Green is gold.
These days, what’s good for the environment is also good for the economy. And that’s good for all of us in Minnesota.

At the Minnesota Center for Environmental Advocacy, as we work to improve the quality of our air, land, and water, we’re also focusing on why these measures make economic sense.

From representing renewable energy groups in an effort to develop Minnesota’s wind power infrastructure to securing the business community’s support for transit, MCEA’s work is increasingly bringing people together from both sides of the issues to a new common ground.
After nine years of effort, MCEA and other groups celebrated passage of language for a constitutional amendment to raise the sales tax 3/8ths of one percent for 25 years. The money will go to clean water, habitat, parks and trails, and the arts. MCEA continues to work hard on the campaign to convince voters to pass the ballot measure in November.

MCEA conceived and helped pass the “superwarmers” bill to tackle greenhouse gas emissions with greater potential to accelerate climate change than carbon dioxide. The new law establishes a reporting system that is the first of its kind in the nation. Beginning in January, car manufacturers will post the leakage rates of air conditioning systems, which contain superwarmer refrigerants, on the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency and state Attorney General’s Web sites. This will help consumers make intelligent purchasing decisions. Other superwarmer emissions will also be reported to the Pollution Control Agency in order to measure the extent of the problem.

MCEA led the effort of a coalition of conservation groups from states along the Mississippi River to petition the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to set and enforce numeric standards to limit nitrogen and phosphorus pollution in the Gulf of Mexico and Mississippi River basin, and to clean up those water bodies. The petition followed the announcement of the second largest dead zone to date in the Gulf. The dead zone is an area with too little oxygen to support sea life, caused every year by nitrogen and phosphorus delivered to the Gulf from the Mississippi.

Working with business and environmental groups, MCEA helped round up the votes to pass a transportation bill over the governor’s veto. Besides raising the gas tax, it also allowed counties in the Twin Cities metropolitan area to put a quarter-cent sales tax on purchases, with the money going to fund transit. Five of the seven counties already have done so.

The Minnesota Center for Environmental Advocacy is representing renewable energy groups before the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission in favor of the CapX 2020 power lines. The lack of transmission infrastructure is the most significant long-term barrier to wind energy development. With the right conditions, the CapX 2020 plan will provide the necessary infrastructure to support the development of Minnesota’s rich wind resources.

The Minnesota Center for Environmental Advocacy and the Sierra Club released a mining report in October. The Economic Role of Metal Mining in Minnesota: Past, Present, and Future concluded that environmental quality is essential to northern Minnesota’s economic vitality and led to a legislative hearing in January on proposed sulfide mining. Meanwhile, PolyMet is expected to release the draft environmental impact statement on its proposed copper-nickel mine near Hoyt Lakes in fall 2008. MCEA will comment on it.

For the third year, MCEA fought the proposed Big Stone II coal-fired power plant in Milbank, S.D., and the power lines which would bring much of the power into Minnesota. In May, two administrative law judges agreed with MCEA’s experts and recommended against the power lines. The Minnesota Public Utilities Commission voted a month later to study the issue further.
Climate Change and Clean Energy
MCEA board and staff members were appointed to the Minnesota Climate Change Advisory Group, which completed its work in February 2008. Created by the governor, the group was charged with developing policy recommendations to reduce and capture statewide greenhouse gas emissions.

The Minnesota Center for Environmental Advocacy so far is the only state group fighting the proposed Albert Clipper pipeline which would bring tar sands oil from Canada to Superior, Wis., and other areas of the Midwest. Extracting oil from tar sands puts dramatically more greenhouse gases in the air than conventional oil drilling.

A significant energy-efficiency bill was passed by the Legislature through the efforts of the Center for Energy and Environment and MCEA. The bill requires all buildings receiving state money to achieve ever tougher efficiency standards so that by 2030 the buildings will be carbon neutral.

A district court judge ruled in October against MCEA, saying the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources “minimally satisfied” the rules in its environmental review of the Minnesota Steel Industries mining and steel plant and the plant’s global warming impacts. An appeal is under consideration.

Water Quality
MCEA scored a victory in the courts when a district court judge ordered the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency to begin regulating ballast water discharged by ships in Lake Superior to prevent viral hemorrhagic septicemia (VHS) and other invasive species from reaching the lake. MCEA first brought the case over concerns about VHS, a deadly fish virus that has been found in every Great Lake except Superior and has caused several large fish kills. In her decision, Judge Kathleen Gearin wrote that “the Court does not believe the MPCA has handled the Minnesota ballast water issue with the urgency that the danger of VHS demands.” The agency passed a permit rule for ballast water in September, but MCEA asked the court of appeals to reject it as too lenient and taking too long to implement.

A ruling from the Minnesota Supreme Court is anticipated soon. The Minnesota Court of Appeals agreed with MCEA last year that a water discharge permit for a proposed sewage treatment plant expansion wasn’t strict enough and would add more pollution to Alexandria’s Lake Winona. The Minnesota Pollution Control Agency appealed to the high court which heard the case in April.

Public Health
Just before Christmas, a federal judge ruled in favor of MCEA and the state of Minnesota that Northshore Mining Co. must continue to follow a 30-year-old standard on how much asbestos it can emit as part of its air pollution permit. Under the control city standard, the amount of asbestos in the air in Silver Bay, where Northshore Mining has its taconite plant, has to be the same or less than the amount of asbestos in the air in St. Paul.

