

VOLUME 28, ISSUE 3

December 2006



# CACC News



Submitted by Heather Read, 11 Mecosta, Michigan

## *Family Corner*

Many of us are involved in organizations such as Citizens for Alternatives to Chemical Contamination because we feel strongly about keeping our children free of unnecessary chemicals. In the back of our minds, it is in hopes of avoiding serious illness such as cancer, muscle disease, autism, and other chemically linked diseases. I would like to challenge all of us to raise our children, grandchildren, nieces and nephews to become stewards of our environment. Get them involved in our newsletter by submitting an electronic picture drawn by them. It can be a good digital photo of their art, a drawing done on the computer, or a scanned copy. We will pick an art project each newsletter to include for all to see. This will assist us in giving our children pride in the Earth and everything she provides. To quote my favorite saying, "*We do not own the earth; we borrow it from our children.*" Let's work together to provide a great inheritance and give them the respect and responsibility that comes with it. Email submissions to [admin@caccmi.org](mailto:admin@caccmi.org) with child's name, age, and hometown.

## *Holiday Wishes and Hopes for our New Year!*

The CACC Board of Directors, CACC's Webmaster and CACC's Administrator all join to wish our members, volunteers and donors, very special holidays and a New Year filled with the hope of a brighter future.

Enclosed is CACC's "Holiday Letter to our Members" – our end-of-year appeal to you for your critical support of the important education and work CACC does throughout the year to protect our air and waters.

This year brought tremendous change to CACC, with Board development of both a short and long-term plan, revitalization of our committees, and greater outreach to our communities and membership. In November, CACC hired part-time administrator, Carey Pauquette-Schalm, well-qualified and experienced in both conservation and recycling fields.

We face daunting ecological problems in the Great Lakes Basin - from groundwater withdrawals, the ubiquitous production and use of persistent, toxic chemicals, a lifestyle dependent on powerful, polluting industries in an economy that places our air and water and the health of our communities last.

It is up to each of us. We can create laws and lifestyles that protect these Sweetwater Seas and our children's future. Small is still beautiful! – Just look at our children and grandchildren and you will see!

It is for those children and grandchildren, to the Seventh Generation and beyond, that we labor. We invite you to join with us in this momentous task. And we thank you for all you do to make this world a better place!

## ECO AWARDS -2006

At the Backyard ECO Conference 2006, CACC presented Jim Olson, legal champion for Michigan's grassroots groundwater battle with Nestle's bottled water industry, with an ECO Award for his lifetime work on behalf of the Great Lakes Basin.



*Ann Hunt and Jim Olson at 2006 Eco Conference  
Photo Credit Karen Freel-Locey*

Bill Freese, Director of CACC's Chapter in Alpena, the Huron Environmental Activist League (HEAL) received CACC's ECO Award as well for his many decades of dedicated efforts to stop air and water pollution in Northern Michigan! CACC is proud to claim HEAL as a Chapter, and proud to have Bill as a Chapter Representative to the CACC Board of Directors!

### *Update from HEAL*

I hoped this article would finally contain some good news. I had to wait until today before, again, getting just the opposite. Although mandated to do so by the federal court of appeals, the EPA has refused to set emission limits on mercury emissions from cement plants. That order was issued in 2000 and is still being ignored by the EPA.

I have to admit that I am disappointed. The relaxation of air quality standards for the past 5 years by the present administration is the source of our problems. Those that are supposed to protect our health and environment march to a different drummer. We have that problem with our own MDEQ. The current director could have cleaned house. Too many who think like Engler and Harding are still in positions of authority. We had too many years where polluters were more important than the health of our people and protection of our environment. While I'm in such a good mood, I might as well take a few swipes at some of our politicians too. If you are constantly running for office, the lobbyists help you realize which side of the bread the butter is on. They have to declare where most of their funds come from. The only way you can get rid of them is with term limits. Too bad the good ones have to go too.

