**A major victory for solar at the capitol**

**Bill brings solar to public buildings**

In May, Environment Minnesota won a huge victory for clean energy when Gov. Mark Dayton signed a bonding bill making it easier and more affordable to install solar on schools, hospitals and other public buildings.

This provision will allow public building projects financed by bonding to use five percent of the project cost for solar photovoltaics and solar thermal systems, providing clean, local energy for powering, heating and cooling our public buildings. Not only will this bill lessen our dependence on the dirty energy sources that cause global warming and threaten public health—it will also shrink the utility bills for thousands of Minnesota’s public buildings. This will translate to direct savings for taxpayers.

**A win for our environment, economy**

By making it easier and more affordable for public buildings to install solar, this bill will go a long way toward shrinking Minnesota’s carbon footprint—as more and more public buildings turn to solar for their energy needs, our dependence on fossil fuels will shrink. This means less global warming pollution from coal-fired power plants and other dirty energy sources.

In addition to benefiting the environment and public health, the bill will provide a boost for the local economy as well. Reduced utility bills for public buildings will take a burden off Minnesota taxpayers. And a “Made in Minnesota” provision will help Minnesota solar businesses manufacture these solar photovoltaics and thermal systems right here in our state.

This solar victory is the culmination of a hard-fought campaign in which thousands of Environment Minnesota supporters and our partners in the Solar Works for Minnesota coalition contacted their lawmakers in support of solar power. “We couldn’t have won without the thousands of postcards, letters and emails that our members sent to their legislators and Gov. Dayton, urging them to support policies that make it easier to install solar power in our state,” said Environment Minnesota Director Ken Bradley.

The bonding bill brings the state one step closer to our goal of getting 10 percent of our energy from the sun by 2030.

**take action**

*Environment Minnesota’s Samantha Chadwick at a press event overlooking the Mississippi.*

To learn more about our campaign to help Minnesota go solar, visit [www.EnvironmentMinnesota.org](http://www.EnvironmentMinnesota.org).
To our members

Earlier this year, you and thousands of other members came together to break through the partisan gridlock in St. Paul and win big for solar power on our schools, hospitals and other public buildings. But as we celebrate this huge victory, we must keep in mind that there is so much more to do.

Global warming is on the rise, and it’s loading the dice for extreme weather. The last 12 months were the hottest on record in all 50 states. And this year, weather-related disasters resulting from extreme rainfall have been declared in 16 areas across Minnesota, costing taxpayers more than $100 million.

If we’re going to turn back climate change and protect our health and environment, we need to work together to overcome the powerful special interests that stand in our way. But I know that with you by our side, we can make it happen. Thank you for your support.

Sincerely,

Ken Bradley
Director

Recent action

Historic support for carbon standards

This spring, the Obama administration proposed historic new limits on carbon pollution from new power plants. Carbon pollution fuels global warming, which leads to poor air quality that triggers asthma attacks and other respiratory problems. Scientists also predict that global warming will lead to more devastating floods, more deadly heat waves and the spread of infectious diseases. Coal-fired power plants are the largest single source of carbon pollution in the U.S., yet there are currently no federal limits on this pollution from power plants. These proposed standards will correct that for new power plants by limiting their emissions of carbon pollution.

Environment Minnesota members and our allies across the country came out in force to support these commonsense standards: Over 36,000 public comments supporting the standards have been collected in Minnesota alone, and a record-breaking 3 million comments have been collected nationwide. With your help, we’ll continue to push until the carbon standards are finalized.

Building support for our 10,000 lakes

In April of 2011, President Obama proposed much-needed clean water guidelines to protect the rivers and streams that feed and clean our 10,000 lakes. Thanks to two polluter-driven Supreme Court decisions in the last decade, more than half of these vital waterways are vulnerable to toxic pollution and development. Unfortunately, the long-overdue protections have yet to be finalized. Recently, they have fallen victim to partisan politics and face heavy blowback from polluters like Exxon-Mobil and Big Agriculture, which launched a major campaign in July to stop the proposed guidelines.

To counter polluters’ efforts, Environment Minnesota and our allies have been mobilizing broad grassroots support for clean water across the state and nationwide. In the coming months, Environment Minnesota will continue to stand up to big polluters and fight to ensure that our 10,000 lakes are protected for generations to come.