As part of its public health work, MCEA conceived and advocated a cancer-risk reduction act during the 2008 legislative session designed to increase protections against carcinogenic chemicals in Minnesota’s environment. While the bill passed policy committees, it was not funded and eventually died.

Wildlife and Natural Resources
MCEA was the lead author of a paper guiding the inclusion and evaluation of natural resource enhancements in Red River basin flood reduction projects. These enhancements include stream channel restoration, and wetland and grassland conservation and restoration. Natural resource enhancements will now be considered in the formal process used to evaluate flood damage reduction projects that seek state funding in the Red River basin.

Transportation and Land Use
Using geographic information systems software, MCEA has provided maps and expertise on zoning and other issues to help St. Paul neighborhood groups argue for adequate stops and other fairness issues along the future University Avenue light-rail line.
To our supporters

In these stressful economic times, we want to assure you that donations to the Minnesota Center for Environmental Advocacy are returning big dividends.

What makes MCEA a wise investment? It’s simple: We get things done—big, important policy accomplishments that truly protect the environment for future generations.

Take global warming, for example. This past year, our own Board Member Chuck Dayton was one of a handful of environmentalists appointed to Gov. Pawlenty’s Minnesota Climate Change Advisory Group. He successfully argued for the 50 recommendations Minnesota must follow to reach the goal of cutting greenhouse gas pollution 80 percent by 2050.

At the same time, MCEA was crafting a bill to regulate high-potential greenhouse gases, nicknamed “superwarmers.” These gases are released in much smaller amounts than carbon dioxide, but are hundreds of times more potent in trapping heat. The Legislature passed our superwarmers bill last spring and steps to limit emissions of these gases are already underway. This groundbreaking bill has garnered national attention including an invitation to Legislative Director Allison Wolf to address the Mobil Air Conditioning Leadership Summit in Phoenix about the law.

Our water quality work, too, is making a difference. We continue to win significant cases in the Minnesota Court of Appeals for stricter pollution standards, including the Alexandria case involving Lake Winona. Also, Kris Sigford, MCEA’s Water Quality Director, is a leader in a collaborative of environmental groups from states along the Mississippi River, funded by the McKnight Foundation. In July, the collaborative petitioned the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to set and enforce limits on nitrogen and phosphorus pollution in the river to shrink the Gulf of Mexico’s dead zone. MCEA will continue to pursue the EPA until it happens.

In 2009, you can expect even more environmental dividends for your investment. MCEA will continue to fight global warming by pushing lawmakers to adopt all of the recommendations from the climate change advisory group. We will persevere in our opposition to the proposed Big Stone II coal-fired power plant near Milbank, S.D., and we will continue to push to protect Minnesotans from damaging exposure to toxins. We will work to ensure no permits are awarded for sulfide mining in northern Minnesota unless we are convinced the mining can be done with minimal environmental harm and with secure, sufficient monetary assurances for any future clean up. We were the first Minnesota group to fight a proposed pipeline from the dirty tar sands of Alberta, Canada, and that battle continues.

Reading through this annual report, you will see many more examples of the results your contributions produced. Know that you are funding the only environmental organization in Minnesota that knows how to use science and the law to prevent harm to our natural resources. Your contributions are critical to our future success. We never forget that our work is only possible with your support.

Thank you,

Martha Brand and Cecily Hines
By the numbers.


Assets
Cash & Certificates of Deposit $ 1,021,160
Unconditional Promises to give $ 199,700
Accounts receivable $ 79,441
Investments (endowment) $ 954,411
Other Assets $ 21,631
Total Assets $ 2,276,343

Liabilities and net Assets
Accounts Payable & accrued expenses $ 68,157
Unrestricted net assets
Undesignated $ 677,298
Designated by board for long term investments $ 415,791
Temporarily restricted net assets $ 567,490
Permanently restricted net assets (Endowment) $ 547,607
Total Liabilities and Net Assets $ 2,276,343

Statement of Activities
Support
Individuals* $ 540,645
Corporations $ 7,878
Foundation Support* $ 390,000
Workplace giving $ 35,926
Earned Income $ 170,014
Net Loss on Investments $ (17,912)
Special Events Revenue Net $ 27,870
Total Support $ 1,154,422

Expenses
Program expenses $ 1,342,093
Management and Administration $ 174,955
Fundraising $ 168,344
Total expenses $ 1,685,392

Increase in Net Assets $ (530,970)

*These amounts include multi-year grants and contributions. In accordance with generally accepted accounting principles, revenue is recognized in the year the grant is awarded, even though the related expenses will be incurred in current and future years.
Gold for green.

MCEA donors invest in things we all profit from: cleaner waters, smarter development, healthier people, and more robust ecosystems. They fund a greener Minnesota and their contributions make a difference every year. We thank all of our donors, whose generous support makes what we do possible. Here we recognize contributions received from July 1, 2007 to June 30, 2008.

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White Pine Legacy Circle members have pledged their intent to make a bequest or other planned gift to MCEA.

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Jim and Peggy Perry
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We also thank the many environmental organizations and partners across the state whose dedication to protecting and enhancing Minnesota’s natural resources help make our work possible.

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The Minnesota Center for Environmental Advocacy (MCEA) is the legal and scientific voice protecting and defending Minnesota’s environment. We fill a critical niche in Minnesota by combining legal action and legislative work with science and communications to hold government accountable and enforce current environmental laws.

At the heart of our mission is a reverence for nature and a fundamental commitment to a green world for the benefit of current and future generations.