

Former MEC Boss Lana Pollack , Au Sable Defender Rusty Gates Earn Top Awards

*Pair will be honored at Michigan Environmental Council's April
30 Awards Celebration in Ann Arbor*

Lansing, MI – Longtime Michigan Environmental Council President Lana Pollack has been named the 2009 recipient of Michigan's highest environmental award and tenacious Au Sable River defender and fly fishing legend Rusty Gates will receive the Council's citizen hero award.

The pair will receive the honors at an April 30 celebration in Ann Arbor .

Pollack, of Ann Arbor , earned the Helen and William Milliken Distinguished Service Award for her tremendous impact on behalf of the environment during 12 years in the State Senate, 12 as president of the Michigan Environmental Council and numerous other endeavors, including membership on the state's Natural Resources Trust Fund Board.

She is responsible for groundbreaking environmental legislation including the "polluter pay" law of 1990 and for building the Michigan Environmental Council into a formidable political force at the State Capitol during her tenure.

Pollack retired as the Council's president on Dec. 31, 2008.

"Many of the state's most important environmental victories in recent years can be traced back to Lana Pollack and the relationships and coalitions she has helped build," said Michigan Environmental Council President Chris Kolb. "Her legacy speaks for itself, and it made this year's Milliken Award a unanimous landslide vote by the selection committee."

Gates, who lives near Grayling, will receive the Petoskey Prize for Environmental Leadership, which is awarded to citizen activists whose defense of Michigan's natural resources is marked by extraordinary courage, commitment and creativity.

Gates is owner of a fly fishing lodge and founder of Anglers of the Au Sable. He has spent a lifetime protecting the beloved Au Sable River that is both his passion and livelihood. Gates and the Anglers successfully won David-vs-Goliath battles against oil drilling companies, misguided government bureaucracies, and even fellow anglers in defense of the world class trout stream.

He was instrumental in establishing the revered "no-kill" flies-only regulations along a stretch of the river, a controversial crusade that earned him death threats. Most recently he spearheaded successful legal challenges that stopped oil and gas drilling on the fringe

of the revered Mason Tract of wilderness and thwarted a plan to pump contaminated water into the headwaters of the Au Sable.

“Rusty Gates’ quiet humility and soft-spoken nature belie the giant strides he has made in defense of the Au Sable River Valley and its unique ecology and fishery,” said Kolb. “If there ever was a perfect fit for the ‘citizen hero’ nature of our Petoskey Prize, Rusty Gates is it.”

Past winners of the Milliken Award: Steve Hamp, Peter Stroh, Peter Wege, Marty Fluharty, Peter Karmanos, Congressman John Dingell, Congressman Vernon Ehlers, Mary C. Brown, Bunyan Bryant PhD.

Past winners of the Petoskey Prize: Debbie Romak, Alison & David Swan, Diane Hebert, Terry Swier, Michelle Hurd Riddick, Don A. Griffin, Lynn Henning, Carol Drake.

The Michigan Environmental Council is a coalition of 70 environmental, public health, and faith-based groups dedicated to the protection of the state’s natural resources and the public health and welfare that depends on a clean environment.