WMEAC's 45th year was about laying the groundwork for the next 45. Dialogue took place throughout our state, shaping the future of our region's energy portfolio, access to water, watershed protection, and climate resilient communities. Thanks to campaigns and programs WMEAC supported and led, our communities are prepared to begin building the future of West Michigan.

Michigan Energy, Michigan Jobs invested over $50 million in clean energy education for Michigan citizens. Voters left the ballot box with a definite message that they want clean energy policy through legislative action. Governor Snyder kicked off his listening tour on energy policy, and we can expect Michigan's legislature to take action in 2015. WMEAC brought thousands of volunteer hours to the table through voter education and engagement calls and precinct leadership.

WMEAC partnered with citizens in Holland, Michigan to inform thousands in their community about Holland Board of Power & Light's 40 Year Energy Plan. Hundreds of citizen ratepayers showed support for aggressive energy efficiency and clean energy goals, helping to shape an internationally recognized energy plan for Holland's future.

Watershed education and stormwater policy saw large wins this year as well. Teach for the Watershed program now reaches 4,000+ students and stormwater programming and advocacy celebrated major accomplishments. In Grand Rapids, WMEAC and community leaders ensured that stormwater services would see increased investment through streets funding from 2023 and beyond. Vital Streets - streets that manage stormwater and move a variety of transportation users safely - became the default practice for road design within the City. Finally, the city established a Stormwater Oversight Commission at WMEAC's recommendation, to ensure stakeholder participation in future water infrastructure decisions.

Climate change has long been a concern of WMEAC, but in 2013, Mayor Heartwell called on us to begin elevating climate issues. We published the Grand Rapids Climate Resiliency Report, which the Mayor used as he gave input to the Obama Administration's Climate Resiliency Task Force. It stands among the first, and notably, the most complete assessment of climate impacts on municipal management, public infrastructure, communities, and ecosystems. We are proud to see our partners in the businesses and institutions throughout West Michigan use it as a tool to assess their own climate vulnerabilities and take action.

WMEAC is continuing its legacy of delivering our unique, realistic brand of environmental education and action from Saugatuck to Muskegon, Grand Haven to Grand Rapids. It is with great pride that we deliver this report.

-- Julie Parks, WMEAC Board President
West Michigan Environmental Action Council has been working with the community to create action and educate on behalf of the environment since 1968. WMEAC’s goal is to respond to developing issues regarding West Michigan’s natural and human ecologies. WMEAC is focused on Building Sustainable Communities and Protecting Water Resources. WMEAC wants to work with West Michigan residents to see the fruit of their labor in the news, the local economy, nature, and their daily lives by inspiring community action.
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April 2013 - March 2014
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Abbie Evans / Communications
Alex Colwell / Policy
Alexander Beecroft / General Office
Allison Engeseth / Policy
Angelika Kurthen / General Office
Aynsley Gilmour / Water Fellow
Bridget McDonald / Policy
Caleb Syswerda / Policy
Camden Burd / Water Fellow
Janelle Straw / Policy
Jared Sartini / Plaster Creek
John Wiegand / Eco-Journalism with The Rapidian
Kevin Peterson / Community Outreach
Kristina Preble / Teach for the Watershed
Kyle Hudecz / Social Media Organizing and Communications

Leah Sienkowski / Water Trails
Madeline Boyd / Women and the Environment Symposium
Matthew Kuczynski / Social Media Organizing and Communications
Megan Toth / Event and Fund
Mercedes Robinson / IDEAL Scholar
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Spencer Wilczewski / Journalism & Writing
Tina Geelhoed / Social Media Organizing and Communications
William DeBoer / Journalism & Writing

VOLUNTEERS

WMEAC relies on the work of members and friends like you to carry out our mission of leading environmental protection in West Michigan. From March 31, 2013 to April 1, 2014, WMEAC volunteers logged 9,903 hours of service to our mission. This includes individual volunteers and small groups throughout the year. Volunteers worked on tasks including rain barrel preparation, Teach for the Watershed, weeding WMEAC’s rain gardens and green roof, general office help, WMEAC internships, and work in WMEAC’s many committees.

