



Taking on the Big Fights to Protect the Midwest

ELPC 2022 – In Review

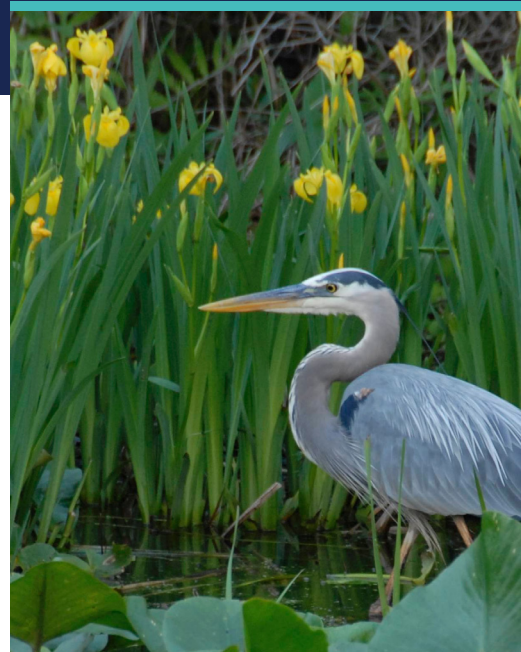


**ENVIRONMENTAL LAW
& POLICY CENTER**

What a Year!

ELPC is playing to win in these unprecedented times, through a challenging legal and political landscape and new opportunities for optimism. This year, a last-minute deal on a “loss and damage fund” at the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP27) is a good step for collective global action. In the midterm elections, people voted for calm nationally and in the Midwest states. The re-elected Great Lakes governors now have a great opportunity to coordinate regionally on EV charging infrastructure, Great Lakes restoration, passenger rail, energy efficiency, and other climate solutions.

As ELPC looks ahead to 2023 and our 30th anniversary, we’re proud of our strategic mission and the results we’re achieving. Here are some highlights of our impact this year, thanks to your support.



Defending the Great Lakes & Clean Water



Our successful advocacy for the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) in 2022 will support vital conservation projects across the region. After our expert witnesses demonstrated the climate impacts of a new tunnel for Line 5 under the Straits of Mackinac, the Michigan public Service Commission reopened the record, indicating they are taking these safety issues seriously. And in the innovative Rising Waters report, ELPC mapped hotspots around Lake Michigan that are at risk of flooding and extreme weather impacts fueled by climate change.

Holding Polluters Accountable

After an ammonia and cyanide steel mill spill in Indiana killed 3,000 fish and closed beaches along the Lake Michigan shoreline in 2019, ELPC and allies sued to protect clean water. In 2022, we secured a consent decree that will force Cleveland Cliffs to clean up its operations, pay civil penalties, and donate 127 acres of land to eventually grow the Indiana Dunes National Park. There’s no free pass for polluting the Great Lakes. ELPC attorneys are winning in the courts to hold polluters accountable.

Putting a Stop to Toxic Algae

ELPC is actively working to reduce manure pollution, stop toxic algae, and protect clean water in Ohio, Michigan, Wisconsin, and Iowa. In Ohio, we won another lawsuit to force the state and federal government to finally develop a cleanup plan necessary to remedy Lake Erie’s toxic algae, and we will keep fighting for the best possible protections. In Michigan, when the state created stronger standards for large-scale animal agriculture and opponents filed a lawsuit, ELPC stepped in to defend the state’s good efforts. In Wisconsin, we’re analyzing winter application of CAFO waste, which is particularly dangerous for water quality, and working with Stanford University’s Regulatory Lab to develop technology to remotely detect such applications.

Protecting the Midwest's Wild & Natural Places

Preserving the Scenic Driftless Area

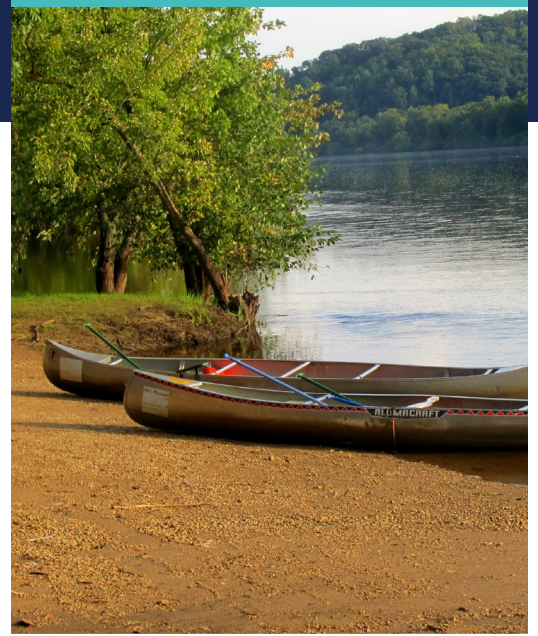
ELPC attorneys are representing four conservation organizations in a lawsuit to protect the Upper Mississippi National Wildlife and Fish Refuge, the nation's 4th most visited refuge. In 2022, we won a major victory when a federal court held that building the costly, environmentally destructive Cardinal-Hickory Creek high-voltage transmission line through the refuge would violate federal environmental protection statutes. The case is now on appeal, awaiting an opinion from the Seventh Circuit Court of Appeals. Separately, we continued to build coalition support around the reestablishment of the Driftless Area Landscape Conservation Initiative at USDA to conserve critical habitat and improve water quality.

