



TARGET EARTH

EAST MICHIGAN ENVIRONMENTAL ACTION COUNCIL

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EMEAC's mission is to protect and restore land, air, water, and diversity of life through informed personal and public action.

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Sense of Wonder:

Why Nature is Good for Kids

A review of Richard Louv's Last Child in the Woods

Diana Seales

According to child advocate Richard Louv, disconnection from nature is potentially harmful to a child's physical, emotional and spiritual development. In his book, *Last Child in the Woods: Saving Our Children from Nature-Deficit Disorder*, Louv argues that the current alienation of children from nature is not only harmful to children but may lead to a future with no environmental leaders. Not only can nature teach kids science and nurture their creativity, nature needs its children: where else will its future stewards come from?¹

Louv devotes an especially interesting section of his book to the thesis that much of the current avoidance of nature may be linked to irrational fears of nature itself. Research supports that lack of connection to nature breeds apathy for environmental issues among youth, especially those in ultra-urban areas, and often leads to inactivity, boredom, dependence on electronics for entertainment and often fear of natural areas.²

As an outdoor environmental educator, I found Louv's thesis to be true. When I led trips for youth from inner city Cincinnati, Chicago, and Columbus, many of the kids paced on the cement a few time before they would walk onto the dirt trail that led into a dark thicket of trees. Once, as we walked by the Yellow Springs Creek, I spotted two fawns and a mother lapping up water. I had all twelve thirteen-year-old boys stay very still as I pointed out the amazing site. Few seconds passed before the boys screamed in fear as deer and children ran full speed in opposite directions. But even initial apprehension of nature soon turns to adoration.

Louv explains that nature serves as a form of therapy for depression, obesity, and ADD and that environment-based education programs can improve problem solving, critical thinking, decision making, and creativity. "The alienation of children from nature is detrimental on many levels".¹

A growing body of literature supports Louv's claims and shows that the natural environment has profound effects on the well-being of children and adults, including better psy-

chological well-being, superior cognitive functioning, fewer physical ailments and speedier recovery from illness. The environment is likely to have a more profound effect on children due to their greater plasticity or vulnerability³. According to Yale Environmental Education Professor, Stephen Kellert, society today has become "so estranged from its natural origins, it has failed to recognize our species' basic dependence on nature as a condition of growth and development."⁴

Research supports the significant benefits of experiences in nature to children. Findings include:

- ☛ Children with symptoms of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) are better able to concentrate after contact with nature.⁴
- ☛ Children with views of and contact with nature score higher on tests of concentration and self-discipline. The greener, the better the scores.³
- ☛ When children play in natural environments, their play is more diverse with imaginative and creative play that fosters language and collaborative skills.⁴
- ☛ Play in a diverse natural environment reduces or eliminates bullying.³

EMEAC plans to address the need expressed by Louv to reconnect children with the natural world through its new Youth Environmental Stewards (YES) Council program - connecting environmental projects with public schools and youth organizations. The YES Council strives to provide opportunities for youth to envision a positive environmental future. Youth, and in particular inner city youth, need exposure to nature. Not only for their own well-being, but to be advocates of the environment in the future.

¹ Richard Louv, 2005, *Last Child in the Woods*

² Randy White, 2006, *Interaction with Nature during the Middle Years*

³ Nancy Wells, 2003, *Nearby Nature: A buffer of stress among children*

⁴ Stephen Kellert, 2002, *Free Choice Environmental Education*

⁵ Andrea Taylor, 2001, *Coping with ADD*



Around Michigan

Sulfide Mining in the Upper Peninsula

Reprinted from "Save the Wild UP: Protecting Michigan's Last Frontier"



Kennecott Minerals has submitted a mining permit application under Michigan's as yet untested sulfide mining law, for the development of the first recognized sulfide metallic mine in the history of the State of Michigan. This mining application proposes to develop a massive sulfide mine under one of Michigan's most important trout streams - the Salmon Trout River; and on the Yellow Dog Plains which is known for its beauty, wild streams, and extraordinary wildlife. Save the Wild UP opposes the permit, "because we feel this application is fundamentally deficient in meeting the protection criteria of Michigan's Non-Ferrous Metallic Mining Statute and rules, established to protect our state and waters from the acknowledged risks of sulfide mining; because these risks are too great to this region dependent on a thriving economy

based on tourism and recreation; and because the people of Michigan are not willing to allow the degradation of the Upper Peninsula and Lake Superior communities". Please write or call your representatives (house.michigan.gov/find_a_rep.asp) and ask them to oppose the permit and to oppose any metallic sulfide mining in the State of Michigan and sign the on-line petition at www.ipetitions.com/petition/nosulfidemining.

Appalachian Voices Hosting Education Tour in South Michigan

Reprinted from Appalachian Voices Newsletter



Appalachian Voices is hosting several presentations around Michigan on Mountaintop Removal (MTR) coal mining, a relatively new type of strip mining that involves blasting up to 1000 feet of mountain top into rubble, then dumping the debris into nearby valleys & streams. This practice has already turned at least a million acres of forested mountains into barren moonscape across the Appalachian coalfields and buried over 1,200 miles of streams. Mountaintop removal coal mining presently occurs in West Virginia, Kentucky, Virginia, and Tennessee.

Schedule for presentations in Michigan: October 16 - 7 pm St Elizabeth Catholic Community Church, Wyandotte; October 18 - 7 pm Fountain Street Church (co-hosted by WMEAC), Grand Rapids; October 19 - 3 pm Muskegon Community College, Caesar Room, Muskegon; October 23 - 7 pm First Lutheran Church, Muskegon; October 24 - 7 pm Trinity Lutheran Church, Battle Creek; October 25 - 6 pm GVSU, 201 Kirkhof Center, Allendale; October 26 - 3 pm Hope College, Maas Conference Rm, Holland. For more information about these presentations, please contact Sandra Diaz, Appalachian Treasures Coordinator at sandra.diaz@earthlink.net.

