

ENVIRONMENTAL LAW SECTION REPORT

Prepared by Charles E. Barbieri, Chair for the Environmental Law Section

Over the past year (2008-2009), the Environmental Law Section has focused on several specific goals. One goal was to develop a new subject matter committee that would focus on sustainability and climate change. The Section received a tremendous amount of interest in this new committee which is jointly chaired by George Curran and Courtney Goldberg. Over 70 persons have indicated an interest in this new committee. The committee helped arrange a seminar jointly sponsored by the Environmental Law Section and the Business Law Section of the State Bar to discuss climate change and sustainability developments in April 2009. That program was well attended.

A second goal of the Section was to examine ways to increase Section membership. This Section, like several others in the State Bar, has had a slight reduction in membership given the current economy. Last year, the Section passed a bylaw change to eliminate any dues requirement for student members. The Section also agreed to waive any dues for a period of time for individuals in the public sector who joined the Section. During this past year, the Section sponsored two gatherings for law students in the metropolitan Detroit and Lansing areas designed to attract new student members. The Section is also sponsoring a young professional social at the 2009 Air and Waste Management Association (AWMA) Conference which is being held in Detroit June 16-19, 2009. In addition, Dustin Ordway, who chairs the membership committee, has been studying steps to target participation of more attorneys in the public sector to join the Environmental Law Section.

A third goal of the Section was to continue the effort to complete the next edition of the widely popular Michigan Environmental Law Desk Book. Jeff Haynes and Eugene Smary, of the Section have served as editors for this new effort. These editors have established deadlines for outlines and text materials to ensure the completion of the Desk Book. The goal has been to have an online edition, which will have links to other resources and which will be easy to edit and to ultimately use.

Although not a specific goal of this year's Section, the Section has continued to sponsor the fall AWMA conference, which was held on the campus of Michigan State University in East Lansing. That event was well attended by members of the bar, governmental agency personnel, environmental consultants and other professionals. The Section plans on sponsoring a similar program this fall in 2009.

The Section's various subject matter committees on air, water, hazardous substances, brownfield and toxic torts have continued to meet and discuss timely topics. Education remains an important objective of the Environmental Law Section.

Section members also participated in a cultural exchange program with Filipino legal professionals, which traveled to the United States to learn more about different aspects of American law, including environmental law.

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