



# Protecting the Midwest

ELPC 2021 – In Review



**ENVIRONMENTAL LAW  
& POLICY CENTER**

# Stepping Up Climate Action

Climate change is already having an impact across the Midwest, from stronger storms to heavier floods and more extreme lake levels. But ELPC is ramping up effective solutions across the region. We're working with cities and states to implement climate-friendly policies and business opportunities that clean up pollution at the local level. In Washington, D.C., we're engaged with federal agencies and representatives to enforce environmental protections, implement strong standards, and invest in resilient infrastructure. Climate action is woven into our work in every issue area.



**Our public interest attorneys and policy experts have been hard at work across the Midwest advocating, litigating, and innovating to protect our environment throughout 2021.**

*Here are just a handful of things we've been doing.*

## Advancing Renewable Energy in the Midwest



### Helping Pass Landmark Illinois Clean Energy Law

Working with our coalition partners, we helped advance sweeping new legislation for clean energy, efficiency, equity, and jobs in Illinois. ELPC was pivotal in including the nation's most comprehensive distribution grid planning requirements, to ensure energy infrastructure is ready to support the state's clean energy ambitions.

### Repowering Rural America

ELPC has been a champion for rural clean energy for decades, with the successful bipartisan Rural Energy for America Program (REAP). Recognizing an opportunity in President Biden's ambitious climate goals, we helped organize a coalition of nearly 200 agricultural, environmental, energy, and business organizations in calling for new REAP funding in the Build Back Better bill.

### Thinking Beyond Wires to Improve the Electric Grid

As the nation shifts towards a more distributed system of clean energy generation, we need a flexible and responsive grid to match. ELPC is engaged with agencies and utilities across the region to seize every opportunity to enable a clean electricity grid. By incorporating advanced transmission technologies, we can reduce waste, minimize costs, and relieve energy congestion rapidly.

# Accelerating Clean Transportation Solutions

## Advocating for Thoughtful Federal Funding Allocation

At the heart of our nation's transportation networks, the Midwest matters for reducing carbon emissions, so transportation spending needs to align with climate goals. ELPC advocates for transparent, data-driven allocation of federal funds. Smart investments in regional connectivity, transit reliability, and safe walking and biking can offer far more bang for the public buck than ever-expanding highway miles, improving mobility, increasing innovation, and reducing car pollution.

## Revitalizing the Chicago Pedway

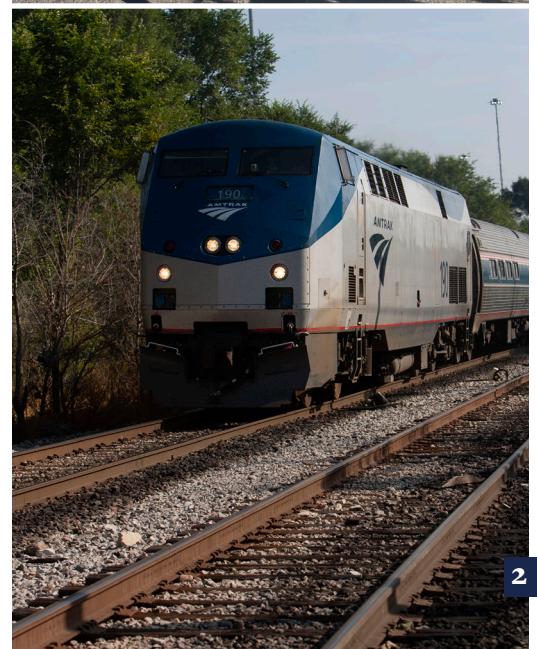
ELPC's campaign to improve Chicago's subterranean walkway system has led to cleaner facilities and more public awareness in recent years, but now we have a major win for better navigation as well. New upgraded signage, installed this winter, will make the pedway more inviting and usable for all.

## Achieving Wins for Passenger Rail

Higher speed rail is finally coming to Illinois. Trains between Chicago and St. Louis are now running at 90mph with plans to reach 110mph by next year, shaving nearly an hour off the old trip. Our advocacy also helped secure a second daily train through Wisconsin and Minneapolis, and new cleaner Amtrak trains will reduce diesel pollution and provide a more comfortable ride. \$66 billion in new federal infrastructure funds will go towards passenger and freight rail, reconnecting communities and improving service across the Midwest.

## Electrifying Transportation

Electric cars are an important part of the clean transportation puzzle, but ELPC also advocates for electric vehicles of all sizes. In 2021, we celebrated new electric school buses in towns like Ann Arbor, MI and Munster, IN; electric transit bus commitments for Chicago's CTA and suburban Pace fleets; new investments in the Midwest EV charging network; \$2.5 billion for electric and other clean school buses in the Infrastructure Act; and tax credits for electric bikes in the Build Back Better bill. Additionally, electric vehicle manufacturing jobs are growing rapidly, as companies like Rivian, Stellantis, and Lion Electric join long-time Midwest automakers in building innovative transportation technology right here in the heartland.



