



2009
Annual *Report*

FISCAL YEAR OCTOBER 1, 2008 - SEPTEMBER 30, 2009



Letter from BOARD PRESIDENT

Greeting Friends:

On behalf of Freshwater Future and the Board of Directors, thank you for your faithful support and interest in our organization. Just like a butterfly leaving its cocoon and spreading its wings for the first time, our little project has transformed into a stable, respected, and independent organization that is making a difference in the Great Lakes region. It is because of those who have been helping and believing in our mission that we have been able to attain the level of success we are currently enjoying. We do not take that for granted.

Our economy did not make it easy to do what we needed to do this past year. But, anything truly worthwhile is never really easy, is it? If not for our loyal staff, strong communications, and outstanding leadership by our Executive Director, as well as a con-

centrated, focused, fundraising effort, we would not be where we are today. Since joining the Board of Directors I have had the pleasure of watching a truly remarkable transformation firsthand.

Over the last three years, we knew we needed to declare our mission loud and strong if we were going to become a force in the Great Lakes region. To do so, we launched a focused membership campaign and currently enjoy a membership that is more than four times larger than it was when we changed our name from Great Lakes Aquatic Habitat Network and Fund to Freshwater Future. Coupled with our membership drive, we launched an Advocate Mentor program that encouraged individuals to build skills and relationships in our Great Lakes community. Both of these efforts have helped to secure our brand and our profile is strong. Yet we know there is so much more we can do.

Our granting campaigns have continued to provide support to groups throughout our community.

Their stories are showing us that individuals, once trained and



Bonnie L. Danni

encouraged, can initiate change that will lead to the protection of our waters. By continuing to educate and connect citizens to decision makers our legislators are hearing about the Great Lakes region and its needs on a regular basis from many locations.

Please join me in celebrating this year's success as you read our annual report. Your support, whether financial or as a partner, has helped to make all we have done possible and if there is anything we have learned these last several months it is that we need each other and we need you if we are going to continue to do the "good work". Thank you for all you give. Thank you for believing in us. We are humbled and encouraged by your support.

Onward!

Bonnie L. Danni

Freshwater Future President

They say that time changes things,
but you actually have to change them
yourself. — Andy Warhol



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October 1, 2008 to September 30, 2009

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**THANK YOU TO THE
FOLLOWING WHO WORKED
IN 2008-2009:**

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Letter from EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Strategic change has always been a core value of Freshwater Future. The focus of our work to help people protect the Great Lakes requires change—changes in beliefs, attitudes, regulations and decisions that affect how we care for our precious water resources.

Every year I am amazed by the impact that community-based groups have in the Great Lakes region. It is at the community level where small changes reverberate to make a lasting difference. The actions of a few truly do have an impact. When people get together to take action to protect a wetland or reduce pollution that flows to our lakes and rivers, we all benefit from these changes.

Just like the needs of the Great Lakes and the rivers, lakes and wetlands that we work to protect and restore, Freshwater Future is changing strategically to expand our effectiveness and impact. In our third year as an independent organization, we are continuing to do what we do best—Help people make a difference, but we are doing it smarter and better. As we change, learn and grow, so do our programs that continue to offer financial resources, training and coaching opportunities, and networking



avenues. I am looking forward to what the future will bring, as Freshwater Future helps communities create change to make our ecosystems healthier and our communities better places to live.

Thank you for being an active and engaged member in your community. I appreciate what each of you do on an individual level and your support for Freshwater Future, so that we can spark action for more and more people and communities working to protect the waters in the Great Lakes region.

For the Health of the Great Lakes,

Jill M. Ryan
Executive Director

How wonderful it is that nobody need wait a single moment before starting to improve the world. — Anne Frank



Protecting Our Great Lakes: ONE COMMUNITY AT A TIME

It is what most nonprofit organizations are working toward—making changes that make our world, region, and communities better places.

At Freshwater Future, we are trying to create change that will result in a healthy Great Lakes ecosystem. There are many changes that must occur before this vision is achieved. These changes include improving wastewater treatment so sewage isn't dumped in our waters; restoring thousands of acres of wetlands to provide sustainable fisheries and habitat for wildlife; and treating pollution so our beaches are clean and open for swimming all summer. There has never been a more critical time for the Great Lakes. Leading scientists believe that the lakes are nearing the point of irreversible change.

To make such changes on an area as large as the Great Lakes region, many small changes must occur in a multitude of communities. We believe it is at the community level that changes have the biggest and most significant impact.