VOLUNTEER HOURS BY MONTH
sum of total hours in thousands

9903.6 hours worked

877 Sum number of Volunteers
Women and the Environment Award Winners

**Women of Vision**
Kim Spring

**Women of Inspiration**
Christine Smith

**Women of Hope**
Katie Fahey

Inaugural George Heartwell Environmental Legacy Award
George Heartwell

WMEAC Annual Awards

**Teacher of the Year**
Jeremy Andrews

**Intern of the Year**
Ondrea Spychalski

**Volunteer of the Year**
David Shaw

**Business of the Year**
Dean Transportation

**Activist of the Year**
Jim Tolbert

**CR Evenson Award**
James Clift

**Joan Wolfe Award**
The IDEAL Committee
Corinne Banks / Kim Harris / Eric Foster / Michelle Jokisch Polo / Dr. Michelle Loyd-Paige / Bobby Springer / Jonathan Harper

WMEAC recognizes that underrepresented communities are among the most vulnerable to environmental deterioration. So, in order to strengthen West Michigan’s environment as a whole, it is important to involve all communities in the process, especially under-represented communities. This realization brought about the IDEAL Initiative.

IDEAL (Inclusion and Development of Environmental Allies and Leaders) was created with a goal of building relationships with community leaders and citizens from underrepresented communities to mobilize around environmental justice issues such as housing quality, health, energy insecurity, workforce development and pollution.

In addition, IDEAL is working to bring awareness to the health and financial impacts of environmental justice issues. The relationships between poor environmental quality and health problems, such as asthma, obesity, heart disease and cancers that disproportionately impact communities of color are strong. Improving our environment can help prevent health problems, improve quality of life, and save money for families.

Through IDEAL, WMEAC is working to build a community of powerful voices of underrepresented people to protect the future of their communities. WMEAC will be guided in our priorities and actions by these individuals and organizations so that together we can restore wellness and opportunity to the many families who are negatively impacted by environmental injustices.
With the help of our members and constituents, WMEAC takes action in the community in two core areas: protecting West Michigan’s water resources, and building sustainable communities. WMEAC works with communities to build rain barrels, provide watershed education, clean the Grand River, and work with local leaders to ensure proper stormwater investment. WMEAC has helped dozens of families receive energy audits and financing for energy efficiency improvements. In addition, WMEAC also released one of the nation’s most in-depth climate reports, the Grand Rapids Climate Resiliency Report.
After historic flooding canceled the original date of the Third Annual Grand River GreenUp, 250 volunteers gathered at Harbor Island in Grand Haven on June 1, 2013 to remove 8,800 pounds of trash and 4,880 pounds of recycling from the Grand River in the Tri-Cities area. The Greenup was funded in part by the Grand Haven Area Community Foundation Youth Fund.

The Tenth Anniversary Mayors’ Grand River Clean Up took place the following fall on September 14, 2013. A record 750 volunteers picked up 12,000 pounds of trash during one of the Midwest’s largest river clean up events. The communities of Grand Rapids, Grandville, Walker, and Wyoming supported the event along with nearly 50 sponsors.

WMEAC has continued its efforts to ensure that the efforts to restore the rapids to the Grand River in downtown Grand Rapids is done utilizing best practices and sound science, so that the project will improve water quality, natural areas, and stormwater management. WMEAC participated in both stakeholder subcommittees, the Economic Development and Community Benefits Subcommittee and the River Quality and Use Subcommittee, which released their initial reports in May 2013. In the Spring of 2014, WMEAC was appointed by the City to participate in the River Restoration Steering Committee and the River Corridor Plan Steering Committee, whose roles are to provide overall guidance on efforts associated with the restoration of the Grand River and riverbank development.
In the City of Grand Rapids, WMEAC was an active participant in the development of the City’s Stormwater Master Plan, Stormwater Asset Management Plan and Capital Improvement Plan, and Stormwater Systems Technical Reference Manual, which were presented to the City Commission in June 2013. Similarly, WMEAC sat on the Vital Streets Taskforce, which released its final report and recommendations in August 2013. As a result of WMEAC’s efforts, the City has developed a policy of implementing green infrastructure practices as the default management practice in buildings and roads development and redevelopment projects.

