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West Michigan Environmental Action Council

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WMEAC IN WASHINGTON TO LOBBY FOR CLEAN AIR AND WATER

The West Michigan Environmental Action Council (WMEAC) announced today that Ken Sikkema, WMEAC executive director, will spend the entire week of February 22nd in Washington D.C. to urge members of Michigan's congressional delegation to resist recent attempts to weaken the Clean Air Act and Clean Water Act. Sikkema will leave for Washington on Monday evening and return on Friday after meeting individually with most members of the Michigan delegation, including Congressman Harold Sawyer and Senators Carl Levin and Don Riegle.

Two Michigan Congressmen, Representatives John Dingell (D-Dearborn) and Robert Traxler (D-Bay City) introduced amendments last December which critically weaken the Clean Air Act. Their legislation, H.R. 5252, dramatically reduces the health standards currently in the Clean Air Act, repeals most of the effective tools in the Act for achieving those health standards, and effectively repeals the program to conserve our remaining clean air resources. The legislation also fails to curtail a very serious acid rain problem.

At the same time, the Clean Water Act has come under attack. The Reagan administration has proposed recisions which reduce water

quality standards and postpone deadlines which would help make the nation's waters "fishable and swimmable."

Before departing for Washington, Sikkema said:

"The Clean Air Act and the Clean Water Act are two of the most important environmental protection statutes in existence. They are particularly important to Michigan for the simple reason that two of Michigan's strongest industries--agriculture and tourism--rely upon the quality of our natural resource base. Any reduction in air and water quality is a clear and certain threat to those very industries upon which we must depend for economic stability."

Sikkema continued by challenging the assumption that weakening the Clean Air Act will aid recovery of the nation's ailing automobile industry.

"The American auto industry is not in trouble because of the Clean Air Act," said Sikkema. "Japanese cars have to meet the same emission requirements as do American-built cars, and yet the Japanese cars are selling quite well in this country. Japanese industrial facilities must meet some of the stiffest anti-pollution requirements of anywhere in the world, and yet they are able to produce quality products at a lower cost than American industrial facilities."

"The Clean Air Act is simply not a major cause of the problems currently afflicting the American auto industry," Sikkema said. "To slow down or reverse the progress we have finally begun to make in cleaning up our nation's air would be both unwise and bad public policy."