Freshwater Future is the only Great Lakes-wide organization who's mission is to support citizen action at the community level.



Freshwater Future staff: Cathy Brady, Office Manager; Ann Baughman, Associate Director; Jill Ryan, Executive Director; Cheryl Mendoza, Associate Director

When taken together these changes move us closer to our vision for the Great Lakes. Right now, there are thousands of efforts by individuals and small community groups working to protect the lakes, rivers, wetlands and drinking water in the Great Lakes region.

By definition, change: making something different, can be a difficult process. Working at the community level has special challenges—there are often barriers to gathering information and making community leaders comfortable with public participation. People with

dissenting opinions can become targets of anger and frustration; and passions can easily rise when issues arise in one's backyard.

As a result, these groups often need help, resources, expertise, and most often validation that what they do is important. Freshwater Future is the only Great Lakes-wide organization who's mission is to support citizen action at the community level. We help people protect and restore the waters in the Great Lakes. We help people connect to their decision makers and share their voices about the importance of clean water.



Freshwater Future Increases Success, Maintains Involvement, Protects the Waters of the Great Lakes

- Focus on community action groups and individuals, providing funding, technical assistance and access to a broad network of resources.
- Build confidence in individuals by affirming through our support that they can and do make a difference.
- Provide expertise to keep community action moving forward.
- Work hand-in-hand with community members.
- Recognize and respect the knowledge, efforts and abilities of local groups.

I don't want to save the world.
I don't even want to change the world.
My ambitions aren't nearly that high,
although maybe they should be. What I
do want to do is make a difference.
— James Taylor

In the last year alone, Freshwater Future services supported over 50 projects scattered throughout the Great Lakes states that resulted in improvements and protections all benefiting the Great Lakes region.



Utilizing passion and tenacity, Highway J Citizen's Group, a Freshwater Future grant recipient from Richfield, Wisconsin, has worked for more than 10 years to prevent environmentally-damaging road expansion projects, in order to protect groundwater, promote sound land use policies, and preserve the quality of life in the Kettle Moraine area of Wisconsin.

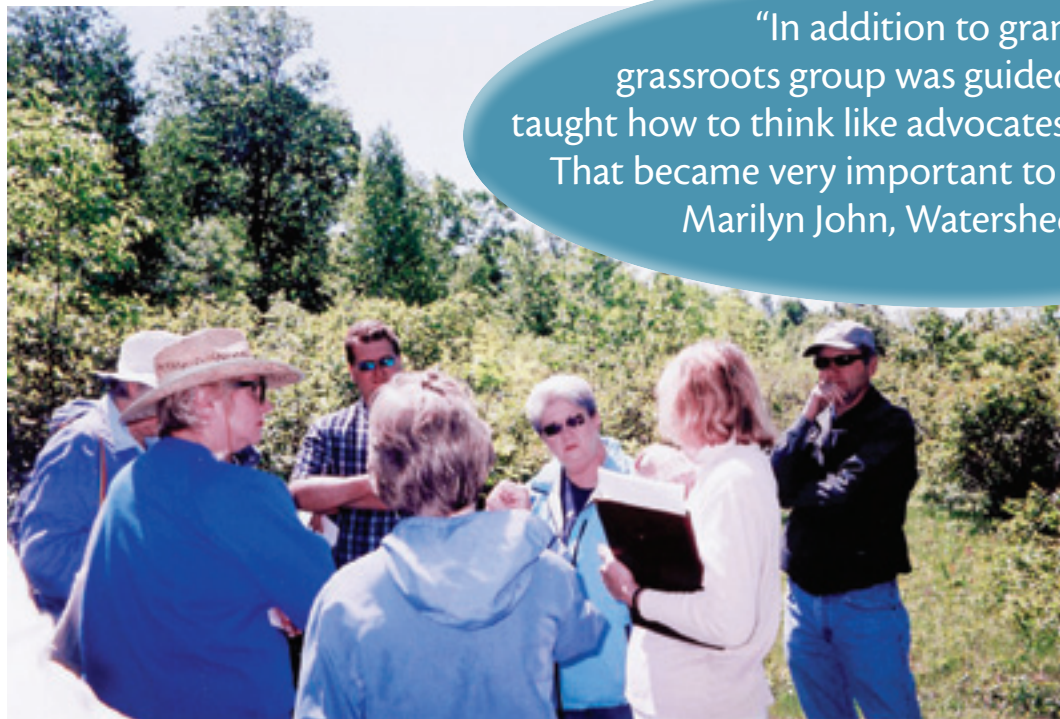


The Yellow Dog Watershed Preserve and Save the Wild UP in Marquette and Big Bay, Michigan, have been working to protect the waters in the Upper Peninsula from pollution from sulfide mines and have been helped by Freshwater Future's grants and consulting services. In 2009, they participated in our Walk, Paddle and Roll fundraising event to raise funds to support their efforts and give back to Freshwater Future so that we can help many more groups.

