



Voices freshwater

JOSH GRENIER | PICTURED ROCKS | FLICKR.COM

2017 Series, Issue One

IN THIS ISSUE

In this issue we honor people and organizations in the Great Lakes Region who devote themselves to making the Great Lakes Great.

Wanted: Heroes

Heroes are defined as people admired for great or brave acts or fine qualities. People who are greatly admired. People willing to take action to benefit the greater good.



We all need heroes. Who is one of your heroes?

Just thinking about our heroes can elevate our spirits. It reminds us of the good in people and inspires us to be better, helping us recognize qualities we want to develop. Heroes give us hope, they continue to focus on righting wrongs and bringing light to some of the problems in our world. Heroes, of course, solve problems and often bring justice.

This year's Freshwater Heroes include people and organizations doing heroic work to improve the health of our waters and communities.

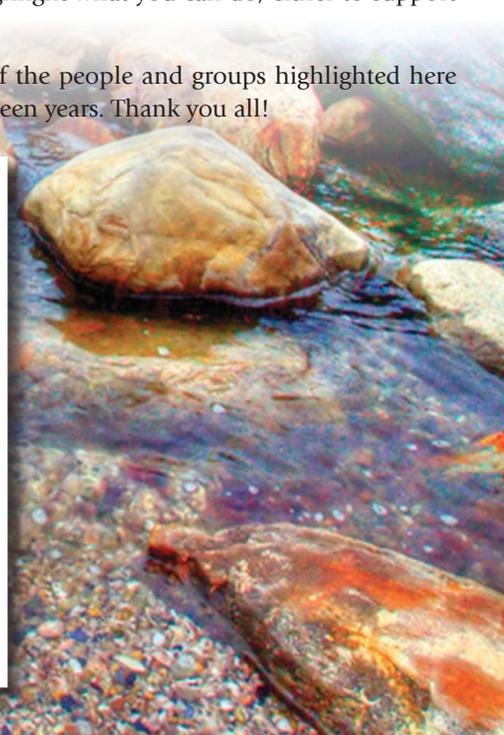
We are motivated to action by Front 40 and the Wellington Water Watchers, who have been fighting massive companies for years in an effort to protect the waters of their communities. We are grateful to Juani Olivares, who has been quietly but powerfully advocating for and supporting her community in Flint, Michigan. We are encouraged by Hank Saunders, and her work with the League of Women Voters to remind us that democracy is not a spectator sport. We are inspired by John Jackson, and his years of tireless service to ensure our voices are heard on Great Lakes issues. We are indebted to Gary Belan for the passion he has shared with us in his time on our board.

Read on to learn more about the great work of this year's Freshwater Heroes. They will no doubt inspire you, as they have us, to get involved—at the end of each article we highlight what you can do, either to support them in their work, or to get involved in your own community.

From a personal perspective, I am especially thankful for each of the people and groups highlighted here because they have all inspired me in my work over the past seventeen years. Thank you all!



ERIC ANDRE | APOSTLE ISLANDS SUNSET





GARY J. WOOD | WELLINGTON COUNTY, ONTARIO | FLICKR.COM



Wellington Water Watchers Community Organization

One can hardly know about the bottled water issue in Ontario without coming across Wellington Water Watchers.

Founded by long-time water advocate Mike Nagy, Wellington Water Watchers has been a key leader in Canada’s fight against bottled water—although Mike prefers the term “packaged water” since water now comes in all sorts of containers. The group’s passion comes from a very personal place—the need to protect their community’s source of drinking water.

What makes the Wellington Water Watchers such an effective Freshwater Hero is their strong handle on the technical aspects of the issue—which means everyone—from government to media—often want to talk to them. The group’s creativity, passion, and bravery in the face of opposition, makes them one of Canada’s great water champions, and Freshwater Future is thrilled to recognize them as a Freshwater Hero.



Wellington Water Watchers Team

WATER FOR SALE Both Sides of the Border

In Wellington County, where the Wellington Water Watchers work, proposals from Nestlé Waters North America, Inc. (Nestlé Waters) to bottle water raise concerns from their group and others. Most recently, in response to Nestlé Waters recent efforts to out bid the town of Aberfoyle for the rights to the Middlebrook well.

