



# Voices freshwater

Ensuring the Healthy Future of Our Waters

CHRISTINA CARSON | LAKE SUPERIOR, PROVINCIAL PARK

2016 Series, Issue One

## IN THIS ISSUE

This issue highlights extraordinary groups and individuals—our Freshwater Heroes—who have gone above and beyond to protect what they hold dear—our waters. Freshwater Future is honored to recognize these individuals and organizations with our Freshwater Hero awards. With the following articles and highlights we hope you enjoy learning about their efforts across the region, as well as gain inspiration to help us keep the Great Lakes region healthy.

## Our Individual Roles in the Democratic Process

by Jill Ryan



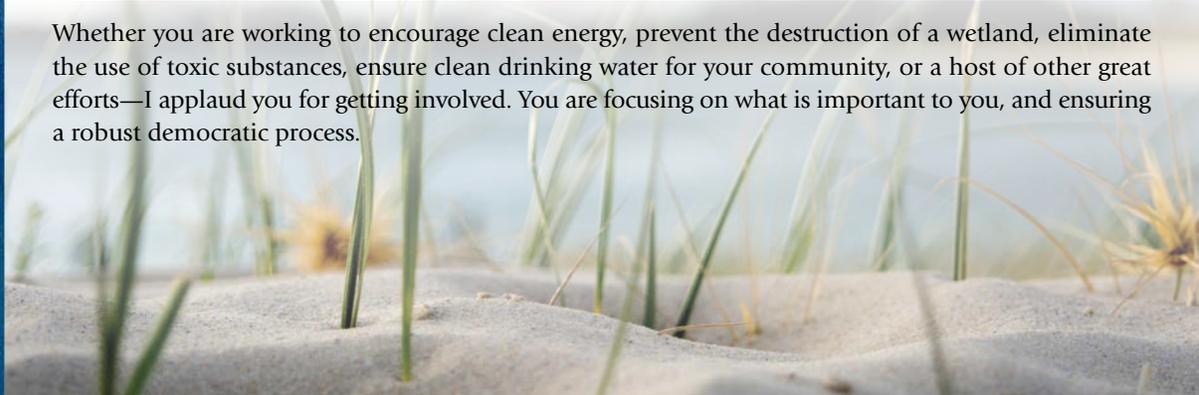
While there is a lot of rhetoric today about our country and our democratic process of government—how often do we stop and think about how that process works in our lives? What did Abraham Lincoln mean when he described government as “of the people, by the people and for the people?” In my opinion, ‘of the people’ means those elected are ordinary citizens, ‘by the people’ means regular people are responsible for selecting the elected officials through their votes, and ‘for the people’ signals that the government’s sole responsibility is to benefit its residents. From individual local decisions to Congressional decisions that impact the entire country, citizen involvement is critical to make this unique form of government work.

I see this playing out in our communities every day. The more we, as individuals, educate ourselves regarding issues that are important to us and voice our opinions and use our votes through the process, the better our system works. Many of you reading this are exactly the type of people who remind me every day of the value of participation in our system. You participate in public meetings in your community; you vote for those you believe best represent your values and you let them know how their decisions impact you and your community; when you see that a project or proposal might not be a benefit to the community, you take action to try to make it better. **You get involved.**

Individual participation is truly what makes the democratic process work. Thousands of decisions are made every day at the local level that impact how our land, water, air and other resources will be used or preserved. Without individuals participating in those decision-making processes, elected officials may hear only from the company or proponent behind the project. Individuals with local knowledge of how that project may impact the community, its residents and resources are therefore critical in ensuring important information and voices are at the table.

This edition of Freshwater Voices highlights some of these motivated and engaged people who have gone outside of their comfort zone to participate and work for what they hold dear. Without people like these amazing Freshwater Heroes, our communities, our states/provinces and our country would suffer not only by losing important community resources, but also from less robust democratic participation.

Whether you are working to encourage clean energy, prevent the destruction of a wetland, eliminate the use of toxic substances, ensure clean drinking water for your community, or a host of other great efforts—I applaud you for getting involved. You are focusing on what is important to you, and ensuring a robust democratic process.





Freshwater Voices is a joint production of Freshwater Future, a 501 (c) (3) nonprofit organization and Freshwater Future Canada, a registered Canadian charity.

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# Ontario Water Centre Community Organization



*Vision for ClearWater Farm*

Ten years ago, Annabel Slight and Jane Meredith took a canoe trip through some weedy waters. Little did they know the adventure they were embarking on.

Soon after, the two formed “Ladies of the Lake,” an impactful group of over 100 women championing Lake Simcoe’s return to health. After great success with fundraising and innovative projects to engage citizens, the Ladies turned their attention to an inspiring new educational initiative, the Ontario Water Centre.

Freshwater Future had the pleasure of working with the “Ladies” as they prepared for this transition. Through our Insight Services, we were able to provide organizational support as they moved towards becoming a new charitable entity.