WETLANDS PROTECTED— Migratory Flyways Win Over Runways

WATERSHED WATCHERS, WEST BEND, WISCONSIN

“In addition to grants, our grassroots group was guided, consoled, and taught how to think like advocates by Freshwater Future. That became very important to our success,” shared Marilyn John, Watershed Watchers.



Marilyn John of Watershed Watchers, leads a tour for local officials to share wetland value.

In August 2009, a 258 acre wetland in West Bend, Wisconsin was protected from a proposed airport expansion that would have destroyed 150 acres containing nesting areas for great blue herons and sandhill cranes and diminished the functions and values of another 100 acres.

Watershed Watchers, a grassroots group that monitors and protects the north-

ern reaches of the Milwaukee River watershed, spearheaded the effort to protect this valuable wetland over the last 15 years.

A pivotal point in the project occurred in 2005 when the Federal Aviation Administration required a comprehensive Environmental Impact Study of the proposed airport expansion's natural resources and the purpose and

need for the expansion, among other issues. Marilyn John with Watershed Watchers contacted Freshwater Future to inquire if we knew of anyone who could help with their review of the Environmental Impact Study. Using our network of nearly 2,000 individuals and organizations, we sent out a

request asking if anyone could provide this assistance. At least six people offered their assistance to Watershed Watchers and the comments that Watershed Watchers submitted to the FAA through this process provided an excellent avenue for community participation in this decision.



Wetland Declared Provincially Significant

NIAGARA RIVER PROPERTY OWNER'S ASSOCIATION, STEVENSVILLE, ONTARIO

For over five years, the citizens involved in the Niagara River Property Owner's Association worked to protect a wetland that was destined to be destroyed for a golf course. Working through the Ontario Municipal Process they triumphed, proving that the wetland deserved the status as a Provincially Significant Wetland, which provides protections in Ontario.

"The Two Rivers Coalition is ready for action and has been actively partnering with other organizations and municipalities to raise awareness about water quality issues. As a new nonprofit, we have found Freshwater Future to be a critical partner in our successes through consultation, start-up funds and their network of watershed groups with which to share ideas." Dave Foerster, Two Rivers Coalition



Niagara River

"As every new obstacle rose to block our fight, we only had to phone Freshwater Future for support. Not only grant money but information packages, CD presentations, as well as personal interactions and learning at symposiums encouraged us to continue. Could we have won without Freshwater Future? No! They were there for us every step of the way." Serena Smith

WATER CLEANER— Phosphorus Ban

TWO RIVERS COALITION, MICHIGAN

In the winter of 2008, citizens in the Black and Paw Paw Rivers watersheds were interested in organizing a group to improve the water quality of their rivers. By summer, the Two Rivers Coalition had formed. One issue of interest was fertilizer impacts. Members and volunteers began educating county officials about the benefits of a phosphorus ban. Fertilizers are used on lawns to make the grass, healthy, lush and strong. Unfortunately, the nutrients found in the fertilizers also help to make plants found



Dave Foerster and Joe Parman, VanBuren County Drain Commissioner discuss phosphorus ban.

in our lakes and rivers grow healthy and lush too, often causing nuisance levels of algae and aquatic plants. By the fall, the County had adopted the phosphorus ban which included enforcement provisions to be implemented by the County Drain Commissioner. Dave Foerster, one of the founders of the Two Rivers Coalition shared that they were pleased to be able to help make changes in their community that will benefit the environment and the economy.