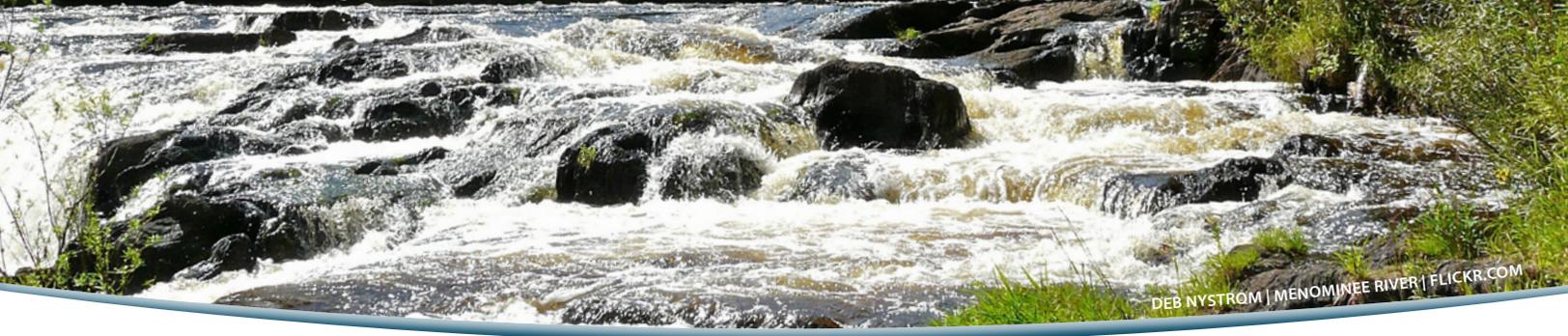
However, Nestlé Waters isn’t the only company taking water from the Great Lakes region and bottling it. In an attempt to address concerns over bottled water in Ontario, the provincial government has **taken steps to address all water bottling.** In a follow-up to their December announcement of a 2-year ban on new water bottling facilities, the Ontario government recently proposed an increase to the price water-bottling companies pay for the water they take from \$3.71 per million liters to \$503.71 per million litres. Environmental groups in Ontario are divided in their response—some see it as a step in the right direction towards improving the way we value water; others are calling for an all-out ban on bottling and the selling of water for profit.

In the United States, Nestlé Waters is proposing to more than double the amount of water they are taking at their White Pine Springs Site in Ewart, Michigan—an amount that could damage area wetlands and protected plant and animal species.

In 2009, Michigan Citizens for Water Conservation (MCWC) ended a ten-year battle with Nestlé Waters that reduced the amount of water being pumped so that nearby wetlands and streams would not be harmed. However, nearby, Nestlé Waters has now revived plans to increase their pumping, which would take up to 400 gallons of water per minute from aquifers that feed local streams and flow into Lake Michigan.

Analysis by the Great Lakes Environmental Law Center suggests that the information Nestlé Waters presented with their permit application is inadequate, and that there could be harmful impacts to area’s wetlands and protected species.

HOW YOU CAN HELP: Are there other issues like this happening in the Great Lakes that you think are important? Freshwater Future wants to know what water issues stand out to you. Let us know at bit.ly/FFInterest



DEB NYSTROM | MENOMINEE RIVER | FLICKR.COM



Front 40 Community Organization

Have you ever received shocking news that left you with that horrible gut-wrenching feeling in your stomach?

The founders of Front 40, a grassroots organization in Menominee County, Michigan, had that feeling when they found out that a mining company had leased thousands of acres of state-owned minerals on the shores of the Menominee River.

Local residents responded by organizing Front 40, an environmental group dedicated to ensuring that metallic sulfide mining operations are not allowed to adversely impact our rivers, lakes, groundwater and lands. The Front 40 name is in direct response to the “Back Forty” venture that was created by the mining interests.

Front 40 has played a critical role in creating public awareness of mining exploration currently taking place in Menominee County. They have informed citizens and elected officials of the reality of community economic issues typically involved with mining operations.

