

2024 CATF Year-End Report



Membership and Organizational Summary

- Jane Fitkin (CSCLS) and Ali O’Neal (Partridge Creek Compost) were selected to join CATF.
- The CATF Outreach Committee hosted the six-part “Marquette 2049 Learning Circles Series – Supporting Scenario Thinking in Times of Climate Change” and is exploring next steps. This series was generously supported and funded by NMU and the SWP.
- CATF recognizes MI Healthy Climate Corps (MHC Corps) members Krystle Baecker (SWP) and Quinn Thibault (Marquette County) for their contributions to local climate resiliency.
- CATF welcomes the second cohort of MHC Corps members including Krystle Baecker (SWP), Paola Rivera González (MEC), Anna Solberg (NMU), and Nico Vermaat (Marquette County).

2024 CATF Members:

- Karen Alholm
- Pri Burnham
- Zosia Eppensteiner
- Jane Fitkin
- Jenn Hill
- Isabelle Honkomp
- Brian Hummel
- Bob Kulisheck
- Michael Larson
- Emily Leach
- Carl Lindquist
- Jerry Messana
- Brad Neumann
- Ali O’Neal
- Tyler Penrod
- Erik Powers
- Karen Schmitt
- Greg Seppanen
- Dave Stensaas
- Ryan Stock
- Jes Thompson
- Dale Throenle
- Darlene Walch
- Abby Wallace
- Johanna Worley

2024 Steering Committee Members:

- Zosia Eppensteiner – Vice Chair
- Bob Kulisheck
- Emily Leach – Chair
- Brad Neumann
- Tyler Penrod – Coordinator
- Dave Stensaas
- Jes Thompson

2024 Membership Committee Members:

- Michael Larson
- Brad Neumann
- Greg Seppanen

2024 CATF Supported Accomplishments Overview

- CFMC supported local nonprofits and programs with more than \$3 million in grants awarded
- CSCLS raised awareness of coastal wetland protection with educational events and landowner engagement
- CSCLS established a native plant garden and outdoor classroom at a Big Bay trailhead
- The City of Marquette’s Community Master Plan update completed; climate action planning is forthcoming
- Marquette Charter Township began updating their Master Plan
- Marquette County conducted extensive public engagement and drafted a Climate Action Plan
- Marquette County Emergency Management is updating the Emergency Operations Plan to improve community resiliency
- NCN hosted 7 Climate@Noon seminars and celebrated 10 years
- NMU is on the path to achieve 25% emission reductions by 2030, carbon neutrality by 2050
- PCC added >300 new homes to curbside compost collection diverting 295,000lbs from landfills in 2024
- Sands Township Hall installed solar power and continued e-waste collection
- SWP programs expanded energy assistance services, reduced wildfire risk, improved local emergency response capacity, installed EV charging infrastructure, and improved coastal resiliency

2024 Project Summaries

Chocolay Township

Chocolay Township is using the national zoning atlas model to create an interactive mapping tool.

Citizens for a Safe and Clean Lake Superior (CSCLS)

CSCLS engaged in various initiatives to protect coastal wetlands and restore native habitats including outreach to local landowners and ongoing wetland education efforts. They hosted wetland walks over the summer, led a restoration project at the Big Bay Pathway, and organized community events including *Superior Snapshot: A Year in Review* and *Superior On Tap* to raise awareness about wetland protection. CSCLS also established a public drop-off location for vape disposal to address hazardous waste concerns.

Learn more about CSCLS here: <https://citizensforsuperior.org/>

City of Marquette

The City of Marquette completed the Community Master Plan (CMP) update with extensive community input. The CMP adopted by the Marquette City Commission includes a directive to begin work on a Climate Action Plan and a Guide to Climate Action Planning. Visit this link to learn more about the CMP and Climate Action Planning:

<https://www.marquettemi.gov/departments/community-development/planning/>

Jenn Hill – Michigan State House Representative

The State of Michigan's legislature passed bills to lower energy bills and increase eligibility for the Michigan Energy Assistance Program which were signed into law by Governor Whitmer in December. A four-person household is now eligible if they make up to 60% of the state median income, currently \$61,861. Approximately 335,000 more households are now eligible for assistance.

MI Healthy Climate Plan 2024 Report: <https://www.michigan.gov/egle/-/media/Project/Websites/egle/Documents/Reports/OCE/MHCP-2024-Report.pdf>

League of Women Voters of Marquette County (LWVMC)

LWVMC has an engaged membership who is dedicated to advocating for environmental policies across various fronts, including energy, battery recycling, and septic policy. The League collaborates with both State and National Leagues to address critical environmental issues, with climate change being one of their top priorities.

In 2024, LWVMC organized trips to the UP's State Geological Repository, Partridge Creek Compost and Partridge Creek Farm. Speakers included the Marquette County Emergency Manager and EGLE's Geologist expert on mine permitting. Members participated in the CATF's Marquette 2049 Learning Circles, and the Committee is actively supporting the Battery Collective in its efforts to develop a sustainable county-wide battery recycling program.

