

ANNUAL REPORT



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DEAR FRIENDS

2019 marks MEA's 20th anniversary, and I couldn't be more thrilled to be celebrating this milestone with you! After twenty years, Midwest Environmental Advocates is still the only nonprofit environmental law firm in Wisconsin providing direct legal services to people in need. Back in 1999, Wisconsin's environmental conservation community was coming to grips with the elimination of the Public Intervenor's Office. The loss was felt deeply by those who were concerned about natural resources, public rights and government accountability. Among them was a recent law-school graduate named Melissa Scanlan. Determined to help fill the void, Melissa and a core group of supporters founded MEA to provide legal assistance to ordinary people working to protect our shared natural resources.

When I look back on all we've accomplished, it's clear that we owe our success to the incredible citizens of this state who have partnered with MEA over the years. As a state, we've had our share of ups and downs, but the one constant has been the willingness of ordinary people to take on extraordinary challenges in order to protect public health and the environment. In this respect, 2018 was no different. In fact, MEA worked with more citizen advocates last year than ever before. Our staff provided legal services, resources and referrals to almost 100 individual citizens and more than a dozen community organizations throughout the state of Wisconsin.

Citizens who stood up for Wisconsin's public lands and waters in 2018 are motivated by a variety of environmental concerns—from frac sand mining to concentrated animal feeding operations to Great Lakes water diversions. What these citizen advocates have in common, though, is a shared belief in the power of the law to protect our resources and in the power of ordinary people to see that those laws are enforced.

As we look ahead to the challenges before us, there is reason to be cautiously optimistic. Our Department of Natural Resources has made a renewed commitment to science-based permitting and enforcement, and lawmakers on both sides of the aisle have finally agreed that something must be done to address Wisconsin's drinking water crisis. These are steps in the right direction, but it's going to take all of us working together to hold elected officials and our public agencies accountable to the promise of creating real and lasting solutions.

I am grateful for the dedication of MEA's talented staff and board of directors who make it possible to support the courageous change-makers standing up for all our rights to clean water, land, air and government. With your continued support, we will move forward together to defend our public resources and institutions for the benefit of current and future generations.

Warmly,



Kimberlee Wright
Executive Director

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YEAR IN REVIEW

CLEAN WATER

Collaborated with partners to win new protections for groundwater in areas susceptible to contamination. More than **2 million acres** of Wisconsin farmland are now covered by improved rules for the spreading of animal waste.

THE PUBLIC TRUST

Filed second amicus brief in support of litigation challenging DNR **high-capacity well permitting** process that fails to account for impacts on nearby water bodies.

COMMUNITY

LAW & POLICY

Reviewed proposed legislation during special and extraordinary legislative sessions and provided **legal analysis and recommendations** to partners.

TRANSPARENCY

JUSTICE

Advocated for citizens' rights and the public interest by challenging illegal settlement between DNR and CAFO industry that limits DNR's ability to **protect water resources**.

EDUCATION

Provided resources and referrals to **90+ citizens** who called our help line with questions about environmental law or problems in their communities.

THE PUBLIC TRUST

Represented Sturgeon Bay citizens in their effort to protect public land and uphold the **Public Trust Doctrine**.

ACCOUNTABILITY

Filed **open records** lawsuit to ensure DNR compliance with its mandate to disclose records related to Racine's diversion of Lake Michigan water.

EMPOWERMENT

Expanded work with local governments and nonprofit partners to provide guidance on local authority to protect **public health** and environment against impact from CAFO industry.

LOCAL AUTHORITY



Provided support to **Equal Justice Works** Fellow Jacklyn Bryan who is collaborating with WI tribes to assess their risks from State regulatory failures.

EQUITY & INCLUSION

ENFORCEMENT

Welcomed legal fellow Robert Lee who will spend two years in Wisconsin working with MEA attorneys to enforce the **Clean Water Act**.

STEWARDSHIP

Successfully challenged Meteor Timber permit in order to **protect rare wetlands**, and continued to defend victory during appeal process.

WETLAND PROTECTION

PUBLIC RIGHTS

Defended integrity of Great Lakes Compact by filing a legal challenge to a permit that would allow City of Racine to divert **7 million gallons** of Lake Michigan water a day for industrial use.

FINANCIALS

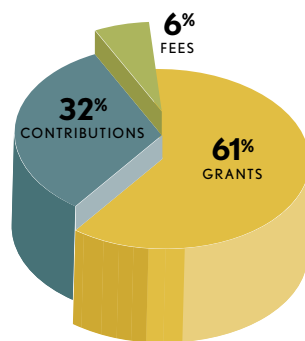
REVENUE AND EXPENSES FY 2018

REVENUES, GAINS AND OTHER SUPPORT	
Grants	\$467,413
Contributions	244,401
Fees	49,688
Other, Including Use of Organizational Reserves	3,593

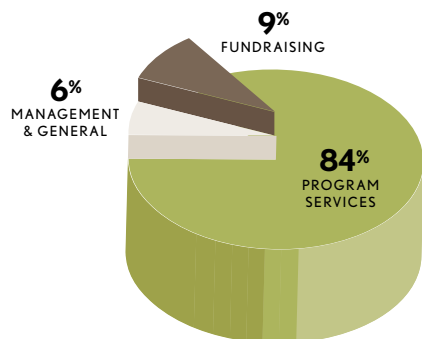
Total Revenues, Gains and Other Support \$765,095

EXPENSES	
Program Services	\$643,506
Supporting Activities	
Management & General	48,597
Fundraising	72,622

Total Expenses \$764,725



TOTAL INCOME



TOTAL EXPENSES

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WHO WE ARE

Founded in 1999, Midwest Environmental Advocates is a nonprofit, nonpartisan environmental law center that supports people working for healthy air, land, water and government for this generation and the next. We use the power of the law to help concerned citizens protect our natural heritage.

We are not your average law firm, nor are we your typical environmental nonprofit. Our mission is to empower citizens to make a difference and to support their efforts to protect public health and the environment using sound science and the law. We believe that every citizen has the potential to make a difference.