Front 40’s leadership on mining issues has resulted in several municipal resolutions against the Back Forty mine and increased understanding of the threats to water resources from open pit sulfide mining. Freshwater Future is pleased to present Front 40 with a Freshwater Hero Award for their work to prevent waters from being impacted from mining development.



Members of Front 40 work to protect their water.

Mining: A Quick Overview of the Impacts and Threats in Our Region

The Back Forty project is just one example of the increasing worldwide demand and value of copper and other minerals that is contributing to a boom of mineral exploration and development in the Great Lakes region. Freshwater Future’s followers are most likely aware that we are concerned about the impact mining has on our freshwaters—both surface and ground.

Mining in the northern sections of the Great Lakes is often referred to as hardrock mining. Hardrock mining involves excavating the rock, followed by crushing and processing it, usually with chemicals such as cyanide to remove the minerals. The rocks also contain sulfide, which once exposed to air and water produces toxic acid drainage. Mining can also result in pollution by other toxic heavy metals such as mercury.

There has yet to be a mine in sulfide ore (the rock with sulfide in it)

that hasn’t resulted in ecological damage and pollution to water resources. According to the U.S. EPA, mining and mineral processing facilities generate the most toxic and hazardous waste than any other industry. One of the challenges of cleaning up mining waste is that the cleanups can last more than 40 years or in perpetuity—often resulting in the government and taxpayers assuming the liability and costs.

The environmental damages are just one of the impacts of these mining operations—there are often impacts on tribal rights and interests where mines are located near traditional grounds and there are considerable negative impacts to local tourism where communities depend on visitors enjoying scenic, natural or recreational areas that are decimated by mining.

WHAT YOU CAN DO Freshwater Future understands that the mining process in the Great Lakes, and everywhere, is long and complicated. If you’d like to find out more about the research behind this article, you can find it on our site here: freshwaterfuture.org/mining-article2017-resources

Let us know if you need help finding more information like this.



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San Juana “Juani” Olivares Community Advocate

When the Flint water crisis first started, San Juana Olivares, or Juani as most know her, realized that the Hispanic and Latino community in Flint would need help.

At the time, she was the Executive Director of the Hispanic Technology and Community Center, but started to volunteer for the Genesee County Hispanic and Latino Collaborative. She jumped right in to help Spanish-speaking residents of Flint be more aware of the dangerously high levels of lead in the water supply and where to get safe water.

Now Juani is the President & CEO of the Genesee County Hispanic and Latino Collaborative (GCHLC). Juani’s knowledge of the needs of her community, combined with a resolve to make a difference, have led to GCHLC becoming a hub of activities, educational programming, social services, water and filter pick up location, a food pantry and health fairs.

Last fall, Juani accompanied a delegation to Washington, DC to lobby Congress to reauthorize and bolster national infrastructure funds like the Drinking Water State Revolving Fund and the Water Resources and Development Act.

Freshwater Future is thrilled to name Juani as a Freshwater Hero for 2017.



All About Water Steering Committee (L-R): Sue Sells, Mildred Robbins, Erma Leaphart, San Juana Olivares, Melissa Mays, Simone Lightfoot, Khalil Ligon, Jill Ryan, Mike Harris, Monica Lewis Patrick, Hilliard Hampton

DRINKING WATER INFRASTRUCTURE Many Challenges for Great Lakes Cities

The Flint Water Crisis and water shutoffs in Detroit have opened our eyes to the many challenges facing public water supplies of our communities. Last year, Freshwater Future committed to working on this issue and hired Hilliard Hampton to direct this work using our approach of collaboration, citizen knowledge and community connection to find solutions.

Addressing a big problem like drinking water infrastructure is going to take a lot of people and many different solutions. The natural place to start was a conversation with local activists that have demonstrated a deep level of expertise and understanding. *A group of these community leaders from Detroit and Flint, (including Juani Olivares) organized a meeting along with Freshwater Future staff to get the conversation going about water infrastructure, quality, conservation, and affordability.*

Over 90 dedicated activists, lawyers, community organizers, funders, and leaders participated in the meeting in February and made important progress on relationship building and identifying next steps.

Participants identified an urgency to get to actions and solutions, that water and environmental efforts are community centered, and that leadership roles are deliberately created for local and underrepresented communities.