# Achieving Healthy Clean Air

## Building Partnerships in Air Quality Monitoring

ELPC is working with the Urban Innovation team at Microsoft Research and many community partners to deploy the largest real-time hyperlocal air quality sensing network in a North American city. The 100 new sensors on bus stops across Chicago complement ELPC's community monitoring efforts, helping us to compare data across geographic areas and advocate for solutions.

## Pushing for Strong Federal Standards

It's been an exciting year in the wonky world of environmental regulation. 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. We testified in support of stronger methane standards and cleaner car requirements, and we advocated to reduce unsafe ozone levels, among many other efforts to reduce air pollution and climate emissions.

## Defending Communities and Public Health

As a result of ELPC and our colleagues' lawsuit against the BP Whiting oil refinery in northwest Indiana, the company will now be fined more than \$500,000 and required to clean up operations to prevent the lung-damaging soot that is so dangerous for surrounding communities. Just over the border, ELPC has also been supporting the Southeast Side of Chicago residents in their fight against a metal scrapping facility and an expanding waste dump on the lakeshore. There, and further inland, we are working to protect communities that are disproportionately exposed to diesel pollution from distribution facilities, highways, and other high-pollution corridors.

## Taking on Dirty Coal

This year, ELPC sued the Iowa Utilities Board for refusing to evaluate MidAmerican coal plants, considering evidence showed retiring the plants could save Iowans \$1.2 billion. After ELPC and allies encouraged Michigan's Consumers Energy to conduct a long-range power plan, the utility now plans to retire coal by 2025. After ELPC and allies won our lawsuit against the central Illinois Edwards coal plant in 2016, we helped direct settlement money in the following years towards clean air investments, including Illinois' first vehicle-to-grid electric school buses that rolled out in local districts in 2021.



# Fighting for Safe Clean Water

## Defending the Great Lakes

The Great Lakes system is a global gem, comprising 21% of the earth's surface freshwater and providing drinking water for 42 million people. ELPC's successful advocacy for the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) in 2021 will support vital conservation projects across the region, including \$1 billion in additional funding from the infrastructure bill. This year, we presented expert witnesses to demonstrate the link between the construction of a new tunnel for Line 5 under the Straits of Mackinac and climate change. We permanently protected Thunder Bay National Marine Sanctuary in Lake Huron, a victory that set national precedent leveraging protection for 10 other National Marine Sanctuaries and Monuments threatened with cuts and drilling.

## 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. We have agreed to a settlement with the owners, Cleveland-Cliffs, to hold them accountable and prevent this from happening again. In Illinois, we helped pass groundbreaking coal ash protections, and we are now participating in the permitting and implementation process to protect safe clean water across the state. And all around the shores of Lake Michigan we're examining the potential impacts of rising lake levels on toxic threats like nuclear waste and superfund sites.

## Putting a Stop to Toxic Algae

In communities across the Midwest, excess manure and fertilizer runoff pollution are fueling toxic algae outbreaks that harm drinking water, the fishing industry, and the recreation economy. ELPC is working to reduce pollution and protect the water in several states. In Ohio, our Clean Water Act lawsuit is forcing the state and the federal government to finally develop a cleanup plan necessary to remedy Lake Erie's toxic algae. In Wisconsin, we're analyzing winter application of CAFO waste, which is particularly dangerous for water quality. In Michigan, the state implemented stronger standards for large-scale animal agriculture, and when opponents filed a lawsuit, ELPC stepped in to defend the state's good efforts.



# Protecting the Midwest's Wild & Natural Places



## Preserving the Scenic Driftless Area

In 2022, ELPC won a major victory representing Wisconsin conservation organizations, when a federal court stopped the unnecessary Cardinal-Hickory Creek high-voltage transmission line from cutting through the Upper Mississippi River National Fish & Wildlife Refuge and the scenic Driftless Area's vital natural resources. Separately, we built a broad coalition to support the reestablishment of the Driftless Area Landscape Conservation Initiative at USDA. This program helped conserve critical habitat and improve water quality in this ecologically-unique area of karst geography untouched by ancient glaciers.



## Keeping Michigan's UP Wild

Working with more than 285 organizations from the Upper Peninsula and across Michigan, ELPC is building a campaign to provide the strongest federal Wilderness protections to part of the Ottawa National Forest. Together, the Ehlco area, the 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.