Expanding Federal Wilderness Protections

ELPC has been working with hundreds of organizations and businesses in Michigan and Illinois to expand the strongest federal Wilderness protections to sections of existing national forests. In Southern Illinois, our coalition seeks to protect 12,000+ acres of wilderness in four key areas of the Shawnee National Forest. In Michigan's Ottawa National Forest in the Upper Peninsula, the Ehlco area, Trap Hills, Norwich Plains, and the Sturgeon River Gorge Wilderness Addition would protect almost 50,000 acres of old growth forest, to ensure enjoyment for generations to come.

Preserving Northwoods Wisconsin

Mature and old-growth forests store the most carbon, so confronting the climate crisis will require reforming harmful forest management practices to preserve these trees. ELPC and partners are calling on the United States Forest Service and the district ranger for Wisconsin's Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest to suspend and fully review the Fourmile logging project, and substantively address climate change, biodiversity, and public health.



Fighting for Healthy Clean Air & Climate Action



Thinking Locally & Acting Globally

ELPC is working with Midwestern cities and states to implement climate-friendly policies and business opportunities that clean up pollution at the local level. We're also helping them tap into federal funds from the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act and the Inflation Reduction Act for more resilient communities. With the Biden administration working on undoing the damage of the Trump years, ELPC has been engaged on many fronts to fight for strong and effective protections against methane, particulate matter, ozone, diesel pollution, and more.

Taking on Dirty Coal

The days of old polluting coal plants should be over – ELPC is fighting the ones that keep hanging around. Cleaning up or shutting down coal plants reduces greenhouse gas pollution. ELPC attorneys are intervening at the Iowa Utilities Board and state court to require coal plant retirement analysis in the resource planning process. With our “Clean Up MidAmerican” campaign partners, we call for the utility to finally retire and replace its uneconomic coal plants with clean, renewable energy.



Defending Communities & Public Health

Over the past six years, ELPC's air quality monitoring program worked with 30+ organizations, schools, and community groups to gather 14+ million mobile data points in Chicago, Milwaukee, and surrounding areas. We helped people from 9 to 90 years old measure particulate matter pollution, understand the data, and take steps to reduce exposure. We are pleased to see these groups now conducting their own monitoring, and the time has come for ELPC to shift gears. We will continue to support our partners, share best practices for mobile monitoring, and use the data analysis to advance solutions for healthy, clean air across the region.



Advancing Renewable Energy in the Midwest

Repowering Rural America

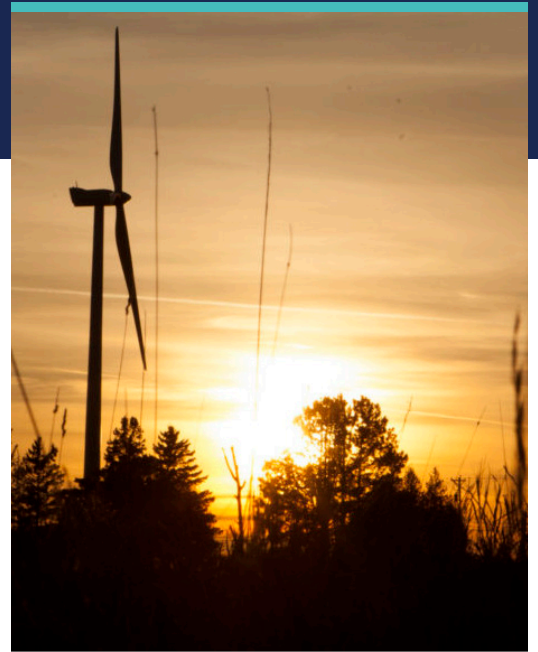
ELPC has been a champion for rural clean energy for over twenty years, with the successful bipartisan Rural Energy for America Program. In 2022, we secured another \$2 billion for REAP under the Inflation Reduction Act. This funding will help even more rural communities to generate new farm income, lower costs, and reduce carbon emissions in every agricultural sector and state in the nation.

Pursuing Smart Planning & a Just Transition to Clean Energy

ELPC is engaged before seven state public utility commissions to accelerate local solar energy, battery storage development, electric vehicles, and the advanced electricity grid we'll need to support these clean energy technologies. We are working to remove regulatory barriers and promote innovative solutions that will lead to a cleaner, more reliable, and more efficient electricity system in Midwest communities. ELPC is also partnering with community-based organizations to jointly advocate for a more equitable energy system built around local, clean energy resources. Our coalitions in Minnesota and Michigan are breaking new ground in the push for energy justice.