Regional stormwater projects include the Rogue River Watershed Stormwater Guidebook Project and the Plaster Creek Watershed Restoration Project, where WMEAC is partnering with Trout Unlimited’s Rogue River Home Rivers Initiative and Plaster Creek Stewards at Calvin College, respectively. WMEAC also continues its participation on the Gerald R. Ford International Airport’s Stakeholder Advisory Committee, which has been working with the airport to mitigate its contributions of deicer fluid and other stormwater runoff to the Thornapple River and its tributaries.

In 2013, the rain barrel program built its 2,500th barrel and continues to reach neighbors and communities with stormwater education. The City of Grand Rapids, Coca-Cola, and Rylee’s Ace Hardware have supported the program since 2009, but each year new partnerships grow and sustain the program. This year, the Kent District Libraries, Muskegon Earth Week committee, Girl Scouts of Michigan Shore to Shore, Grand Valley State University’s Michigan Alternative and Renewable Energy Center, Rockford Area Community Endowment, and the West Michigan Shoreline Regional Development Commission helped facilitate and fund workshops.
Over the past school year, Teach for the Watershed (T4W) has reached over 4,000 students across Kent and Ottawa Counties. Students from over 90 classrooms in 10 school districts participated in watershed education from stream sampling events to cleaning up county parks. Our efforts continued this summer with various school camps in West Michigan.

As we move into the fall of 2014, WMEAC will partner with Grand Rapids Public Schools to roll out T4W in six grade classrooms across the district, with the hopes of offering the program to all middle school students in the next few years. Participating teachers will receive T4W events and related classroom curriculum to offer in a watershed unit aligning with Michigan science curriculum standards.

In June 2013, WMEAC was awarded a grant from the Michigan Coastal Zone Management Program, Department of Environmental Quality, with funds from the National Atmospheric and Oceanic Administration, to design a framework and evaluate community readiness for a Lake Michigan Water Trail connecting Benton Harbor to Ludington. Water trails are designated routes on navigable waterways such as rivers, lakes, and canals that are designed and implemented to foster an interactive historical education experience; they are generally intended for non-motorized watercraft.

WMEAC is partnering with Grand Valley State University's (GVSU) Hospitality and Tourism Management Department and Williams and Works to conduct research, marketing and planning analyses, and collect community feedback on the future development of a water trail along Michigan’s western shoreline. During the Spring of 2013, WMEAC and GVSU, along with local community partners, hosted the first of 18 public listening sessions in the lakeshore population centers of Benton Harbor/St. Joseph, South Haven, Saugatuck/Douglas/Holland, Grand Haven, Muskegon, Whitehall/Montague, and Pentwater/Ludington.
In the Fall of 2013, the Wege Foundation awarded a grant to a statewide collaborative of partners to protect Michigan from High Volume Horizontal Fracturing, or fracking. Freshwater Future, Michigan Environmental Council, FLOW for Water, the Sierra Club, Trout Unlimited and Kent County Water Conservation and WMEAC are working at the state, regional, and local levels to educate communities and local officials, gather data to support regulatory changes, and activate citizens toward proactive steps to protect Michigan's heritage of freshwater resources. WMEAC is working primarily with FLOW and Kent County Water Conservation to help local communities strengthen their ordinances to protect themselves from the ancillary impacts of fracking and to train citizens to be leaders in their communities to call for strengthened protections.

WMEAC FILM SERIES
The WMEAC Film Series works to not only raise awareness but create action on issues that directly affect West Michigan. A panel discussion follows most screenings led by a group of experts on the topic discussed in the film. The WMEAC Film Series grew exponentially during the 2013/14 season. At the first film in the 2013/14 series, Trashed, at Celebration Cinema North, WMEAC hosted over 200 attendees who learned about the impacts of waste on our ecosystem.