The Obama administration is moving closer to finalizing vital clean water protections for our 10,000 lakes. Above, Lake of the Isles.
Minnesota has huge clean energy potential, and Minneapolis is in a unique position to lead the way as the state transitions from dirty energy to clean, renewable energy.

Minneapolis has already committed to cutting global warming pollution 15 percent by 2015 and 30 percent by 2030. But so far, the city’s two main utilities—Xcel Energy and CenterPoint Energy—have held it back from making significant progress toward these goals. In fact, Xcel’s global warming pollution actually increased from 2010 to 2011, making it nearly impossible for the city to meaningfully reduce its carbon footprint.

But all that could soon change. In the next few years, the city’s 20-year franchise agreements—which provide a guaranteed market for Xcel and CenterPoint—are expiring, and Minneapolis will face a choice: Will it renew the franchise agreements with these dirty energy giants, or will the city choose a cleaner, more efficient energy future?

**Selling the city short**

Each year, Minneapolis spends $450 million on electricity and gas provided by Xcel and CenterPoint. And the city has 20-year franchise agreements with these firms, bringing the total cost to $9 billion.

This number wouldn’t be so problematic if the interests of Xcel and CenterPoint aligned with those of Minneapolis residents. But time and time again, we’ve seen that they don’t. Minneapolis residents and businesses would like to install more renewable energy and reduce their use. But these utilities have come up short in helping meet these demands—even actively lobbying against programs that would help advance clean, local energy in the city. Xcel typically opposes policies, like a solar energy standard, that would make it easier and more cost-effective to install solar energy, generate local electricity and reduce our global warming pollution. Recently, they even proposed eliminating the popular Solar Rewards rebate program. And Xcel and CenterPoint have little incentive to promote energy efficiency—which would reduce our energy consumption and costs—when their bottom lines grow along with gas and electricity sales.

**Let’s keep our options open**

Minneapolis shouldn’t settle for another 20 years of rising energy use, rising costs and rising global warming pollution. We’re proposing that the city keep its options open. Minneapolis should negotiate agreements that require the utilities to invest in clean, local energy and energy efficiency and help the city meet its emissions reduction targets. And if this proves impossible, the city should consider municipalizing its energy utilities, giving residents full control over their energy future.

Minneapolis shouldn’t rush to lock the city into another long-term franchise agreement with Xcel and CenterPoint. We’re working to ensure that Minneapolis can rely on clean, renewable energy for years to come.

**Why is Lake Pepin important?**

“The lake is a geologically unique natural resource which provides benefits to a wide range of people, including sportsmen, business owners, residents, conservationists and recreational users. Keeping Lake Pepin healthy means protecting our ecosystems, maintaining the culture and community around the lake, and sustaining the economic activity dependent on the lake.”

**What’s threatening Lake Pepin?**

“The two main sources of pollution impacting the lake are sediment (dirt) from eroding stream banks, and excess nutrients in the form of nitrogen and phosphorus. Each year, one million metric tons of sediment fills in the south metro Mississippi river and Lake Pepin. That’s like the volume of a downtown Minneapolis city block filled over the height of the Foshay Tower, 454 feet!”

**What needs to be done to combat the problem?**

“We need to implement better conservation practices on farm fields, significantly reduce erosion, and filter out nutrients before they enter our upstream waterways. We also need to enforce existing state laws designed to protect our waterways. Local enforcement of county ordinances is a necessary next step, because nearly 45 counties in Minnesota eventually drain into Lake Pepin. We need citizens across the region to get involved, learn more about the issues, and work for better water quality along the Mississippi River corridor and Lake Pepin.”
Toxic mining in Superior National Forest?

Through our grassroots outreach and advocacy, we’ve been a leader in the fight to prevent toxic sulfide mining near the Boundary Waters and Lake Superior. The environmental impact statement for the first proposed mine has been delayed again, likely until next year.

In the meantime, the mining companies have been using their political influence in an attempt to get around restrictions on mining in these precious areas. A bill is being considered in Congress that would transfer thousands of acres of land in the Superior National Forest to the state to be managed intensively for logging, mining and other extractive industries. The bill would allow the mining industry to bypass federal environmental laws and cut the public out of deliberations.

Sulfide mining companies say they’ll keep our water clean and respect environmental laws even as they try to weaken or evade these same laws. We’re working to expose these tactics and keep environmental standards in place.