Dear Environment Minnesota member,

Even in a tough political and economic climate, Environment Minnesota paved the way in Saint Paul for several key victories this year. We kicked off and made strong progress on a campaign to tap into Minnesota’s impressive potential to get energy from the sun, leading the effort to pass a Property Assessed Clean Energy measure.

This victory allows local governments statewide to help homeowners and businesses install solar panels or use energy more efficiently. Our coalition partner, the Solar Energy Industries Association, noted the importance of our leadership in passing the measure, which Policy Director Lynn Hinkle called “critical to move energy-efficiency and solar power forward in our state.”

We also shepherded incentives into law that benefit both consumers and manufacturers of solar electricity. These victories will serve as the building blocks for achieving our vision of getting 10 percent of our electricity from the sun by 2030. Additionally, we worked with the United Autoworkers to promote plug-in electric vehicles as a way to move away from fossil fuels and bring jobs to Minnesota. In the spring, we launched our Save the Boundary Waters campaign to protect our waters from a new and dangerous form of toxic mining that has left disastrous sulfuric acid pollution in other states.

We also started a new tradition this year: gathering members, experts and community members for breakfast each month to discuss environmental issues from a local perspective. “Green Ideas & Ham” is proving to be a successful way to engage many more people on the issues so important to you and me, and I hope you join us in the new year.

In 2011, we are building our coalitions to take the next steps in protecting our water, air and special places for future generations. Your support, combined with hard-hitting research, toughminded advocacy and grassroots outreach, give us the strength we need to win. Thank you for staying with us.

Sincerely,

Ken Bradley
Director

From our staff

Ken Bradley
Director

Sam Chadwick
Preservation Advocate

Dan Kohler
Regional Program Director

Rob Sargent
Energy Program Director

Solar solutions for Minnesota

Working for “10 percent by 2030”

Minnesotans are closer than ever to tapping our state’s impressive solar potential, thanks to our work in 2010. We released research and raised public awareness about Minnesota’s solar potential, and we advocated directly for smarter policies. We won a measure that helps homeowners finance solar panels and use energy more efficiently—a good first step. State Sen. John Doll, who sponsored that legislation, noted Environment Minnesota’s value on the team that saw the bill through. “Their work was absolutely essential to moving this important piece of legislation into law,” he said.

With a diverse and engaged coalition of business, labor and environmental groups, we have made solar a hot issue for the coming year, and we have put in motion a plan to move Minnesota toward getting 10 percent of our electricity from the sun by 2030.
Protecting our wilderness

Minnesotans rally to protect the Boundary Waters

Minnesotans have stood up time and again to protect our pristine Boundary Waters from threats such as development and pollution. This year, we let Minnesotans know it’s time to stand up for the wilderness again. In the spring, we joined a strong coalition of groups working to protect the Boundary Waters from the threat of pollution from sulfide mines that have been proposed nearby.

We galvanized public support by talking to people across the state, calling our members and taking our case to the media. We delivered thousands of petition signatures from Minnesotans to the Environmental Protection Agency, all of whom had their own reasons for wanting to protect the BWCA for future generations. Many of our members sent in notes explaining why they would never want to see the Boundary Waters threatened; others sent in favorite photos from family trips.

Bald Eagle Lake, South Kawishiwi River on the line

The wilderness is being threatened by sulfide mining, which—unlike iron ore or other kinds of mining—can wash sulfuric acid and heavy metal into nearby waters, polluting lakes and streams and wreaking havoc on the ecosystem. Many of the proposed mines are right on the edge of the Boundary Waters, near South Kawishiwi and Bald Eagle Lake; others could impact the Lake Superior or Mississippi River watersheds. One company has already begun exploratory drilling under Birch Lake, which runs right back into the Boundary Waters.

During the summer, federal officials stopped in Minneapolis on a nationwide tour, asking for input on which places the government should focus on protecting as part of its America’s Great Outdoors initiative. We got our members involved and attended the hearing to call for adding the Boundary Waters to that list.

Pressure on the EPA to take action

Even as we raise awareness of the threat, industry lobbyists have succeeded at preventing the state Legislature from forming regulations that will hold companies accountable for future costs. Such costs could be passed on to taxpayers, or worse, never cleaned up at all. The next step is to call on the Environmental Protection Agency to block any new mines that could pollute the Boundary Waters, degrade water quality, or exceed designated acceptable pollution standards.