The 2013/14 Lineup:
December: Trashed // Celebration Cinema North
January: Gasland II // UICA
February: Chasing Ice // GVSU Loosemore Auditorium
March: Vanishing of the Bees // UICA

WOMEN AND THE ENVIRONMENT SYMPOSIUM
Over 150 guests attended the Women and Environment Symposium this year. Personal commitment forms were integrated throughout the workshop to encourage attendees to make 30-day and 365-day commitments to take action to impact their personal lives and their communities. WMEAC then sent out resources to participants to help them reach those goals. This positive piece reinforced the intention of the Symposium, which was to create opportunities for meaningful action and to inspire and empower women.

Keynote speaker, Sandra Steingraber is a biologist and author who writes and lectures on environmental factors that contribute to reproductive health issues and cancer. She is the author of several publications including Living Downstream and Raising Elijah: Protecting Our Children in an Age of Environmental Crisis. Steingraber spoke to Symposium attendees about fracking and the importance of communities rising up to take action.

Other topics were addressed in various panels such as Women and Child Health, Climate Change and Resiliency, and Citizen Action and Political Efficacy. The panels brought together women from across the state sharing their stories of political action.
From 2011-2013, WMEAC participated in BetterBuildings for Michigan in close partnership with the City of Grand Rapids, as a part of a state-wide pilot project. This project determined how to most effectively conduct energy efficiency campaigns. The program met and exceeded the expectations.

In June 2013, WMEAC and local energy contractors were interested in finding opportunities to continue to support the energy efficiency industry in West Michigan, post-BetterBuildings for Michigan. Michigan residents spend an average of $2,100/year on their energy bills, a result of our cold climate and housing stock. The first step to living in a healthier, more comfortable, and more efficient home is to have a whole-home energy assessment. A homeowner will go through the home with a professional energy contractor to assess efficiency in areas of the home like wall and ceiling insulation, air sealing, HVAC, and ventilation systems.

WMEAC knows that energy efficiency is the cleanest, cheapest, and most quickly deployed energy source we have available today. Home energy assessments give a homeowner the power to be smart about investment in order to make the biggest impact on health, comfort, and savings. WMEAC has continued providing resources to hundreds of homeowners who are interested in learning about, and taking action toward, reducing their home’s energy use.

Thank you to Herman Miller for partnering with WMEAC to champion a home energy program as an employee-based initiative focused on indoor health, energy savings, and comfort opportunities.

Thank you to WellHome and DwellTech Solutions as former energy contractors who supported and helped West Michigan homeowners and tenants to meet their own energy goals through BetterBuildings for Michigan. And, thank you to the City of Grand Rapids Community Development Department for partnering with WMEAC to serve over 2,000 West Michigan residents with energy efficiency improvements.
Michigan recycles only about 14 percent of its solid waste stream, which is a dismal amount. As a state, we bury an estimated $435 million of recyclable materials in landfills every year. WMEAC participated in the governor’s recycling stakeholder group, and helped shape an initial statewide recycling plan. The plan represents a good first step; however many large issues remain unsolved. Significant resources will have to be invested to build a quality, comprehensive system that includes a dedicated funding stream.

Compromise and innovation will be required to bring disparate stakeholders together around a new bottle bill.

It was recognized that it is much too cheap to landfill in Michigan — artificially so — and today’s residents and taxpayers are still paying to manage the waste of previous generations. Public Sector Consultants, a Michigan research and management firm, estimate that capturing 4.3 million tons of resources buried each year would produce 7,000 to 13,000 jobs and $3.9 billion in receipts, and will save the annual energy equivalent of nearly 417,000 homes. The State realizes that this is a huge potential for our communities.

“Garbage.” “Trash.” “Waste.” “Throw away.” These terms are becoming outmoded. A new paradigm is emerging that recognizes material value throughout a product’s life cycle.

