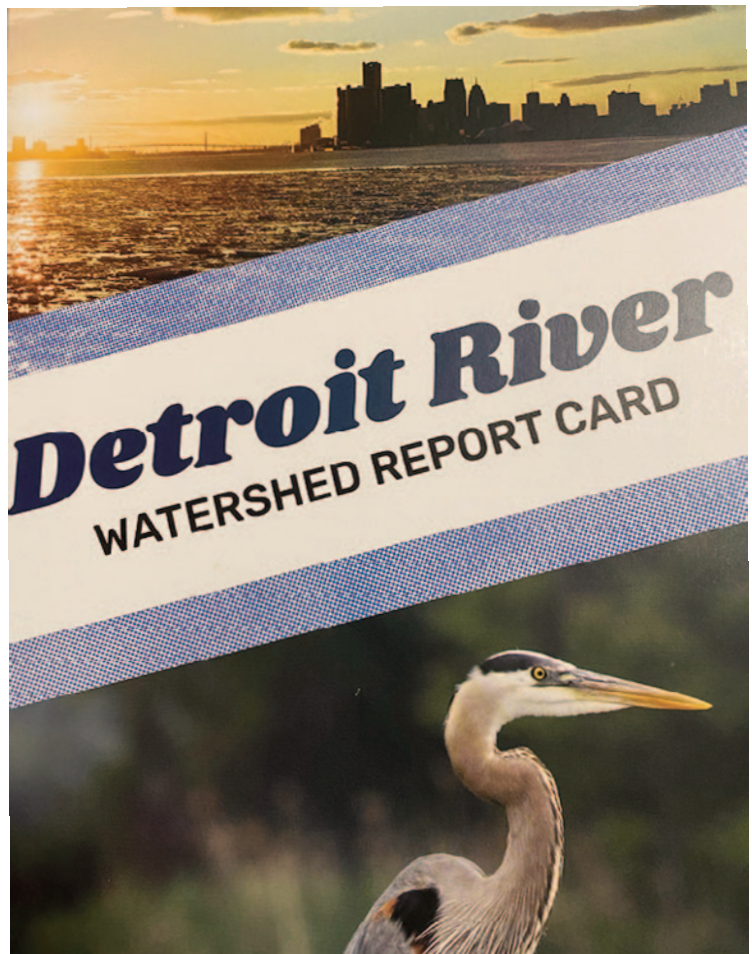
Five (5) watershed groups located in S.E. Michigan, our most populated region, were involved. The groups included: Clinton River Watershed Council, Friends of the Detroit River, Huron River Watershed Council, River Raisin Watershed Council, and Friends of the Rouge. The project was facilitated by and in collaboration with the University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science (UMCES) (Integration & Application Network) www.umces.edu and Council Fire, Benefit LLC.

Most of the work was done virtually using several collaboration tools to gather data and solicit ideas from stakeholders from all watershed councils. According to the report cards, the indicators were placed into six categories. The categories are listed below with examples of the indicators:

- Water (nitrogen, phosphorus, turbidity...)
- Economy (household income, income equality, trade...)
- Ecosystem (wetlands, tree canopy, fish populations...)
- Human Health (fish consumption, air quality, heat vulnerability...)
- Infrastructure (farmland, impervious surfaces, affordable housing...)
- Recreation (fishing licenses, beach access, parks...)

Data was rigorously collected, tallied and used to create scores for each indicator. The result of this collaborative process is impressive but most importantly it provides a baseline of data to assess past efforts and create action plans to build upon progress made and create strategies and opportunities for improvement.

The final report cards for each of the watershed groups and one for the entire SE Michigan region were released in May 2024 and can be found here: <https://bit.ly/3zu1vBf>



Report From The State Capitol

By Tim Minotas and Christy McGillivray

Since January 2024, the Legislative team has focused on strong advocacy for shared budget priorities. Many of our legislative priorities did not move through to the Governor's desk, including the water affordability package, polluter pay, and part 31 rulemaking, and a revocation of the ban on local plastic bag bans. However, by the end of the legislative break a few bills we care about did make it to the Governor's desk – a bill to properly label disposable wipes as NOT flushable, legislation to eliminate the industry stacked Environmental Rules Review Committee, and a bill that will ban HOA's from impeding individuals' ability to put solar panels and make energy efficiency upgrades on their property.

We also held our 2024 spring lobby day in May where over a 100 Sierra Club members and activists descended upon Lansing to lobby lawmakers on the water affordability bill package, polluter pay, and the environmental impacts of biofuels. Overall, Sierra Club staff set up 84 meetings with both Republican and Democratic offices, and were able to hit all 148 legislative offices that day. Tim and Christy are communicating and meeting with lawmakers on a daily basis and are at the Capitol every week during session.

