If you want to understand something, observe it carefully. Get close. Put it under a microscope. Take notes. Collect data over time. Make hypotheses. Then test them repeatedly.

That’s the scientific method, and it’s under attack. Every day, scientific evidence on climate, water and air quality is ignored or worse, denied.

But science is worth fighting for. In Minnesota, we’re standing up for science. Because just as pollution knows no borders, our actions impact people across the state, and our leadership influences policies worldwide.
MCEA’s work guarantees science informs our energy future: Using evidence drawn from public health research and other data, MCEA won a 4-year battle in 2017 to ensure that regulators put a price tag on climate change when making decisions about new and retiring fossil fuel-based power plants in Minnesota.

MCEA uses technology to educate leaders: MCEA helped keep Governor Dayton’s signature farm run-off buffer law intact by using mapping technology to educate legislators about the real impact of proposed changes on the ground in their own districts.

MCEA partners with scientists to protect water: MCEA worked with experts to help us wade through the scientific research showing the connection between phosphorus pollution and toxic algae blooms, and defend the scientific need for the standards against opponents.

MCEA leads on science-driven decisions on sulfide mining proposals: By partnering with mine engineers, geochemists, and hydrologists, MCEA works to ensure that Minnesota protects the people downstream from pollution.

MCEA STANDS FOR SCIENCE IN TROUBLED TIMES

In the past year, the state and federal laws that protect our water, air and public health have been under assault. Our work at MCEA has never been more challenging. It has also never been more important.

That is why we are launching the “Double or Trouble Campaign: Double Down to Defend Minnesota,” asking all of MCEA’s donors to double their commitment to MCEA for the next three years, for as long as the Trump administration is in office. MCEA is a 43-year-old organization that helped build the environmental laws that protect Minnesotans, and we will not stand by and allow protections to be rolled back after decades of hard work. We need to redouble our efforts now more than ever. We hope you will join us in this effort.

At MCEA, we stand up for science, and science is based on observable evidence. So, in the spirit of science, we offer evidence of MCEA’s effectiveness in our annual report. Please take a moment to read our list of accomplishments over the past year. We want to highlight one of the best examples where MCEA’s lawyers and experts went head-to-head with science deniers, and emerged victorious.

Join us in doubling down to defend Minnesota by doubling your support of MCEA for the next three years while the Trump Administration is in office.

This past summer, MCEA and its partners won a four-year battle to assign an accurate dollar value to the damage created by every ton of carbon emitted by Minnesota’s utilities. These new, scientifically-supported dollar values are the real cost of climate change. This hard-won victory came after years of hearings, testimony from dozens of expert witnesses, and thousands of attorney hours. Now, the Public Utilities Commission must consider the true protections to be rolled back after decades of hard work.

MCEA, with its powerful and knowledgeable staff of lawyers and experts, was made for these times. Over the past year, we have seen that lawyers are the heroes who step in when politicians fail us. Our justice system is designed to protect our rights against infringement. And make no mistake—when we talk about environmental protections, we are talking about rights. We have a right to clean air, clean water, and a climate that will support human civilization as we know it for our children, grandchildren and beyond.

MCEA’s science-based advocacy goes well beyond energy. On climate, water quality, transportation, and mining, MCEA is Standing Up for Science. And we are standing for all of our rights to breathe clean air and drink clean water. We hope you will stand with us by doubling your support for MCEA. Your support has never been more important.

At these hearings, MCEA brought forth scientific experts and economists to talk about the cost of climate change. In contrast, the coal companies actually tried to present the case that climate change is not real. Their evidence had all the tell-tale signs of “science denial,” including “experts” who had never been published in a peer-reviewed journal, logical fallacies, and cherry-picked data. In the end, science and reason prevailed, and the judge sided with MCEA and its partners, proving that when we stand up for science we can win real environmental progress.