RIVER'S HEALTH IMPROVED—

BAD RIVER WATERSHED ASSOCIATION, WISCONSIN



Bad River Watershed Association

Every road that crosses a river or stream is a potential source of pollution and potential habitat problem. Culverts can make it impossible for fish to swim upstream and crossings become conduits for polluted runoff containing soil or sediments. In the Bad River Watershed in northern Wisconsin, the number of crossings and culverts was huge, with more than 1,100 crossings. Not to be daunted by a challenge, the Bad River Watershed Association received a grant from Freshwater Future to organize volunteers and set out to inventory the crossings, and prioritize which

ones needed restoration to restore fish passage and reduce sediment pollution. The project attracted much additional interest because it was scientifically sound and because it was based on collaboration between many agencies, from town road crews to state fish experts to the US Fish and Wildlife Service. To date more than 740 of the crossings have been inventoried and each year several culverts are replaced and runoff problems addressed. To date more than \$200,000 has been received to assist in this work.

“We recently embarked on a major effort to monitor the effects of restored stream crossing on fish,” says Michele Wheeler, Executive Director of Bad River Watershed Association. The Bad River Watershed Association has recently received a grant of over \$100,000 from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service as part of the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative to monitor the impacts on fish before and after culvert replacements.

“We recently embarked on a major effort to monitor the effects of restored stream crossing on fish,” says Michele Wheeler, Executive Director of Bad River Watershed Association.



GROUND WATER CONSERVED—

MICHIGAN CITIZENS FOR WATER CONSERVATION



Terry Swier

Nine years ago, **Terry Swier** dreamed of a retirement filled with playtime with her grandchildren and enjoyment of Thompson Lake in Michigan's Mecosta County. But when concerns arose about a bottling facility possibly impacting Thompson Lake and surrounding waters, Terry's retirement was replaced with a full time volunteer job. She was one of the founders of Michigan Citizens for Water Conservation that fought for ground water through the Circuit Court, the Court of Appeals and the Michigan Supreme Court. Raising over \$1 million to fund the effort, the 2000 members of Michigan Citizens for Water Conservation have accomplished much to protect ground water.

Michigan Citizens for Water Conservation settled with Nestlé Waters North America, Inc. that agreed to reduce the amount of water it can pump for its Ice Mountain bottled water in Mecosta, Michigan in July 2009. The modified injunction order reached by agreement ended the almost 9 year dispute and became a final and permanent injunction that reduces Nestlé's original intended water removal by 50 percent.

"This injunction ends the continuing legal battle of MCWC's struggle to protect Dead Stream, Thompson Lake and wetlands from excessive water extraction," Swier said. "Now it is time to turn to the task of assuring water remains owned by the public."

People Involved in Decision Making

What makes a democracy work? In our opinion it is when people are involved in decision making at all the local, state, and federal levels. At Freshwater Future, we engage our network of interested citizens and advocates and provide them with updates

on important policy initiatives, but more importantly we build a bridge between the policy and the on-the-ground community work that is so critical, giving a specific action our network can take to make a difference.

Over the past year alone:

- Sent out 17 Action Alerts providing opportunities for our network to take action to help the Great Lakes
- Regularly bridged the gap between federal decision makers and grass-roots activists
- Engaged citizens to comment on policy issues including: Invasive species legislation and Great Lakes Compact, plus more

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BUILDING LEADERS THROUGH OUR ADVOCATE MENTOR PROGRAM

In 2008, we launched our Advocate Mentor Program to address these issues by uniting engaged citizens from throughout the Basin, encouraging the exchange of proven advocacy methods, and fostering the advocates' passion for protecting water resources in their communities. More than 40 people have participated in the program to date.

By pairing our grant recipients with an experienced grassroots advocate the mentees find solidarity in learning that they are not alone in their efforts, avoiding common pitfalls, and completing their projects more efficiently.

Our mentors also benefit from participating by sharing their knowledge

"It has been a good program. I've enjoyed the talks and emails with my mentee. The program is a two way street—it provides benefits to both. I enjoyed sharing things that have worked and not worked for my group. I am benefiting from having a chance to help."



Cynthia Pryor,

and experiences, enhancing their leadership skills, and reenergizing them to work on their own community's project.

Cynthia Pryor, an Advocate Mentor from the Yellow Dog Watershed Preserve, shared the following about her experience in the program, "It has been a good program. I've enjoyed the talks and emails with my

mentee. The program is a two way street—it provides benefits to both. I enjoyed sharing things that have worked and not worked for my group. I am benefiting from having a chance to help."

Freshwater Future is proud of our work to make the Great Lakes region a better place. Our services to citizens and community groups results in measurable improvements and protections for our lakes, rivers, wetlands, and Great Lakes. People and communities getting involved and making a difference.

It is a privilege to live in a region so rich with water resources that are an international treasure.