The majority of the legislative session was defined by our herculean efforts to beat back bad data center tax break bills. Due to the work of Sierra Club volunteers and staff, the big tech lobbyists couldn't muster enough votes to get these through at the very end of session. The stakes of this fight are incredibly high – without proper mandates for the production of renewable energy and water conservation, a boom in data center construction will trigger the off-ramps in our 100% clean energy package resulting in the functional loss of our singular environmental victory from 2023. Due to the amazing efforts of Sierra Club volunteer leaders, staff, and the entire environmental advocacy community, we were able to stand up to utilities, big tech, and even two powerful labor interests, cinching a victory at the last minute of session. This is the first time that big tech has not gotten its way in a state legislature, and the Michigan Chapter is, again, doing groundbreaking work on this issue.

When it comes to the state budget, the final version ended up being a mixed bag for environmental priorities. Overall, the budget supported clean energy and efficiency but fell short in fully safeguarding residents from pollution and cost increases. You can view Sierra Club's 2025 budget priorities here: <https://bit.ly/4e4J5WU>

As a way to hold state lawmakers accountable for their actions, the Sierra Club Michigan Chapter publishes a legislative scorecard highlighting where legislators stand on key priority issues. We use our scorecard to make sure Sierra Club Michigan Chapter members and supporters know how their elected officials voted. Upon the conclusion of this legislative session, the Michigan Chapter will be releasing its end of the year scorecard.

We have so much to do, and we must expand our pro-environmental majority in the state legislature to accomplish this impressive to-do list in 2024! We will keep building the momentum we need to deliver for the health of Michiganders and Great Lakes protections.



Sierra Club members and supporters pose outside the Michigan State Capitol Building for citizens' lobby day.

Old Growth

By Marvin Roberson, Forest Ecologist

Old-Growth used to be a dirty word.

It refers to forests which are not cut, and are allowed to grow to their biological maturity. Much of Michigan forests were originally old-growth, and many of the species native to Michigan evolved under old-growth conditions.

There is little old-growth forest remaining in Michigan today. Some old-grow is still present at a few places like Hartwick Pines and McCormick Wilderness. There are, however, large portions of Michigan's forests that are returning to that state.

The Sierra Club's Michigan Chapter and conservation programs have worked to restore old-growth forests for almost 40 years. Some of those efforts include state implementation of national policies, such as the Clinton Roadless Rule, which prohibited new road building in unroaded areas. Other efforts targeted Michigan agencies to secure the old-growth designation in the national and state forest plans.



Photo by Marvin Roberson

Old-Growth Hemlock in Michigan's Upper Peninsula.

In almost every case, we were met with resistance. Old-Growth was called “decadent”, or a “biological desert”. Agencies acted as though old-growth conditions were interesting historical artifacts incapable of restoration. They did not acknowledge that much of Michigan's forested landscape is trying to return to old-growth, and that only active resistance by management agencies is preventing that return.

However, time has proved us right. Scientific research demonstrates the importance of old-growth not just to native plants and animals, but also for carbon sequestration to combat global climate change. And as this science progressed, agencies came along, albeit sometimes reluctantly.

Currently, the Biede-Harris administration is implementing a nationwide mature and old-growth forest initiative. This initiative documents threats and opportunities to protect old-growth forests on over 100 million acres of federally managed lands.

The Public has an opportunity to weigh in on this initiative. Comment on this proposal at the following address, and tell the US Forest Service to protect as much old-growth as possible, especially in Michigan: <https://bit.ly/3Tkol56>



Support our work

Enclosed is my/our gift to the Sierra Club Michigan Chapter:

_____ \$250 _____ \$100 _____ \$50 \$_____ Other

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 the 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 Cara Beld at cara.beld@sierraclub.org.

Please send your gift to the Sierra Club Michigan Chapter: 602 W Ionia St Lansing, MI 48933

Instead of a check, please charge my credit card \$_____. [] VISA [] Master Card [] Discover Card [] American Express

Card # : _____ Exp. Date: _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Make your gift online



Open the camera on your phone and scan the QR above.

Give online at:
sc.org/MI/MackInacSupport

Supporting Your Local Chapter

By Cara Beld

Have you considered making a gift to ensure environmental advocacy and conservation are strong in Michigan for future generations? By leaving a planned gift you can strengthen the protection of treasured natural spaces and access to clean air and water for residents across the Great Lakes State. Your planned gift also establishes the longevity of the fight against corporate polluters and dirty energy producers for years to come. Because most planned gifts are given after your lifetime, your current budget isn't affected. Many gifts are easy to make. The most popular gifts—beneficiary designations or including us in your will—can be made by updating a form or adding a sentence to your will.

Another way to support environmental action in Michigan is through your retirement account. This is a tax-wise way to support the planet and to leave less heavily taxed assets to your loved ones. By designating the Michigan Chapter as a beneficiary through the Sierra Club Foundation, these assets pass to us tax-free. To make this type of gift, you can simply update the beneficiary designation form provided by your account administrator with the following information: Sierra Club Foundation, FBO Sierra Club's Michigan Chapter, tax-ID number 94-6069890.