Accelerating Responsible Transmission Development

As the nation shifts towards much higher levels of renewable energy, we need a flexible and responsive grid to match. We need more transmission, but we must be smart about where new transmission lines go. ELPC and our colleagues advocate for more responsible transmission planning processes to identify natural and cultural resources conflicts at the front end. This will save time and money by avoiding sensitive environmental areas that could cause protracted legal battles and delays. ELPC also advocates for advanced transmission technologies, like “smart wires” and battery storage, that can help carry more renewable power over the transmission lines than we already have in order to “right-size” the investment needed in new infrastructure.



Accelerating Clean Transportation Solutions



Electrifying Transportation

Electric cars are an important part of the clean transportation puzzle, but ELPC also advocates for electric vehicles of all sizes. In 2022, we championed the new federal Clean School Bus Program, which will bring nearly 400 electric school buses to 80 Midwest school districts in the first round of funding. We have continued to push for more ubiquitous charging networks, electric transit buses and bikes, and a more safe and equitable transportation system for all communities.

Improving Passenger Rail Across the Midwest

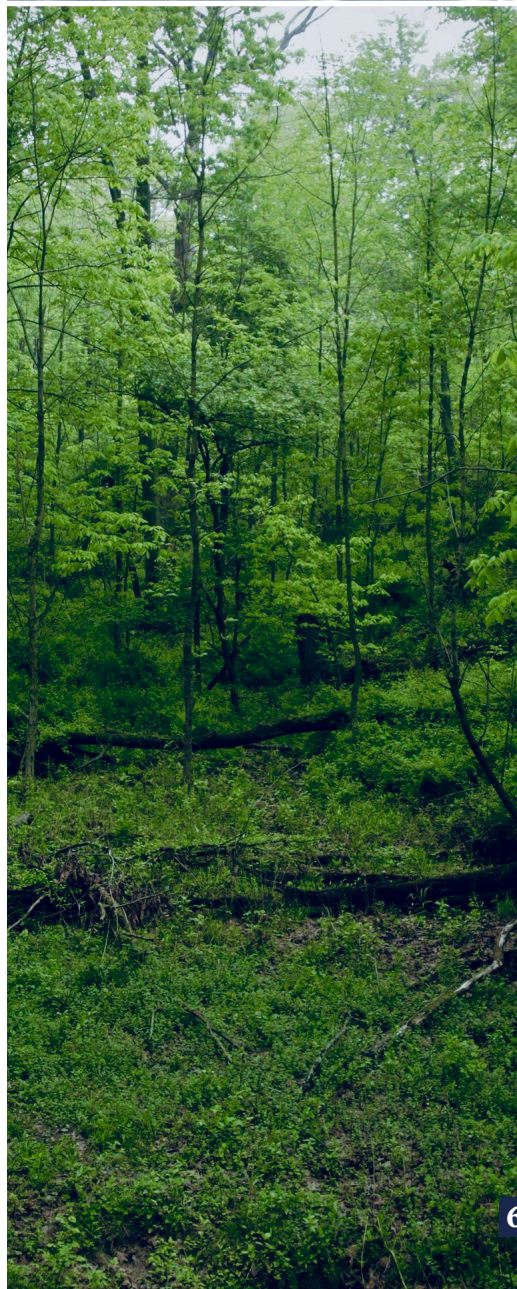
ELPC's longstanding leadership to accelerate passenger rail across the Midwest reached a key progress point this year. Amtrak announced its ambitious Midwest regional rail development plan. Track improvements and new trains are increasing speeds in several states, and long-awaited connections are moving closer to reality for communities like Duluth, Madison, and the Quad Cities. Key federal, state, and local leaders and agencies came together to support modernizing Chicago's Union Station, which will ease travel throughout the Midwest, thanks to new federal infrastructure funds.



Looking ahead to 2023

ELPC has several new opportunities for environmental progress in the Midwest in the months ahead. Our Michigan Power Plants to Parklands Initiative will help transition retired coal plant sites into public parklands, solar energy generation, and energy storage facilities. Our Northwest Indiana Protector Project will focus on protecting clean air, water, and parkland from polluting facilities along the Lake Michigan shoreline. Across the border on Chicago's Southeast Side, ELPC will be representing two community clients challenging a waste dump in Lake Michigan, as we push the Army Corps to identify better alternatives.

As we celebrate our 30th anniversary in 2023, we'll be looking back on decades of making a difference protecting people, communities, and our planet. We are proud of our mission to achieve sustainable environmental progress and economic growth together. And we look forward to continuing to advocate, innovate, and litigate to protect the Midwest, from the Great Lakes to the Great Plains, for years to come.





ENVIRONMENTAL LAW & POLICY CENTER

The Environmental Law & Policy Center is the Midwest's leading environmental legal advocacy organization. We drive transformational policy changes with national impacts. We show that environmental progress and economic development can be achieved together by putting sustainability principles into practice. We advance climate solutions effectively by accelerating clean renewable energy alternatives to conventional power plants and advancing clean transportation solutions.

We protect the Great Lakes and defend the Midwest's wild and natural places, and we fight for safe, clean water and healthy clean air for all. We combine effective public interest litigation with strategic policy advocacy, sound science, and economic analysis. ELPC produces strong results for the environment in the courtrooms, boardrooms, and legislative hearing rooms across the pivotal Midwest states and in Washington D.C.

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