

EMPOWERMENT

We use the power of the law

STEWARDSHIP

to help you protect our heritage of

COMMUNITY

healthy water, air, land and government.

JUSTICE

ANNUAL REPORT / 2012



Midwest
Environmental
Advocates

DEAR FRIENDS

In addition to a full slate of legal work, the staff and board of Midwest Environmental Advocates worked hard this past year to increase our capacity to provide information and inspiration to people working in their communities for environmental justice. A key goal in redesigning our website and communications has been to highlight the importance and power of ordinary people standing together for the rights and opportunities of future generations.

The people of Wisconsin have a long tradition of valuing our rich natural heritage and that hasn't changed. Even though record numbers of people have made it very clear they don't support environmental rollbacks and special favors for special interests, their elected officials don't listen. We are more determined than ever to build a powerful social movement by connecting communities across the state working to protect public health and the environment.

The past year was a strong reminder of the importance of clean, open government as the basis for just and sustainable communities. Day after day, citizens take on the burdens of holding polluters accountable as their own government can't or won't. It isn't fair to expect people whose health and well-being are threatened by illegal pollution to take on powerful interests, but we are so thankful they do.

Even though there are far too many examples of special interest politics overshadowing the voices of people, I remain hopeful. The people of Wisconsin, people of all political persuasions, share a deep sense of duty to protect the health and opportunities of future generations. Native son Gaylord Nelson's words still reflect the ethic of Wisconsinites,

“Our goal is not just an environment of clean air and water and scenic beauty. The objective is an environment of decency, quality and mutual respect for all other human beings and all other living creatures.”

There have been times throughout our history when the power of the law really matters – this is one of those times.

Thank you all for your generous support and for your willingness to stand up and be heard.



Kimberlee Wright
Executive Director



WHO WE ARE

Founded in 1999, Midwest Environmental Advocates is a non-profit, environmental law center that supports people working for healthy water, air, land 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 non-profit. Our mission is to empower citizens to make a difference and to support their efforts to protect public health and the environment using the tools of law. We believe that every citizen has the potential to make a difference.

WHAT WE DO

Midwest Environmental Advocates stands with courageous citizens who are committed to their community and who work together to protect our environment. We use our legal expertise to help these citizens hold polluters and government accountable. Our legal practice is community-based, firmly rooted in Wisconsin's long tradition of environmental protection and social responsibility. In 2012, our work upheld the values that define us – *empowerment, stewardship, community and justice*. We worked with 38 clients to make change and protect their environmental commons. Over a dozen separate legal actions were brought to fight for our environmental heritage. Our intake program has assisted more than 50 individuals with their legal questions and concerns. We launched a new website with added capacity to provide timely information. We have welcomed new staff and mentored 12 law students for careers in public interest law. In short, we delivered on our promises, set new goals and worked hard.

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WATER



The people of Wisconsin play a significant role in the building of one of the best water protection programs in the nation. The wealth of clean water resources we enjoy today exists because of Wisconsin's tradition of open government and meaningful participation by the public. Citizens' access to technical and legal services in the complex arena of environmental regulation is at the heart of our success. Special interests have drowned out citizens' voices over the past several years to the point where our state water programs are failing to enforce the standards designed to protect public health. People who value healthy and abundant water come from all walks of life and they are working to regain sufficient resources and professional autonomy for public servants charged with administering important protective standards.

- Midwest Environmental Advocates works hard to see effective implementation of the phosphorus pollution control standards we helped pass in collaboration with partner organizations. The phosphorus criteria will protect Wisconsin waters from algae-causing pollutants. We have on-going legal actions to compel enforcement of laws designed to protect our public waters.
- We work with a number of Milwaukee area citizens groups as we scrutinize the city of Waukesha's request to withdraw water from Lake Michigan, a precedent-setting situation that could threaten the future water levels of our Great Lakes.
- As a member of the Mississippi River Collaborative, we work with 10 environmental organizations along the main stem of the Mississippi River, using science and the law to advocate for improved water quality in the river and the Gulf of Mexico.
- A generous grant on behalf of healthy water has allowed Midwest Environmental Advocates to increase our capacity to monitor and enforce protective laws when our government can't or won't. This critical support has allowed us to provide technical review of water pollution permits and to challenge permits that don't meet science-based standards in the law. This added capacity has allowed engaged citizens all over the state to hold polluters and government accountable to the Clean Water Act. Generous grants such as these give voice to citizens who don't have the wealth needed to fight powerful interests in court.

LAND



Working for healthy water and healthy air requires a respect for healthy land. The land ethic described so eloquently by Aldo Leopold is alive and well in Wisconsin. Sadly, even though Wisconsinites have worked together for generations to protect public and private lands, long-standing protective laws were weakened in spite of citizens' opposition. We provide citizens throughout Wisconsin information to help them assert their rights to participate in local land use decisions.

- We are working with the Bad River Band of Lake Superior Chippewa to make certain their homeland is not irreparably damaged by a proposed iron mine to be built in the headwaters of their Nation's watershed.
- Midwest Environmental Advocates worked with community groups throughout Wisconsin to blow the whistle on an industry-led effort to cut the public out of policy development to promote the aerial spraying of untreated animal waste while reducing local control.
- Residents call on our expertise to understand the local and state regulations regarding land use and development pertaining to Wisconsin's current sand mining boom.

AIR



Healthy air, like healthy water, is a right that we strive to protect. Low income communities of color are disproportionately impacted by industrial pollution in part due to our legacy of siting dirty facilities in poor urban and rural communities. Dirty air causes heart disease, respiratory disease, hypertension and other serious conditions. Access to public interest legal resources is critically important to people breathing bad air.