Marquette County

To inform the development of a Climate Action Plan, Marquette County board commissioned an energy audit, vehicle fleet review, and GHG facilities emission audit. Marquette County Planning gathered survey data and facilitated three County employee engagement sessions and four Dialogue Dinners to gather community feedback. Plan development was supported by MI Healthy Climate Corps members Quinn Thibault and Nico Vermaat as well as a volunteer

subcommittee. The Climate Action Plan will be presented to the County Board for approval in the first quarter of 2025. You can learn more at: www.mqtcoplan.org/climateactionplan

The state budget allocated \$20 million to the Disaster and Emergency Contingency Fund which has been overdrawn by \$25 million in the past. Marquette and Baraga Counties were each allocated \$1 million in funding in response to 2023 spring flooding. A pair of rapid snow melt events in 2023 resulted in flood damage to more than 150 Marquette County homes and business. 23 structures experienced major damage or were destroyed. It's estimated that repairs to public infrastructure will cost \$7 million. The damage didn't qualify for federal flood assistance.

Marquette County Emergency Management is updating the Emergency Operations Plan (EOP). The updated EOP will rethink and condense existing plans to make them easier to use in the future.

Emergency Management received a fellow through the NMU Rural Fellowship Program who will conduct outreach and planning with local small businesses and non-profits to increase local resiliency. Studies show 50% of local businesses and non-profits permanently close after a major natural disaster.

The Marquette County Housing Rehabilitation Program received \$500,000 from the Michigan State Housing and Development Authority (MSHDA) to preserve existing housing stock throughout the County and in 2024 had an additional \$83,000 to provide emergency repair grants. Since 1994 this program has distributed over \$5 million in assistance to low and moderate-income homeowners to help homeowners maintain their residence as safe, sanitary dwellings that meet local housing codes.

Part 115 of the Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Act- Solid Waste Act was updated. Marquette County notified the state of its intention to develop a Regional Materials Management Plan. CUPAD will serve as the regional planning agency for the development and implementation of the six county materials management plan.

Marquette Charter Township

Marquette Township is updating their master plan and is seeking community input through a public survey.

Michigan Environmental Council (MEC)

MEC continued its commitment to advancing clean energy solutions in the Upper Peninsula, securing Phase 2 funding for our Energizing Rural Communities project in Alger County. Building on the momentum from Phase I, we have continued to organize and host community education events in collaboration with Alger County Renewable Energy Solutions, Michigan Energy Options, the UP Environmental Coalition, and Michigan Saves. These events have provided residents and local businesses with practical information on financing options for renewable energy installations and home energy efficiency retrofits as well as information on installing solar on their homes and businesses.

Michigan State University Extension (MSUE)

New [MSUE Strategic Direction Plan](#) includes sustainability and climate resilience goals in all four new Strategic Initiatives: Thriving Michigan Food Systems; Strong Michigan Communities; Healthy, Empowered, and Fulfilled Michiganders; and Resilient Michigan and Great Lakes Environments.

MSUE and the MSU School of Planning, Design, and Construction delivered statewide education for the MI Climate and Health Adaptation Program with a grant from MDHHS. Three [Catalyst Communities webinars](#) delivered in 2024 highlight the [Climate and Health Adaptation Planning](#)

[Guide for Michigan Communities](#) developed out of the 2017-2019 pilot project in Marquette County. In 2025, MSUE will be providing technical assistance to four Michigan communities through a planning process to envision climate-health adaptations to select sites throughout the communities (similar to the processes in Marquette Township and City of Negaunee).

MSUE continues to engage Michigan communities with education and outreach on the topics of green infrastructure, stormwater management, sustainable agriculture, community health, renewable energy, local planning, harmful algal blooms, sustainable tourism and more.

Northern Climate Network (NCN)

Northern Climate Network turned 10 years old and hosted 7 Climate@Noon seminars.

- Jan. 19, 2024 – Bio Energy & Environmental Justice
- Feb. 2, 2024 – Proforestation: Secrets of the Carbon Capture Forest
- Mar. 15, 2024 – What is Divestment & What it Means for NMU
- Apr. 12, 2024 – Citizens' Climate Lobby En-Roads Climate Simulator
- Sept. 13, 2024 - 10 Year Anniversary: Past, Present & Future
- Oct. 4, 2024 – Why Composting Helps Mitigate Climate Change: How to Start Today
- Nov. 8, 2024 - Climate Anxiety, Disavowal, and the Illusion of Economic Growth

Learn more about NCN here: <https://nmu.edu/northernclimatenetwork/home>

Northern Michigan University (NMU)

NMU adopted a new strategic plan called Our Compass which includes a pillar on sustainability and will develop an [action plan](#) to put those ideas into practice.