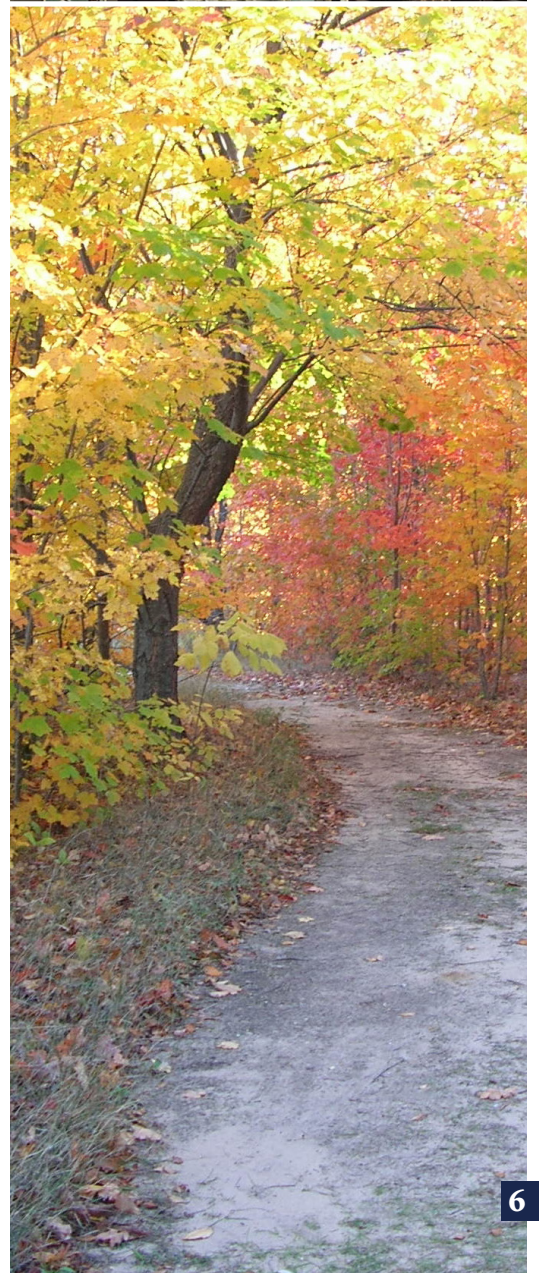
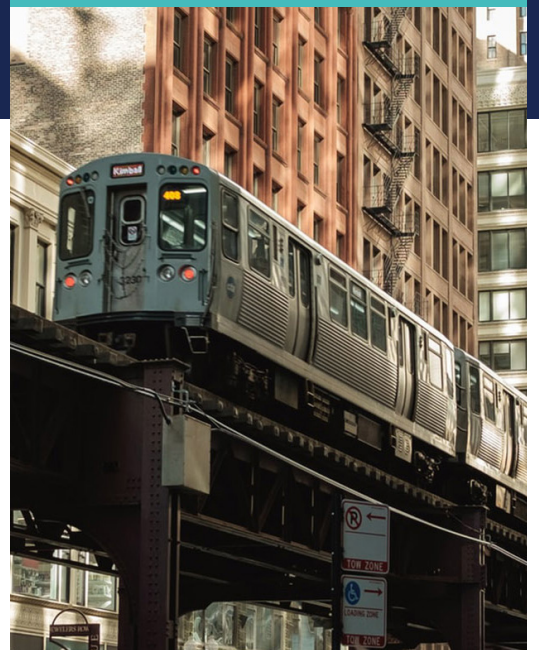
## Protecting Northwoods Wisconsin

Confronting the climate crisis requires reforming harmful forest management practices, to preserve mature and old-growth forests that store the most carbon. We are calling on the United States Forest Service and the district ranger for the Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest to act promptly to suspend and fully review the Fourmile logging project, and substantively address climate change, biodiversity, and public health.

# Making a Difference for People, Our Communities, and Our Planet

This is just a slice of what we've done this year. ELPC is ambitious and effective even in these challenging times. We know the Midwest's amazing environmental, economic, and natural resources matter. The Midwest can and should be a fulcrum for clean energy and transportation innovations, which are good for the environment and good for the economy.

From the Mississippi River to the Northwoods, from the Midwest's swamps and prairies to our small towns and skyscrapers, we know a healthy economy depends on a healthy environment. At the heart of the nation, the Great Lakes system is a global gem, containing a third of the planet's surface freshwater. This gift of nature, however, brings a duty of care. At ELPC, we don't just love these natural resources. We work every day to protect them. With your help, we can keep achieving great things. Your generosity ensures ELPC's work to protect the environment and the Midwest will thrive in 2022 and beyond. Thank you for your support!





## 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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