- Midwest Environmental Advocates is part of the Cleaner Valley Coalition, a partnership of civil rights, environmental, faith, health and neighborhood organizations working to improve the air quality of Milwaukee residents by advocating for the cleanup of We Energies' Menomonee Valley coal-fired power plant.
- Our comments on behalf of concerned Wisconsin citizens prompted the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Board to order further study of the health effects of airborne crystalline silica, a by-product of frac sand mining.
- In northern Wisconsin, two separate proposed incinerators raised air quality concerns among local residents. Midwest Environmental Advocates worked with citizens groups to bring their concerns to local and state officials and ensure that air quality was a top concern.

GOVERNMENT

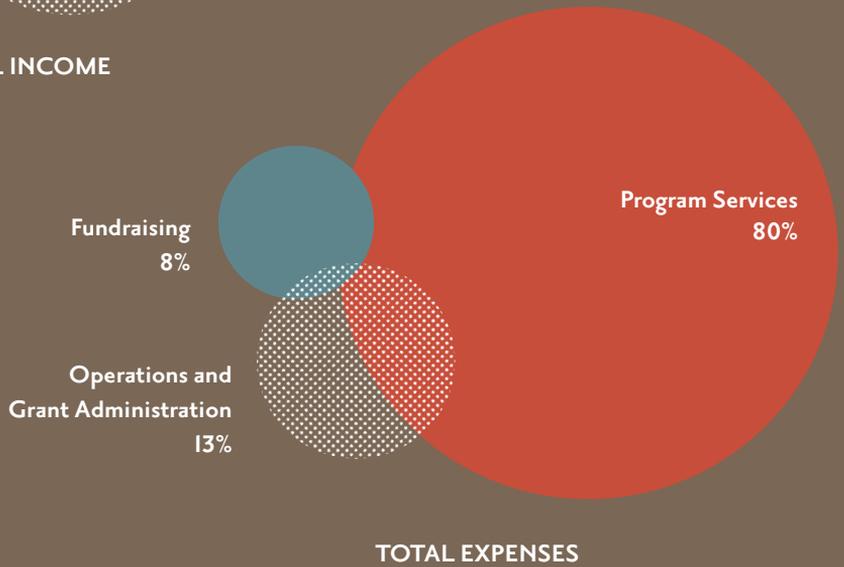
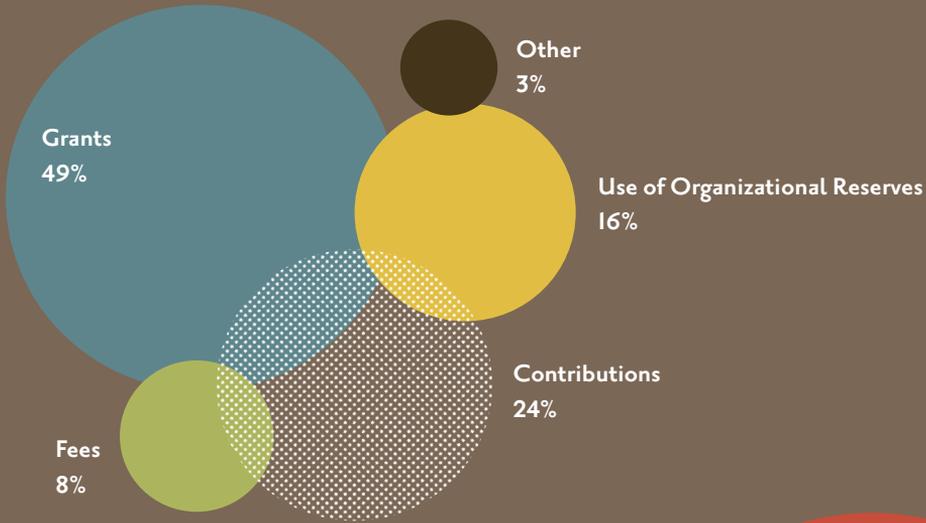


A healthy government is open to public involvement, and uses sound science to protect public health through the faithful implementation and enforcement of environmental laws. The strong tradition of open government and meaningful access to participation by citizens has steadily eroded since the DNR secretary became a political appointee nearly 20 years ago. Citizens recognize this as a critical moment to hold the line against declining enforcement of our laws. We work to empower those citizens and stand with them to further a healthy environment.

- When the Environmental Protection Agency identified 75 deficiencies in the state program to implement federal laws to limit discharges of pollution to the waters of the state, Midwest Environmental Advocates meticulously tracked DNR's performance in issuing permits and challenged those that were deficient.
- Midwest Environmental Advocates decried the influence of politics in the DNR and continues to advocate for public health by asking that science be the basis for agency decision making.



FINANCIALS



REVENUE AND EXPENSES

FY 2012

Revenues, Gains and Other Support	
Contributions	\$160,850
Legal Fees	50,083
Other	20,230
Grants	324,543
Use of Organizational Reserves	106,027

Total Revenues, Gains and Other Support \$661,733

Expenses	
Program Services	\$527,290
Supporting Activities:	
Operations and Grant Administration	83,211
Fundraising	51,232

Total Expenses \$661,733

DONORS

Midwest Environmental Advocates extends our deepest gratitude to those that made a contribution in our 2012 fiscal year (September 2011 to August 2012). We depend on your support to help us defend our environment. Our success requires a committed staff, an engaged board, dedicated citizens and generous people like you. Please know that every gift you send is valued and directly benefits our work.

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