NMU continued on the “[Path to Carbon Neutrality by 2050](#),” a plan finalized in 2023 outlining the strategies for achieving that goal and targeted reductions in carbon emissions for each decade along the way. The plan established emissions reduction targets of 25% by 2030 and 50% by 2040, then eliminating remaining emissions by 2050. NMU identified five key strategies for achieving its goal: reduced energy use; optimized infrastructure to minimize operational costs and emissions; a “right size” campus physical footprint to maximize use and efficiency of new and existing spaces; renewable energy investments; and increased carbon sequestration on university land. This plan builds on the grassroots work of students, faculty, and staff who since 2010 have reduced NMU’s carbon footprint by nearly 30% making NMU’s carbon footprint already the lowest of all Michigan universities who publish their emissions. Read more about NMU’s climate and sustainability efforts here: <https://news.nmu.edu/nmu-carbon-neutrality-plan-finalized#:~:text=According%20to%20the%20draft%2C%20NMU,eliminating%20remaining%20emissions%20by%202050.>

Jes Thompson led and facilitated progress as NMU’s first Associate Vice President of Sustainability. Her leadership has expanded NMU’s capacity to support students and build upon the gains made in recent years in pursuit of carbon neutrality by 2050. Some action items include transitioning the University’s fleet to hybrid and electric vehicles, implementing a post-consumer composting program, and developing an interdisciplinary sustainability curriculum accessible to students from all degree programs.

NMU student groups, faculty, and staff continued to lead the University to a more sustainable future by hosting zero waste events, Earth Week, and sustainability conferences for students and the public. In June 2024, NMU was recognized as a [STARS Gold Institution](#) by the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education.

NMU was selected to be a data collection site for [SpheriCity](#), a National Science Foundation research project. Marquette is one of 11 communities selected to be part of this research

project. This will involve transects for litter and audits of items for sale and available in local restaurants and businesses.

SHINE launched a new weekly Campus Sustainability [newsletter](#).

Partridge Creek Compost (PCC)

In 2024, Partridge Creek Compost added over 300 new homes and businesses for curbside compost collections. This increased their yearly diversion rate from 84,000lbs diverted in 2023 to 295,000lbs in 2024. This diversion equates to 340,000lbs of finished compost created from diverted waste and municipal wood chips, and prevented 44 metric tons of CO2 equivalent emissions from entering the atmosphere in 2024 alone. You can support PCC by signing up for curbside pickup, buying compost, or donating by visiting: <https://www.partridgecreekcompost.org/>

Sands Township

Sands Township installed solar on the township hall and received EGLE funding to host e-waste recycling events for Marquette County residents at the Sands Township Recycling & Transfer station on M553.

Superior Watershed Partnership (SWP)

SWP opened the new SWP Climate Office near McCarty's Cove between Lakeshore Bike and Lakeshore Depot. This office is home to SWP's Climate Emergency Response Program, Great Lakes Climate Corps, and e-waste collection programs.

SWP has expanded energy assistance services to now include the ALICE population (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, and Employed) with \$1.5 million from the Michigan Department of Labor & Economic Opportunity (LEO). SWP's Energy Office continues to provide thousands of income qualified Upper Peninsula residents with free emergency assistance to pay energy bills, financial literacy classes, energy efficiency upgrades, and residential solar installations. In-home energy efficiency services are expanding with the planned addition of two new energy efficiency technicians in the coming months.

Phase 2 of the Lakeshore Boulevard project broke ground with a \$2.5 million grant from NFWF to implement a living shoreline along nearly 1 mile of Lake Superior shoreline and build new trails through restored dune/swale and coastal wetland ecosystems. Site grading and installation of the living cobble beach continued through the fall until winter weather paused the project until 2025. After work with heavy machinery ends, GLCC crews and volunteers will help plant beach grass and other native species throughout the project area.

The Great Lakes Climate Corps (GLCC) wrapped up another successful field season. SWP hired, trained, and deployed more than 30 GLCC members across the Upper Peninsula to work alongside project partners on conservation, restoration, and recreation projects. The crews made progress on SWP's 100,000 tree initiative, built and maintained dozens of miles of trail including work on Sugarloaf Mountain, restored wildlife habitat, supported KBIC's Natural Resource Department priorities, performed wildfire fuels reduction at Little Trout Lake Park, and much more. GLCC members and 8 year-round SWP staff received emergency response training to be prepared to assist county emergency managers when disaster strikes.

SWP received funding through EGLE Charge Up, MEDC, and the National Park Service Mobility Challenge to install more level 3 rapid EV chargers in Upper Peninsula communities. Marquette, Munising, Grand Marais, and Hancock will receive a total of 7 of these EV chargers.

Buoys were deployed in the spring providing real-time weather data including wind speed, water temperature, and wave height to recreational and commercial boaters. This data is used by

NWS, NOAA, and Environment Canada for climate research. You can view this weather data on the GLOS Seagull website: <https://glos.org/priorities/seagull/>

SWP's NEW Website: <https://superiorwatersheds.org/>

GLCC Video: <https://youtu.be/E6OtMqUsXG0>

SWP Energy Program Website: <https://superiorwatersheds.org/energy-conservation>

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