Kathryn Hoffman
Chief Executive Officer

Alan Thometz
MCEA Board Chair

Minnesota State Tree // Red Pine
2017 ACCELMICATIONS

Using our expertise and resources to influence lawmakers and public perception, MCEA secured durable environmental protections that wouldn’t happen otherwise. Among the highlights:

DEFENDING MINNESOTA’S CLIMATE AND AIR

Retiring coal: MCEA represented clean energy allies and won a decision to retire the two largest coal-burning plants in Minnesota. Burning coal is the number one contributor to greenhouse gas emissions and harms public health through air pollution. MCEA convinced the Public Utilities Commission that these units could be safely retired effectively and reliably retired.

Wind power: MCEA worked with partners to double the amount of wind added to Otter Tail Power’s system during its next planning period, in lock with its six last Minnesota coal plants, and add solar to its system as part of the replacement package.

Electric vehicles: MCEA and partners have been working on how to integrate electric vehicles into our electricity system to pave the way for aggressive carbon emission reductions. As a result of this work, Xcel Energy is designing a pilot vehicle-charge program that reduces up to 50% of the energy required for charging.

Pipeline reviews: MCEA’s challenges to the Sandpiper pipeline proposal resulted in the requirement that all new pipeline proposals in Minnesota undergo environmental reviews. Without this hard won precedent, North Dakota’s Line 3 pipeline proposal would have been able to bypass detailed review of the environmental risks.

DEFENDING MINNESOTA’S WATER AND PUBLIC LANDS

Impaired waters: MCEA won improvements to the Minnesota’s ‘impaired waters’ list, which puts strategies in place to address contaminations in polluted lakes and rivers. Based on our work, four waterways were added in 2017, with more to be included in the future.

Toxic algae: Phosphorus causes toxic algae and is a major contributor to the dead zone in the Gulf of Mexico. MCEA has been working for years to develop and implement a science-based water quality standard for phosphorus, and in 2017 the first permits to include limits on phosphorus were issued.

Protecting rivers and streams: MCEA used its legal, mapping, and communications expertise to appeal the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources’ decision to drop 60 miles of waterways from the public waters list. If successful, public water protections will be restored for those rivers and streams, including protection from being ditched or dammed without a permit. Our challenge is currently pending before the Minnesota Court of Appeals.

Updated water pollution permits: After we sued, the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency agreed to replace an outdated, 26-year-old water pollution permit for the Minnesota mine with one that meets modern standards, includes federal requirements, and sets concrete deadlines to reduce pollution.

Defending public lands: MCEA filed a federal lawsuit this year on behalf of public land users and taxpayers, challenging an unfair land exchange that favors PolyMet Mining.

DEFENDING MINNESOTA’S LAWS

Defending existing laws: We defended Minnesota’s core environmental laws under attack at the Capitol using an “all hands on deck” approach that brought together MCEA policy, mapping, communication and lobbying expertise.

EVENTS ACROSS MINNESOTA

MCEA brings people together across Minnesota around big ideas that are driving change. From Ely to St. Paul, hundreds of people attended our events in 2017.

DONORS

960 people donated to MCEA this year.

671 people donated less than $50.

289 people donated more than $50.

$1,558,609

DONORS

MCEA continues to be a leader in the creation of the contributions of our donors. We thank you for supporting our mission to restore the waters and re-grow Minnesota’s waterways, to push for climate solutions, and to build a just and healthy world. We are grateful for our wonderful White Pines Legacy Club members, who have committed to giving back to MCEA in their will. To learn more, please contact Carol Tanaka at ctanaka@mnep.org.

VOLUNTEERS

3,819 hours

$54,335 dollar value
Defending clean water, driving a change to clean renewable energy, and protecting our most precious places isn’t easy. Real environmental progress takes time, dedication, the search for truth, and the commitment to follow wherever that search leads you. The Minnesota Center for Environmental Advocacy has been on this journey since 1974.

MCEA’s policy and legal experts use scientific facts to drive change and to defend our clean air and water. In-house, top-notch professionals provide legal advice, legislative influence and spatial analysis. Our expertise in environmental law, science, mapping and public policy enables us to communicate compelling stories that influence good outcomes on issues important to Minnesotans.

MCEA strategically uses our expertise and resources to influence public perception and secure durable environmental protections that wouldn’t happen otherwise. We’re in it for the long haul, and we’re glad to have you on our team.

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We’re moving in March 2018! Check our website for updated contact information.