In December of 2013 WMEAC released its Grand Rapids Climate Resiliency Report. The report originated from a grant the City of Grand Rapids received in 2012, when Mayor George Heartwell was recognized by the U.S. Conference of Mayors for the City’s efforts in confronting climate change.

The report is unique in that it discusses 22 different municipal sectors that climate change is likely to impact. The report includes traditional environmental topics such as energy, stormwater, and air quality, but it also delves into less traditional environmental topics such as crime, insurance, infrastructure, and health. The report was designed to be easily integrated into the City’s master plan and identifies 38 specific recommendations for the city to take action on.

One of the best metaphors for climate resiliency is that of a giant, complicated knot. When you pull on one thread of that knot, you tug on many other threads. Issues that contribute to climate change are then themselves impacted by climate change, and vise-versa.

Maintaining city streets is not normally within the purview of environmental organizations – particularly when funded by an income tax. However, traditional infrastructure can become climate infrastructure with smart design and planning. For example, local streets become “vital streets” when they are designed to provide safe access for all users (friendly to pedestrians, the handicapped, bikes, transit, etc.); manage storm and flood waters on-site; enhance the urban tree canopy; and grow economic vitality in walkable business districts.

During the Winter of 2013/14 WMEAC worked with the City of Grand Rapids to designate low impact design as the default design approach for street and sidewalk repair in order to enable the City to achieve a minimum of Stormwater Management Level C investment, as defined in the cities Asset Management and Capital Implementation Plan, by FY2022. In its February 11, 2014 Vital Street and Sidewalk Investment Guidelines the city defined “vital streets” and promised to ramp up stormwater funding over the next decade which will make Grand Rapids more climate resilient into the future.
DONOR SUPPORT

Your donations, including membership, annual fund donations, You Are Here campaign, gifts, endowment fund donations, and planned giving help build stronger communities, preserve our water, and advocate for the future of West Michigan’s environment.

Becoming a WMEAC member or donor means you are an integral part of this change. Not only do these dollars help us reach our goals for West Michigan’s environment, they also provide a voice on variety of issues that change policy on behalf of the environment.
The You Are Here Campaign was designed to increase WMEAC’s capacity to mobilize our region around key environmental issues by funding:

- Expanded educational and advocacy programs, capacity-building within the WMEAC leadership team.
- Three endowed Scholar positions focused on water, energy, and inclusion in environmental education and advocacy.

The campaign is on-going. We have achieved 78% of our $866,000 goal and are actively speaking to individual donors and institutions to successfully close out the campaign.

WMEAC continues to deliver impressive outcomes by making effective and efficient use of grant revenue and contributions from valued donors.

**OPERATION FUNDS**

Both revenue and expenses were down in the 2013/14 fiscal year, in concert with the conclusion of various programs in the prior fiscal year. WMEAC posted a negative balance of approximately $152,000 for fiscal year 2013/14. The year ended with Total Revenue of approximately $527,000 and Total Expenses of $679,000.

**ENDOWMENT**

WMEAC’s endowment investments grew again, moving from $995,620 in the 2012/13 fiscal year, to a healthy balance of $1,036,180 at the close of the 2013/14 fiscal year. The strong year in the market allowed WMEAC to draw $86,000 from the endowment to supplement operations and fund positions and programs that are focused on building organizational financial sustainability by growing membership, grants, and program revenue sources.
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Gaye Works and John O’Connor
Cheryl Oliver
Mary O’Neill and Carl Erickson
Judy and Don Otten
Amy Overeiner
Megan Parisian
Julie and Charles Parks
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Phyllis and Harold Penny
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Beryl Peters
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Carol Phelps
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Rhett and Jeralyn Pinsky
Tammy Milnikel and Kim Plant
Stan Ponstein
Jennifer Pope
Ken Porter
Mark Post and Gerard Akkerhuis
Rosemary Prince and Bruce Mort
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Monica Randles and Andrew Maternowski
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Mary Alice and Mike Williams
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Jane and Uko Zylstra
Joan L. Wolfe
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