Our world is changing every day. Freshwater Future is prepared to be adaptable and flexible to change and help others to make the changes we need for a healthier Great Lakes ecosystem.

AFTER MORE THAN 14 YEARS PROVIDING GRANTS TO GRASSROOTS ADVOCATES IN THE GREAT LAKES BASIN, FRESHWATER FUTURE HAS LEARNED THAT:

- Destruction and threats to our water resources will continue;
- Many of these threats are recurrent and similar across the region, and
- Grassroots advocates need opportunities to reenergize.

GRASSROOTS CITIZEN ADVOCATE AWARD—2009

Mary Jo Cullen

Once a teacher, always a teacher and Mary Jo Cullen has taught us many things—work hard for what you believe in; be creative; ask questions; ask for help; do not give up; and be nice. But most of all Mary Jo has taught us how to be great advocates for water and the environment. Freshwater Future was pleased to award the 2009 Grassroots Citizen Advocate Award to Mary Jo Cullen for her dedication and work to protect the Great Lakes.

As a citizen advocate, Mary Jo has helped Citizens Concerned for Michipicoten Bay's effort to protect the largest undeveloped stretch of Lake Superior from an aggregate mining project. Mary Jo's energy and enthusiasm helped draw international attention and involvement of artists, authors, and famous leaders. Her

knowledge and expertise working on issues around Lake Superior also lead her to share her skills with Gravel Watch Ontario. There she served on the Board and helped coordinate speakers for their events.

Freshwater Future was fortunate to have Mary Jo serve on our Board of Directors for three years, serving two years as the Fundraising Committee Chair. There she has shared her leadership skills and shined as a fundraiser—helping us transition to an independent organization with an active Board and solid financials.

As a teacher, Mary Jo taught French and special education. As an advocate, she has taught people around Lake Superior and Lake Ontario about how we can all play a role in protecting these Great Lakes. An avid



Mary Jo Cullen, an avid kayaker has circumnavigated Lake Superior.

paddler (both kayak and canoe), we thank Mary Jo for her service and hope her years ahead are filled with many wonderful paddling adventures on the Great Lakes.

It is not the strongest of the
species that survives, nor the most intelligent,
but the one most responsive to change.

— Charles Darwin

Fiscal Year 2008-2009 FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS

Fiscal Year 2008-2009 Income: \$324,688		Fiscal Year 2008-2009 Expenses: \$318,696	
Grants	\$252,371	Grants	\$94,408
Contributions	\$53,993	Publications	\$41,282
Program Fees	\$7,549	Networking	\$80,316
Special Events	\$7,249	Strategy Assistance	\$55,814
Investments or Interest	\$3,526	General & Admin	\$21,196
		Fundraising	\$25,680

Freshwater Future's reviewed financial statement was prepared by Mason & Kammerman, P.C., Certified Public Accountants. As a publicly ca of our exemption application (Form 1023) and our two most recently filed annual information returns (Federal 990) are available for review upon request. Freshwater Future is a participating member in Guide Star.



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Frey Foundation
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Petoskey-Harbor Springs Area
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Watersheds
Citizens Concerned for
Michipicoten Bay
CROP PLUS
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**In Honor of Kristina Clark's
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Save Lake Superior Association
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Our donor list includes the names of those who made a gift to Freshwater Future between October 1, 2008 and September 30, 2009. All our donors are important to us and we apologize for any errors or omissions. Please contact our office with corrections.



FRESHWATER FUTURE: HELPING PEOPLE PROTECT THE GREAT LAKES

The Great Lakes are an international treasure like no other in the world—and they are at risk. Freshwater Future works to ensure the health of the Great Lakes for our children, grandchildren and future generations. We are dedicated to the belief that individuals can and do make a difference.

Freshwater Future builds effective community-based initiatives to protect and restore the water quality of the Great Lakes basin. Freshwater Future is a powerful resource investing in the people and communities caring for our Great Lakes waters. Over the past 14 years, we have:

- Helped thousands of community-based groups and individuals
- Provided over \$1 million in grants
- Connected citizens to resources and each other, building a Great Lakes community
- Provided one-on-one assistance to build leadership skills for citizens and community-based groups
- Distributed thousands of locally targeted resource toolkits and other materials

FRESHWATER FUTURE BELIEVES THAT:

- Effective citizen engagement improves the health of our communities
- Citizens closest to the issues have the knowledge and ability to make a difference
- Positive change at the local level is important for protecting our resources