Every gift strengthens our mission to protect, restore, and enjoy Michigan nature and builds the collective grassroots power of caring supporters like you. Keep an eye out for the upcoming Special Appeal letter hitting mailboxes in September. For more information, contact Cara Beld at cara.beld@sierraclub.org.

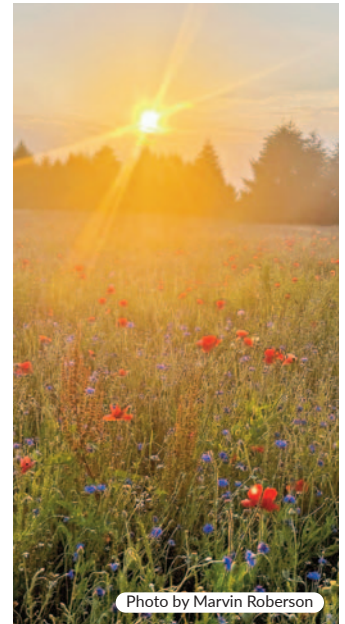


Photo by Marvin Roberson
Sunset over poppy field in Fennville, MI.

Donate Your Vehicle This Fall

Considering a new car or have an older car you don't want in your garage or driveway? It's quick, easy and you can support a good cause! By donating a vehicle you no longer need or use, you reduce your impact, support the charitable programs of the Michigan Sierra Club and receive a tax deduction. The entity CARS will pick up most cars, trucks, trailers, boats, RVs, motorcycles and off-road vehicles, making it easy for you to support the Sierra Club's mission to move toward a greener future.



Your generous donation will support the Michigan Sierra Club - to secure protection for public land and waters, promote healthy ecosystems and communities, and fight for environmental justice, clean air and water. For your convenience, the donation process is easy and efficient. From the pick-up or tow of your vehicle to the sale - everything will be handled from start to finish. Give us a call at 844-674-3772 or visit us online at www.scfch.careasy.org and we'll show you how easy it is to donate a vehicle you no longer need and give a gift that can preserve and protect our Great Lakes state.

Contact Cara Beld, Michigan Chapter's development manager, at 517-484-2378 with any questions.

Consider Becoming a Monthly Donor

Become a monthly donor through Sierra Club's Evergreen program. A monthly gift is one of the best ways to ensure that the Michigan Chapter programs continue. These contributions from members and supporters like you sustain Great Lakes protection and advocacy for clean air and water across Michigan communities. Please consider an Evergreen monthly gift to the Michigan Sierra Club today. Any questions, email cara.beld@sierraclub.org. You can go online to: sc.org/MIMackinacMonthly



In Memoriam

In Memoriam - Nancy Shiffler April 27, 1949 - May 29, 2024

Dedicated, smart, kind, disciplined, quiet, patient, a mentor, generous, fun. The words barely capture the remarkable life and legacy of Nancy Shiffler, whose four decades of environmental leadership have left the Sierra Club and the Great Lakes state immeasurably better. Nancy served in many volunteer roles with the Club over the years, including conservation committee chair, regional conservation committee representative and chapter chair, and continued as an active emeritus member of the Chapter ExCom until her passing this past May. Nancy initially got involved with Sierra Club through outings, and for many years she regularly led outings to Isle Royale. Nancy also served as a Council Delegate representing the Michigan Chapter at the Annual Meetings in San Francisco. Some people are generous with their time, others with financial support; Nancy was incredibly generous with both. She exemplified radical patience at the forefront leading on nearly every environmental issue in Michigan with her quiet, dignified demeanor, impressive depth of knowledge and calming presence. She had a huge heart and worked tirelessly to boost morale during trying times with her sharp wit, humor, and an intriguing array of talents. While Nancy will be sorely missed, her legacy will inspire future generations for decades to come.



2009 Photo by Jan O'Connell

Nancy Shiffler devoted four decades to advancing environmental and conservation causes in Michigan.

Order Your Sierra Club Calendar Today!

Sierra Club's iconic calendars are available through the Michigan Chapter office. Enjoy full-color photographs of breathtaking landscapes and stunning wildlife images while keeping track of your daily activities and appointments. These best-selling calendars are sealed with a removable sticker, eliminating individual plastic wrapping. Our new environmentally conscious saddle stitch binding ensures easier recycling, and the photos and grids are printed on elemental chlorine free, Forest Stewardship Council®-certified paper containing a minimum of 60 percent pre- and post-consumer waste. FSC® certification guarantees that the virgin component of the paper has been sourced from forests managed in an environmentally and socially responsible manner. But the best calendar feature of all must be that 60% of the proceeds stay right here in Michigan to support work on local issues important to our members.

Please submit all orders by Monday, November 25th, 2024 (don't worry, we'll order a few extra in case you miss the deadline). Your calendar will arrive mid-December. Print, complete and mail the order form with payment to the address below. You can also email cecilia.garcia@sierraclub.org or call our office at 517-484-2372

Sierra Club MI
Att: Calendar Sales
602 W Ionia St
Lansing, MI 48933



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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:

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