The Ontario Water Centre is about advancing water thinking—including encouraging people to “think” like water. In its short history it has seen many successes. ReWilding Lake Simcoe has brought over a million dollars to clean-up and restoration, the award-winning kids book “Do Fish Fart?” is engaging kids, and local water festivals and online mapping have engaged people of all ages. Their flagship project, the ClearWater Farm, promises to connect water innovation, local food and healthy communities.

Freshwater Future is pleased to present the Ontario Water Centre with a Freshwater Hero Award, truly demonstrating the power of individuals to change the world—or in this case, their lake!

## FRESHWATER HERO AWARDS



### Kristy Meyer Past Freshwater Future Board Member and President

For over three years, Kristy has been a tireless champion for Freshwater Future as the President of our Board of Directors. We've benefited greatly from Kristy's passion and dedication in many ways. She developed a process for evaluation and improvement of the board's effectiveness, improved the way we recruit and engage new board members, and led the organization's renewal through a strategic planning process. Under Kristy's leadership, the Board has grown and developed into a sophisticated structure that supports the growth of Freshwater Future. In her job at the Ohio Environmental Council, Kristy and her team

are at the heart of the fight against toxic algal blooms. They are busy proposing solutions, educating residents, and convincing elected officials to take action to restore the health of Lake Erie.

Kristy also works on a number of the other issues we hold dear, including keeping invasive Asian carp out of the Great Lakes, protecting water supplies under the Great Lakes Compact, and ensuring ongoing financial support for the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative.

No wonder Kristy is up with the sun each morning. We will miss her on the board but look forward to working with her on all things Great Lakes.



### Deborah Dorsey Past Freshwater Future Board Member

Deborah Dorsey originally became involved in her Detroit neighborhood group, West Grand Boulevard Collaborative (WGBC), simply because she wanted to make her community a safer, cleaner and a nicer place to live. Little did she know it would turn into a career change. Soon after Deb got involved with WGBC, she found herself invited by her local Sierra Club representative to Freshwater Future's Climate Symposium. She was hesitant—what did her goals for her neighborhood have to do with climate change? As it turns out, a lot! Deborah took what she learned and incorporated it into a project at her local library. WGBC built a children's

reading garden with rain garden features that will help their neighborhood be better prepared for the impacts of climate change such as bigger storms, flooding, and property damage.

Deborah was also recruited to and joined the Freshwater Future board where her willingness to help, give a valued opinion, fundraise through our Walk, Paddle and Roll event, and promote our efforts have all been critical to our success.

One of Deborah's most valued strengths is her vision and energy for what is next—Deborah is currently pursuing a master's degree in nonprofit management. We know Deborah will continue to make a difference in her neighborhood, community, and anywhere she goes!



### Nancy Staley Freshwater Future Volunteer

"I need a hug." This is always the first thing you hear when you work with Nancy Staley. Nancy started volunteering with Freshwater Future in 2014, and although it has been a few short years, she has put in countless hours helping prepare mailings with her beautiful handwriting and attention to detail. She comes early, stays late, and always gets a lot of work done! Nancy's smile, hugs, and tireless work ethic remind us that there is room in every day for both hard work and laughs.

As a native of Charlevoix, MI and an avid volunteer, Nancy has built a great relationship with other nonprofits in the community of Freshwater Future's home office in Northern Michigan—so much so that we try to coordinate our mailings so we can snag her whenever she is available. Her work, and the work of volunteers, are integral to grassroots work.

Hugs for many more years to come!



RAY DUMAS | ISLE ROYALE NATIONAL PARK | FLICKR.COM

## FRESHWATER HERO AWARDS

### Farms Not Factories Community Organization

**F**arms Not Factories formed in response to a proposed Concentrated Animal Feeding Operation (CAFO) in their community of Bayfield, Wisconsin. This farm proposes to raise 26,000 hogs...in other words, it would produce between 6.5 and 9 million gallons of toxic liquid manure every year. This is roughly the same amount of excrement as a community of 50,000 people—but unlike human waste, this waste isn't treated. It would be the biggest pig industrial farm in the state.

As a volunteer organization, Farms Not Factories works tirelessly to learn from experts and to research threats to their air, water, human health, and way of life. By bringing this information to people in the



RICHARD HURD | RURAL WISCONSIN COUNTRYSIDE | FLICKR.COM

community and organizing with others who share their concerns, this group has created a powerful movement that is effectively capturing the attention of decision-makers.

This movement isn't giving up until they are assured the way of life for their Lake Superior community, which depends on clean air and water, is protected from these grave threats. For that, we congratulate Farms not Factories for their work!

### Lee Willbanks Citizen Advocate



**W**ho can fill a conference room with over 100 people from two countries, on a Saturday...in New York's North Country... each and every February... to talk about a river?

Lee Willbanks can.

He brings these people face to face with river champions that range from fourth graders sharing their experiences on the water, to leading scientific experts, to the policy makers involved in big decisions about the health of their cherished St. Lawrence.

In his dual roles as Executive Director of Save the River and Upper St. Lawrence Riverkeeper, Lee leads a small but mighty team dedicated to protecting the massive river that runs past the door of their home base in Clayton, NY.