Back to the main issue. There are 120 cement plants in the United States. Three are in Michigan. Those are: St. Mary's in Charlevoix, Holcim in Dundee, and Lafarge in Alpena. St. Mary's is the easiest for the MDEQ to work with. Lafarge is the worst. As the Earthjustice article points out, [See [www.earthjustice.org](http://www.earthjustice.org) and search for "cement kilns"] one of the most serious problems with cement plants is their serious under-reporting of their emissions. The Lafarge facility is used as an example in the article. For years Lafarge reported between 58 and 64 pounds of mercury emissions per year. Recent stack tests show that they have been in fact emitting over 580 pounds of mercury per year. If this is the norm, then the cement industry could really be emitting between 25 and 50 tons per year.

We here in Alpena have the most toxic and dangerous form of mercury: vaporized mercury, which converts to methyl mercury in our waters. It doesn't get carried away on the wind. It falls close to its source. Lafarge is in our city limits. It is on the shores of Thunder Bay of Lake Huron. Our river and inland lakes are already over the limit for mercury. What is most irritating is in its ads. Lafarge, **the number two emitter of mercury in the State of Michigan**, has the gall to call themselves "**A STEWARD OF OUR ENVIRONMENT.**"

Bill Freese, Director  
Huron Environmental Activist league

### ***Bi-partisan Legislation Can Help Reduce Mercury on a Global Scale Groups Urge Governor to Sign Bills into Law*** *Submitted by Kate Madigan, Michigan Environmental Council*

Lansing- Michigan Environmental Council (MEC) and Michigan United Conservation Clubs (MUCC) applaud the Michigan House today as they acted quickly and decisively to pass bi-partisan legislation that would ban products containing mercury in Michigan. The bills now head to the Governor's desk.

Over 3500 metric tons of mercury is used globally each year in switches, relays and measuring devices, most of which have cost effective and readily available alternatives. Michigan's legislature has recognized the need to remove these unnecessary sources of mercury by taking a first step in banning the sale of thermostats, blood pressure cuff devices and esophageal dilators that contain mercury.

"We are thankful to have leaders in our state like Senators Patty Birkholz, Ron Jelinek and Liz Brater who understand the importance of keeping our fishing holes clean and our fish healthy," says Sam Washington, Executive Director of Michigan United Conservation Clubs. "Mercury is a serious problem and it's not a new problem. We've known about the dangers and now it's time to stop talking about solutions and start implementing them."



Harold Stokes enjoying ECO Conference 2006  
Photo Credit: Karen Freel-Locey

According to a 2006 study released by ERA Technologies, seemingly small steps, like banning products containing mercury in one state, can have a large effect on today's global market. As more states and regions ban the use of certain types of products, the economic viability of producing those products decreases. Michigan's product bans may not appear to be monumental, but when added to similar bans in other states across the U.S., they become part of a powerful movement that will help drive industry to produce and develop non-mercury products and alternatives world-wide.

"Today is a great step forward for mercury reduction in Michigan. Protecting the health and welfare of our families from unnecessary mercury use is critical to ensuring that our children and children's children will grow up in a safe and healthy environment," says Kate Madigan, Deputy Policy Director of the Michigan Environmental Council and new mother. "We must continue to phase out more unnecessary uses of mercury and will be calling on the legislature to act next session."

Mercury is a potent neurotoxin that can hinder brain development and cause neurological problems and is especially dangerous to infants, children and pregnant women. When mercury is released into the environment it falls onto our rivers, lakes, farmlands and forests. Once on land or in water, bacteria can convert it to methyl mercury, an organic form that builds up in the food chain. Top predator fish such as walleye, bass, and northern pike can have concentrations millions of times higher than surrounding waters.

To safely dispose of thermostats, blood pressure measuring devices, and other products containing mercury, Michigan residents should visit [www.michigan.gov/mda/0,1607,7-125-2961\\_6860\\_24909---,00.html](http://www.michigan.gov/mda/0,1607,7-125-2961_6860_24909---,00.html) or call 1-800-662-9278 to find a collection site in their area.