Too Hot Not To Handle

Press Release from St. Michael Catholic Community



St Michael Catholic Community presents the HBO film documentary, *Too Hot Not to Handle*, Thursday November 2 from 7:30 to 9:00 pm. Their special guest will be Patty Gillis, founder and executive director of Voice for Earth Justice and coordinator of the MI Interfaith Climate Change Campaign.

"Our planet has just endured the hottest year on record, and we could've said the same thing several times this last decade. Deadly heat waves in the US have increased threefold since 1950 and today kill more people than hurricanes, tornadoes, lightning and blizzards combined. The Earth is heating up. What can we, as people of faith, do about it?"

There will be refreshments served and the program is free, but please register before November 1st at 586-556-4487. St Michael is located at 40501 Hayes, 1 block S of 18 Mile, in Sterling Heights.

If you have environmental news, events, would like to volunteer or get involved with EMEAC please contact our community organizer Domiana Alexander at domiana@emeac.org or director, Diana Seales at director@emeac.org. Our office number is 248-258-5188.

The Great Lakes Bioneers Detroit conference

Bioneers Press Release

Save the Dates: Oct. 20 - 22 at Wayne State University. “Detroit and the surrounding region need solutions for challenges to health, environment, social justice and spirit. The Great Lakes Bioneers Detroit conference provides a robust forum for exploring practical and visionary options for our communities.” (<http://www.sustainabledetroit.org/bioneers>)

The conference will include informative talks, performances and incredible food, all from great local sources. The conference also features a live satellite downlink of the Bioneers Conference in San Rafael, CA.

Friday night the conference will host *Water for Life*, an evening of music, story and discussion. The night will be a feast for the mind and the soul. Feeding the mind, Dave Dempsey, author and environmentalist, will speak on the topic

It’s All Connected: Bioneers, Social Justice, the Environment and Affirmative Action

Diana Seales

Founder of the Bioneers, Kenny Ausubel, was asked in an interview how he felt the Bioneers is set apart from other environmental and social movements? Ausubel answers,

“I think number one: the focus on solutions. So much of the environmental movement has been focused on the problems. But at the end of the day, we have to move beyond the problems into solutions, and then we have to move beyond the solutions into action. To explain the other very fundamental thing about Bioneers, we use this term: ‘declaration of interdependence.’ The understanding that we are a part of the web of life. There really are not single or separate issues. If there are people who live on two dollars a day or less, we can’t solve the environmental crisis without addressing poverty and inequity in the world. So I think that’s partly what’s very different about Bioneers, is we’re bringing all the pieces together. It’s this fundamental idea that it’s all connected and that we’re all connected.”¹

With Proposition 2 on the ballot this election, how are the issues of gender, race and equality “all connected” and why should environmental groups be concerned about affirmative action? As a recipient of the ‘Women in Science and Engineering’ scholarship as an undergraduate and a past environmental educator for inner-city youth, these questions are of particular importance to me. Affirmative action has increased representation of women and people of color within government. Women and minorities in office tend to support environmental issues. Without them the environmental community would not be where it is today.

Proposal 2 would roll back progress Michigan has made in opening the doors of opportunity to women and minori-

ties. Michigan may roll back decades in terms of equal rights for women and minorities at a time when there are fewer opportunities for education and jobs. As it is, the state of Michigan is tied for last in gender pay equity; women earn just 67 cents for every dollar men earn. African-Americans households earn 39 percent less than white households.

“Water: Commodity or Commons?” Feeding the soul, Judy Piazza, well known musician and activist will team up with the multi-talented storyteller LaRon Williams. Using a variety of musical forms and ritual, they will help us honor and celebrate the sacred role of water in our lives. Saturday night includes *the Magical Marsh* performances from the fabulous puppets of Matrix Theatre company. The closing ceremony will take place Sunday night at 6:00 with a performance by the Long-Hairz Collective. Independent artists William Copeland and Joseph Reilly have aligned spirits, minds and expression to form the Long-Hairz Collective — a blend of hip-hop, poetry, folk and blues music. The Long-Hairz remain rooted in the past, yet sing, rap and speak about a bright vision of what the future may hold.

Bioneers comprise a network of visionary innovators working to build a sustainable, positive and creative future for the web of life.



In other states where similar proposals have passed, women and minorities have suffered. Lawsuits have threatened funding for battered women’s shelters, for research programs like breast cancer and cervical cancer centers because they were considered gender-specific, and UCLA had its lowest number of African American freshmen this year since 1973.

Pre-College programs and youth outreach programs such as the King/ Chavez Parks Initiative, the U of M Minority Engineering Program, and the U of M Women in Science and Engineering (outreach program) would be compromised. These scholarships help increase representation of women and students of color in fields like Environmental Studies.

Michigan faces a variety of environmental challenges such as: contamination from mining operations, incinerator pollution in Detroit and PVC contamination; affecting women and minorities to a greater extent. Research and diverse participation is important in finding solutions to these environmental problems. “Access to environment should be granted and protected for all communities. Understanding how we define environment should be shared by all”²

Local environmental organizations that oppose the proposal include Michigan Environmental Council, ACCESS, Sierra Club, and Clean Water Action. For the complete list of supporting organizations and to learn more go to www.oneunitedmichigan.org.

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¹ Interview from *Third Eye Magazine*, ‘The Original Bioneer’

² Roger Hart, *Children’s Participation: The Theory and Practice of Involving Young Citizens in Community*

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