From on-the-water monitoring and restoration efforts, to educating the next generation of river champions, to his persistent and passionate advocacy on complex policy issues like aquatic invasive species



and regulation of water levels, you can trust that Lee is there, standing up for the St. Lawrence, each and every day.

Should you find yourself on the shores of the St. Lawrence wondering: Who is watching out for the river? Who is listening to the river? Who is providing a voice for the river?

Take comfort in knowing that Lee Willbanks is. For that, we are both lucky and grateful.



PETE BEAUMONT | LAKE HURON, IPPERWASH BEACH, ONTARIO | FLICKR.COM



## WaterLegacy Community Organization

**W**aterLegacy is a grassroots citizens' group formed in response to the threat of what would be the first sulfide mine proposed in the State of Minnesota.

This group is leading efforts to protect land in the Superior National Forest, adjacent to the Boundary Waters. They are lands that are designated as High Biological Diversity and on which Native American tribes have rights to hunt, fish and gather reserved under treaties. The proposed sulfide mine by PolyMet would harm endangered and threatened species and would conflict with federal fiduciary responsibilities to tribes as well as state and federal statutes, regulations and policies.

In response, WaterLegacy has been vigilantly working to educate the public and media. As a result, they are changing the one-sided conversation that was undermining their communities' economic and environmental sustainability.

WaterLegacy is also a leader in advocacy efforts to state and federal agencies, bring together groups from around the state and region



*Across the country sulfide mining has been polluting surface and/or groundwater with acid mine drainage, sulfuric acid and/or toxic metals.*

to create a powerful impact. They have consistently brought solid, scientific and legal information to decision makers that is resulting in better protections for area waters. The Great Lakes Basin is lucky to have such hard working advocates!



## Bonnie Danni Past Freshwater Future Staff and Board

**B**onnie Danni has been a heartfelt supporter of Freshwater Future for almost 16 years. She has been President of our board, helped improve and maintain our accounting systems as a volunteer, became our first monthly major donor, and has played a critical role as Financial Manager on our staff. She has helped with all of this, while always, always, always having a smile on her face and encouraging words to share.

In addition, Bonnie has an amazing sense of stewardship for our Great Lakes, almost radiating a sense of love and caring for these amazing waters. She is a problem solver, a whiz with numbers, has a generous heart that shines through her work and support of Freshwater Future—all descriptors that pop to mind when one thinks of Bonnie's personality and talents.

Freshwater Future is fortunate to have such a dedicated supporter, who has helped us grow and mature in a multitude of ways, and continues to share herself with us for the good of our Freshwater Future.



RANDY.MCROBERTS | MACKINAC ISLAND | FLICKR.COM

**Want to help**  
Freshwater  
Future's *efforts*  
**to protect YOUR**  
**Great Lakes??**  
*Here's what*  
**you can do:**

- Sign up for email alerts and newsletters on our website—we'll send you information and updates on the issues that are important to you.
- Follow us on Facebook and Twitter.
- Make a donation to support our work in helping community groups protect their local waters.
- If new threats to area waters come up in your community, let us know about it!

## You Could Be the Next Freshwater Hero

**A**re you inspired? Hard not to be after reading about the amazing Freshwater Heroes who are working to protect our beloved Great Lakes waters. You might be thinking... What can I do in the face of all these challenges? I'm not a biologist, or politician, or lobbyist... I don't have expertise in policy, or science, or planning... what can I possibly do?

Rest assured, each of the Freshwater Heroes profiled in this issue and many others felt exactly the same way when they started out. Most people don't come to the table with expertise and knowledge—they're librarians, cooks, teachers, accountants, stay at home parents, etc... What they have in common is passion to protect the places they love!

And we bet you do too. If you're reading this, you care. So take the next step. Find out what's happening in your local community and reach out to community groups or other individuals who are working to protect your community's lakes, rivers, streams and more... If you can spare a bit of time or money, you can make a difference to your local waters.

Not sure where to start? Drop us a note or give us a call and we'll connect you with a group working hard to keep our waters in the Great Lakes region clean and healthy.

“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has.”

*Margaret Mead*



JOANNA GILKESON/USFWS | FLICKR.COM

Lake Superior intersects with Pendills Creek in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan.

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# New Year, New Funding Opportunities

## What types of funds are available from Freshwater Future this year?

### Project Grants:

Project Grants provide funds for grassroots project expenses that promote water resource protection and restoration. Awards range from \$500 to \$3,500(USD).  
Grant Deadline: April 15, 2016

### Insight Grants:

Insight Grant awards range from \$500 to \$3,000(USD) in value and are used for improving organizational effectiveness of grassroots organizations through customized trainings and coaching with Freshwater Future.

### Special Opportunity Grants:

Special Opportunity grants, otherwise known as "emergency grants" are awards up to \$500 for project needs that fall outside of our Project Grant cycles.

### Healing Our Waters Grants:

HOW grants provide funds to aid in the development of restoration based Great Lakes Restoration Initiative and other federal grant applications and projects. Awards from \$5,000 to \$15,000(USD)

Visit [freshwaterfuture.org](http://freshwaterfuture.org) to learn more, or call us at 231-348-8200

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