In the fall, when evidence surfaced that a decades-old mining site is currently causing acid mine drainage pollution less than two miles from the Boundary Waters, we joined our coalition partners in publicizing the information, making the case to the public and our leaders that we can’t risk decades of irreversible pollution for one-time profits.
Stopping Global Warming

Tornado Alley moved north to Minn. in 2010

Our “Extreme Weather” report, which outlines how our region’s recent floods, tornadoes and other strange weather events could be just a taste of what will be the norm in the future, is a prime example of Environment Minnesota’s hard-hitting research driving the conversation in our state. Meteorologist Paul Douglas and famed polar explorer Will Steger joined us to release the report, garnering widespread attention in the state and getting people talking about global warming.

A week after we released our research, Environment Minnesota Director Ken Bradley appeared on Minneapolis’ Fox 9 News to discuss the report. He used its findings to debate a representative of “Minnesotans For Global Warming,” a group that opposes measures to reduce human activities that impact the Earth’s climate.

Global warming and extreme weather: The science, the debate and the impacts

Environment Minnesota is leading the way at the state and federal level in making sure our leaders take the necessary steps to reduce global warming pollution.

Extreme weather events lead to billions of dollars in economic damage and loss of life each year. Scientists project that global warming could affect the frequency, timing, location and severity of many types of extreme weather events in coming decades.

- In 2010, Minnesota experienced a significantly warmer and more humid than average summer.
- 2010 also saw the record for individual tornado touch-downs, with 145 recorded as of September.
- Lack of action has already cost taxpayers hundreds of billions of dollars to combat and clean up flooding, hurricanes and wildfires.

In 2011, we will continue to push through the simple steps, such as stronger efficiency standards for appliances and buildings, as well as larger-scale efforts to increase the amount of electricity we generate from the sun and the wind.

“The need for individual, and more importantly political, action is imperative.” - Will Steger
Repower Minnesota

Successes and setbacks on electric cars
Environment Minnesota’s advocacy at the Capitol this year won incentives to keep Ford Motor Company’s Saint Paul assembly plant open by moving to manufacture next-generation electric vehicles. Unfortunately, our plan fell on deaf ears at Ford; they are still planning to close the plant in 2012.

With or without Ford, the market for electric cars is expected to grow significantly, and we’re continuing our work to position Minnesota as a leader by ensuring that our state has the proper infrastructure in place so that a market for the vehicles can grow. Electric vehicles go hand-in-hand with solar and wind power: with the vehicles charging on electricity that comes from clean, renewable sources, we will truly be driving clean cars. In 2011, we will continue working with our labor and business coalition partners in the coming year to ensure Minnesota becomes a leader.

At monthly breakfasts, citizens chart path forward
In 2010, Environment Minnesota developed an inviting way to truly engage citizens in dynamic conversation about today’s most pressing and relevant environmental issues.

Our monthly “Green Ideas & Ham” breakfast forum, held early on the second-to-last Tuesday of each month, has been an exciting success. So far this year, dozens of community members have joined us at the Red Stag Supperclub (Minnesota’s first LEED-CI certified restaurant) for forums on property-assessed clean energy, energy efficiency, and food and farming.

On the table: food, farming and energy efficiency
At the food and farming forum, guests dined on the organic and local food served at every breakfast, while conversation covered the ways our food gets to the table. We explored the ways farming impacts our soil, water and natural environment, and how we can be part of the solution to make it better. At the property-assessed clean energy forum, guests learned how Minnesotans could take advantage of new policies that allow homeowners to avoid the up-front costs of installing solar panels or making other energy-efficiency improvements to their homes.

Breakfast guests have heard from local labor leaders, entrepreneurs, experts, and of course, other citizens and community leaders who want to learn more and join in the discussion. The breakfasts will continue in 2011, and we hope to see more and more of our members there.
Environment Minnesota Supporters

Foundation support
The Environment America Research & Policy Center is a 501(c)(3) organization that conducts research and public education on emerging environmental issues. Contributions to the Environment America Research & Policy Center are tax-deductible. To find out more, contact Ken Bradley at (612) 331-8404.

The Environment America Research & Policy Center thanks the Kingsley H. Murphy Family Foundation and the Energy Foundation for supporting our work in Minnesota.

Financial Information
Charts reflect combined financial information for the environmental work conducted by Environment Minnesota, the Environment America Research & Policy Center and Environment Minnesota’s citizen outreach programs.

Building a greener future
Environment Minnesota and The Environment America Research & Policy Center gratefully accept bequests, beneficiary designations of IRAs and life insurance, and gifts of securities to support our work. Your gift will assure that we can continue to protect Minnesota’s air, water and open spaces for future generations. For more information, call 1-800-841-7299 or e-mail PlannedGiving@EnvironmentMinnesota.org.