## ***US Plans to Reduce Toxic Materials Reporting as European Union Tightens Requirements***

In an ironic juxtaposition, the US EPA has proposed loosening Toxic Reporting Inventory (TRI) criteria while European markets are increasing industry's responsibility to test chemicals before they can enter that market. The TRI proposal, opposed by more than 122,000 individuals, include reducing reporting frequency to alternate years, changing the reporting threshold for non-persistent bio-accumulative toxins (PBTs) from 500 to 5,000 pounds annually, and permitting the use of certification for PBTs up to 500 pounds as long as there were not environmental release. The public outcry against these proposals was so strong that Congress refused funding to enact the changes.

On the other side of the Atlantic, EU regulators, noting that we lack basic health and environmental information on an estimated 85% of the chemicals in commerce, proposed changing registration requirements to mandate that industry, not the government or the public, to prove that chemicals are safe before they can be used or marketed. This position, known as the precautionary principle, has long been promoted among US and Canadian environmentalists following findings of PBTs in the bodies of a significant majority of North Americans tested. By leading the way, the EU will create markets for safer alternatives, as well as impact the chemical industry globally.

For further information, contact The Working Group on Community Right-to-Know at [www.crtk.org](http://www.crtk.org) or US PIRG at <http://www.uspirg.org/issues/healthy-communities/right-to-know>.

## ***US Coast Guard Plan to Practice Live Fire on Great Lakes Meets Harsh Criticism***

A small notice in the Federal Register produced strong public opposition on both sides of the border as the Department of Homeland Security announced that it was calling for public comment on a proposal to create "safety zones" in the Great Lakes to permit the US Coast Guard (which is part of DHS) to practice live fire training.

The creation of the zones was a surprise to citizens of both the US and Canada, as well as to the Canadian government. CACC's Chairperson Kay Cumbow was instrumental in conveying information to the Canadian government through Sarnia (Ontario) Mayor Mike Bradley. "When I heard, I thought it was something from *The Onion* newspaper or an Internet hoax... This whole thing was done way below the radar," said Bradley as quoted in the *New York Times*, 10/16/2006.

The issue brings to light not only the risk to the public who could be caught unaware in the crossfire, but also the way in which the two governments collaborate on issues of safety and security in a post 9/11 world. A decision is expected after public comments are reviewed. To learn more, visit Great Lakes United at [www.glu.org](http://www.glu.org) (See "Between Editions") or the U.S. Coast Guard Safety Zone website at: [www.uscgd9safetyzones.com](http://www.uscgd9safetyzones.com)

The CACC NEWS is published by Citizens for Alternatives to Chemical Contamination (CACC).  
Editor: Carey Pauquette-Schalm  
Printer: Tigner Printing, Coleman, MI

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We encourage our members to sign up for the email edition of the CACC NEWS for these reasons: You receive it more quickly. It saves trees. Our dollars can be utilized for programs and resources rather than printing and postage -AND you receive it in COLOR!

*Mark it on Your Calendar*

- **January 27:** Northern Michigan Small Farm Conference • Grayling  
For more information visit <http://www.msue.msu.edu> or call (231)533-8818
- **February 10:** Renewable Energy Introductory Seminars  
Ann Arbor, Michigan  
For more information visit [www.glrea.org](http://www.glrea.org) or call 1(800)434-9788
- **Michigan Organic Conference**  
Volunteers are needed to help make the Michigan Organic Conference a success. For more details, please contact George Bird at [birdg@msu.edu](mailto:birdg@msu.edu).
- **8th Annual Northern Michigan Small Farm Conference** - Saturday, January 27 at the Grayling High School. Contact Antrim County MSUE, 231-533-8818.
- **Michigan Seeds of Prosperity: A Policymaking Event** - Thursday, February 9 at the Lansing Center. Contact Michigan Land Use Institute at [www.mlui.org/sop](http://www.mlui.org/sop) for more information.

Late Breaking News: US Coast Guard Announces Withdrawal of Great Lakes Live Fire Proposal 12/18 - See inside for full story.

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