

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.

Volume 36, Issue No. 3

Summer, 2006

Celebrating Water for Life

Recapturing the Summer 2006 exploration of water issues from the perspective of social justice and human rights in Southeast Michigan

Water rights was the theme of a recent series of events sponsored by southeast Michigan environmental and social justice groups. EMEAC opened the series during its May 9th annual meeting with a screening of the movie, *Thirst* and the trailer for the upcoming film *Water Warriors* documenting the Highland Park's water crisis. The *Celebrating Water for Life* series is important to local communities across Michigan that are confronting water pollution, water shortage, diversion and rate issues:

- ◆ In Detroit, hundreds of residents have had their water shut off;
- ◆ In Highland Park, thousands of residents have experienced home water shut-offs and many have lost their homes when sky rocketing water rates have been attached to their property taxes;
- ◆ Mecosta County's ground water is being freely siphoned and sold by Nestle;
- ◆ Monroe County residents must ship in water because their water supply has been contaminated by quarry operations.

There were four main events in the summer *Celebrating Water for Life* series. The May 9th evening began with environmentally-themed poetry by Detroit's William Copeland followed by the movie trailer and the *Thirst* documentary. The evening ended in a lively audience discussion moderated by journalist Jack Lessenberry. During the discussion, Sylvia Orduño, Michigan Welfare Rights Organization and PhD candidate at the University of Michigan, shared her observation that "For the past several years we've been telling people that thousands of Detroit and Highland Park residents have been living without water, but no one seems to care. We need help with stopping the shut-offs and implementing a water affordability plan. As stated by the residents of Stockton in the documentary *Thirst*, if we don't do something to protect our municipal water department, it's going to be privatized."

Lynna Kauchek, of Clean Water Action, said she was excited to be a part of the May 9th event. "Participants were anxious to know what they could do, and although I made a lot of fliers to distribute, I gave all of them

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Water for Life discussions in Detroit and Milwaukee

EMEAC has a New Community Organizer!



Domiana Alexander joined the EMEAC on June 7, 2006. She is a recent graduate of Michigan State University with a bachelor's degree in Environmental Studies and Applications.

Before joining EMEAC, Domiana worked on environmental justice issues at both the state and federal level. At the Michigan Environmental Council (MEC) she helped to organize and host a food forum for communities in the Metro Detroit Area to address the needs of women and their families and researched the health effects on infants, children and women of eating mercury contaminated fish. At the federal level, Domiana worked at the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in Washington D.C where she assisted in the development of new Environmental Justice Targeting Tools for the Office of Environmental Justice.

While at EMEAC Domiana intends to work on youth outreach and environmental justice.

New Environmental Education Curriculum for 4th through 9th Graders - School Districts Encouraged to Contact MDEQ

EMEAC, in partnership with the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ), is pleased to announce the Michigan Environmental Education Curriculum Support (MEECS). Five Michigan-specific science and social studies units are ready for Michigan classrooms consisting of Ecosystems & Biodiversity (grades 4-6), Land Use (grades 4-5), Water Quality (grades 6-8), Energy Resources (grades 7-9), and Air Quality (grades 7-9).

MEECS is designed to provide students in grades four through nine with an opportunity to learn about, and to increase appreciation and understanding of, Michigan's environment and its role in Michigan's economy. MEECS is aligned with science and social studies content standards and MEAP assessment.

MEECS workshops have been scheduled from July 31, 2006 through December 2006. The workshops are little to no cost and materials are provided free upon completion. School districts are encouraged to schedule one or more workshops at the school as part of an in-service day. Contact your local Math/Science center (<http://mscenters.org>), or visit the DEQ MEECS website www.michigan.gov/deq-meecs for more information.

The DEQ website provides the workshop brochure online with workshop dates, times, and locations. Please check for updates as more workshops are scheduled. For more information regarding MEECS contact Tom Occhipinti (517) 373-2379 or occhipit@michigan.gov.

