



LOCAL PARTNERSHIPS. HEALTHY COMMUNITIES.

Level II



Earth Keepers Initiative Marquette, Michigan

Marquette, the largest city in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan, is faced with a variety of environmental challenges that threaten water quality and quality of life including the improper disposal of pharmaceuticals, household hazardous waste and electronic waste (e-waste). In addition, the City of Marquette has critically elevated levels of mercury documented in the effluent of the Marquette Area Wastewater Treatment Facility, which enters Lake Superior via the Carp River Area of Concern. The primary source of mercury to the wastewater treatment facility has been attributed to over 30 dentist offices in the community. Lastly, there is a high incidence of burn barrel use for trash disposal in the project area (a problem source of dioxins). Although these problems pose serious environmental and health risks they also present great opportunities to involve the public in addressing them.

Joining Together

In 2004, the Superior Watershed Partnership helped establish the Earth Keepers. The Earth Keepers initiative is a coalition of faith communities in Michigan's Upper Peninsula taking action to protect the environment. Participating faiths included Catholic, Lutheran, Methodist, Episcopal, Jewish, Presbyterian, Buddhist, Unitarian, and Baha'i. Other Earth Keepers partners include, but are not limited to, the Keweenaw Bay Indian Community and Northern Michigan University. The Earth Keepers have proven to be one of the most diverse and effective stakeholder groups in the country. Religious leaders (including an unprecedented four bishops as signatories) from nine faiths signed the Earth Keepers Agreement which commits them to working with the Superior Watershed Partnership and other partners to prevent pollution and protect the natural environment

Identifying Problems and Solutions

Through a collaborative process, project partners identified ways to inform and involve the residents of the Upper Peninsula of Michigan on ways they could help solve some of the environmental issues facing their communities.

For Further Information

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CARE Earth Keepers Partners

140 congregations representing 9 faiths across the Upper Peninsula of Michigan

25 regional pharmacies

19 local and state police departments

Northern Michigan University student Earth Keepers

Superior Watershed Partnership

Cedar Tree Institute

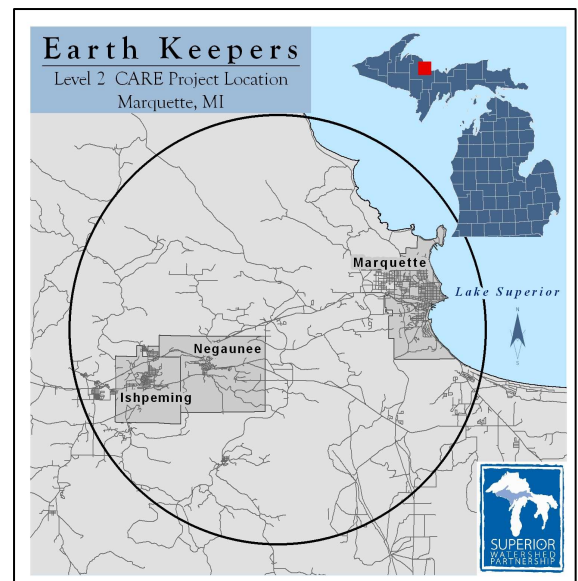
Keweenaw Bay Indian Community

The Nature Conservancy

Michigan Senator Carl Levin's Office

EPA Great Lakes National Program Office

Thrivent Financial





Implementing Solutions/Reducing Risks

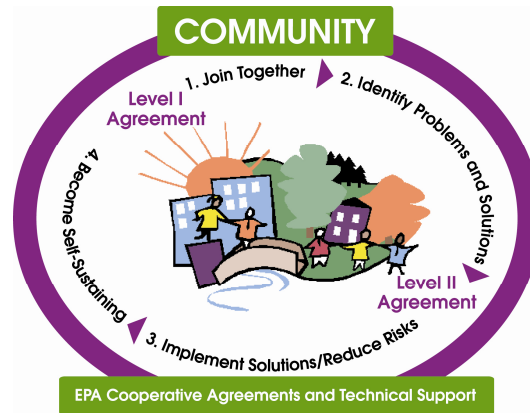
- Coordinated and held a one day (Earth Day) multi-site pharmaceutical collection to prevent unused medications from entering local waterways.
 - Within three hours, community residents turned in more than one ton of unwanted pills, powders, and liquid medicines, including an estimated \$500,000 worth of narcotics.
 - About 2,000 people dropped off drugs at nineteen churches in Marquette and the Upper Peninsula during the three hour event.
 - The pharmaceutical collection received local, national, and international media coverage and has received numerous requests for replication from communities across the country.
 - Fact sheets were developed and distributed to event participants - outlining proper disposal of medications when there is no collection or disposal location available.
- Coordinated and provided technical support to over 30 dentist offices in Marquette and Alger Counties resulting in voluntary installation of amalgam separators. Mercury amalgam separators prevent mercury from entering local waterways and provide enormous benefits to local water quality.
- Currently working to provide 140 churches and over 300 businesses across the Upper Peninsula with energy and water conservation information.
- Working with local units of governments to provide citizens with information and alternatives to burn barrel use.



The Earth Keepers 2007 pharmaceutical collection event was the third Upper Peninsula-wide clean sweep event; in past years they held record breaking events for discarded electronics and household hazardous waste.

Becoming Self Sustaining

The Earth Keeper project has a high likelihood for long term sustainability based on the high level of financial, technical and volunteer support from the many committed project partners. These stakeholders represent over 70% of the local community. Other partners of the Earth Keepers including representatives from the environmental sector, industry, government, human health, business, recreation, and academia further expand the ability of the Earth Keepers to involve the community, build support and sustain the project. In addition, the project has been used as model for other Great Lakes communities by the Great Lakes Mayors Initiative.



More About CARE

U.S. EPA's Community Action for a Renewed Environment (CARE) is a community-based, community-driven program to reduce risks from toxic pollutants in air, land and water. Under CARE, EPA issues grants to communities to 1) build a broad-based partnership; 2) identify a range of environmental problems and solutions; 3) take action to reduce risks; and 4) become self-sustaining. Level I projects (up to \$100,000) work on steps 1 and 2, while Level II projects (up to \$300,000) work on steps 3 & 4. West Oakland is a Level II project.