EMEAC Takes on Youth Education

"Many of you here, during this workshop, have mentioned how you are exhausted from the demands put on an environmental advocate" noted EMEAC's Domiana Alexander at the Midwest Social Forum (MWSF). The MWSF is an annual gathering of grassroots organizations, community activists, workers, educators, students, artists, and others committed to making a better, more just world possible that took place this year on July 6 - 9th in Milwaukee. "We want to help bring new blood to the environmental movement. EMEAC is looking to partner with other environmental and educational organizations to train future leaders. We are working to create a youth environmental stewards program led by youth and driven by what inspires them."

EMEAC has already started to partner with a local youth group, The Rosa and Raymond Parks Center for

Self Development, an organization that has a large youth membership focusing on civic engagement. The partnership will involve the Non-Partisan Voter Mobilization project to encourage citizens to hold their elected officials accountable for protecting Michigan's health and environment.

Additional projects with the Parks Center will include environmentally themed field trips, environmental science curriculum and a summer camp where students learn more about opportunities, careers and importance of natural resource studies.

There will be many volunteer opportunities around the creation and implementation of this endeavor. If you are interested in volunteering for a particular program, helping to develop the youth environmental leaders council, or want to learn more, please contact us.

out and had to search for my personal copies to distribute!”

The 2nd event in the *Celebrating Water for Life* series, entitled “Detroit’s Water: Looking to the Past to find Justice for the Future”, took place on

June 13th and featured a panel of environmental and community experts who discussed the complex history, politics and race relations among residents that share Detroit’s water system in Oakland and Wayne County. “It is hard to imagine a positive resolution without a discussion about creating new relationships and conversations between the city and the suburbs.” Rich Feldman, an Oakland County resident, commented during the discussion. Many of the participants appreciated the perspectives on water rights Dave Dempsey and Russ Bullant offered. Dempsey is the author of *On the Brink: the Great Lakes in the 21st Century*. Ballant, a Detroit Historian, is critical of the suburbs for failing to understand that rate markup occur in their own townships and not from Detroit and critical of Detroit for giving millions of dollars to contractors instead of city workers.



Environmental Health Presentation

The 3rd event was a Town Hall style event at which approximately 70 youth from Wayne, Washtenaw and Oakland County participated in discussions about water diversion, water equity and pollution. The youngsters also learned about messaging and educating their community and how to get others involved.

EMEAC also hosted a six hour caucus during the Midwest Social Forum July 6th about Southeast Michigan and Great Lakes water concerns. Approximately 30 environmental groups were represented; including from Michigan - the Traverse Bioneers, Michigan Water Alliance, and Michigan Citizens for Water Conservation. National groups, such as Food and Water Security from Washington, DC, were also in attendance.

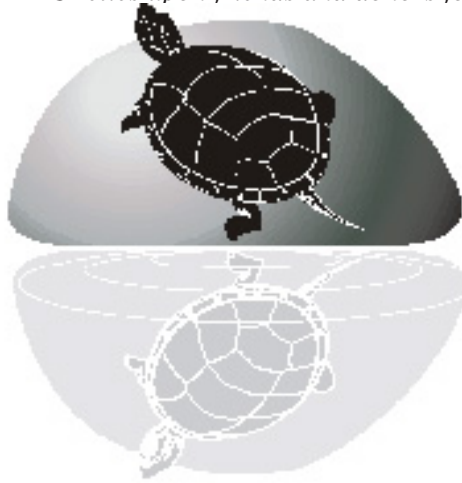
EMEAC will continue the discussion about water access and diversions as a part of a community discussion series. It is a vital that we build community support for equitable access to clean water because when water is treated, as a marketable commodity, and is not appreciated as a life sustaining resource, everyone’s access is threatened.



We want to hear from you!

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

EMEAC relies upon friends and donors for financial support.



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Summer, 2006



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