The Steering Committee continues to meet and share ideas. With the help of our Associate Director for Urban Programs, Hilliard Hampton, we’ll continue to host a series of roundtable conversations and opportunities for information sharing through 2017. If you want to know more, please contact Hilliard at hilliard@freshwaterfuture.org.

Thanks to the Erb Family Foundation and the C.S. Mott Foundation for funding support for the gathering.

WHAT YOU CAN DO: If you would like to participate on issues pertaining to public water supply in urban areas, contact Hilliard Hampton hilliard@freshwaterfuture.org or (313) 516-8821



FRESHWATER HERO AWARDS



Hank Saunders Citizen Advocate

Anywhere Henrietta “Hank” Saunders goes she is sure to find a long-lost friend. It is her kind spirit, combined with her dedication to the environment and her commitment as an inveterate volunteer, that makes Hank deserving of a Freshwater Hero Award.

As a retired financial services professional, she has shared her skills as an analyst with a number of nonprofits in the Chicago area and even at the national level as the treasurer of the National League of Women Voters. At Freshwater Future, we have had the pleasure of working with

Hank in her role as Treasurer of the Lake Michigan Chapter of League of Women Voters and Faith in Place. Hank currently serves as the treasurer for the national League of Women Voters.

Hank’s positive energy and can-do attitude is inspirational. She “walks the talk” of helping the environment by making her home energy efficient and even having her garden certified as native! Hank embodies the League of Women Voters ethos that democracy is not a spectator sport, and she shows it through her work to involve, include, and engage people in so many efforts.

Exercise Your Rights

We always hear about the rights of democracy, but the major responsibility of it is participation. ~Wynton Marsalis

We can all learn from Hank’s example, by getting involved and participating in our democracy. Civic engagement is a fundamental value of all the work Freshwater Future does. It is at the core of how change happens and our communities improve. There are a number of ways you can get involved...

GET INFORMED: Just like the “Couch to 5K” running guides, we provide you some easy ways to help transition from the viewer to the player—at least for water resource issues! One of the easiest ways you can up your involvement is to make sure you are signed up to get our emails. Visit us at freshwaterfuture.org to sign up.

EDUCATE: Now is the time to educate our elected officials at every level—local, state, and federal—to provide them with quality information to guide their decision making. What water resource issue are you most concerned about? Wetlands? Asian carp? Climate change? Algae? You can let your elected officials know about your concerns.

LOBBY: What exactly is lobbying? Asking your elected officials to vote on a certain piece of legislation. As a citizen, you have the right to do this. If you believe they should vote a certain way or know how you feel—tell them with a phone call, email, or letter.

On topics related to water, we provide opportunities for you to connect with your elected officials—go to our website for opportunities to take action and make your voice heard.

VOTE: This one may seem like the most obvious. However, it is important to remember that we are fortunate in the US and Canada to have the freedom to vote. It is one of our greatest civil liberties and an important part of the equation of a democracy. Voting is the simplest and easiest way to participate in your community, plus after you vote you can proudly wear your “I Voted” sticker.

VOLUNTEER AND GET INVOLVED IN LOCAL GROUPS: You and your friends and neighbors know what issues are the most important for your community. Is there a local group working on it, do you have a skill you can share to help them address the problem? Lending your time is a powerful to effect change in your community.



Gary Belan Past Board Member

Gary Belan understands the importance of working on water issues at all levels—from national and international groups to local watershed advocates. Freshwater Future has benefited from his knowledge and perspective, and are grateful for the years of service he has given to our organization. For six years Gary has been on one or both of the boards of Freshwater Future and Freshwater Future Canada. As Senior Director at American Rivers, Gary has brought valuable insight about the issues facing organizations across the Great Lakes, federal policy, watershed politics, and green infrastructure. We wish Gary luck as he continues to work on rivers and use his passion to support groups and citizens in their fight to protect their waters. Thank you Gary for being an amazing Freshwater Hero!



John Jackson Citizen Advocate

John Jackson is a passionate leader who has been tirelessly advancing public engagement throughout the Great Lakes—since before “engagement” was a buzzword! Combining an extraordinary depth of knowledge about the Great Lakes with passion and a strategic vision for binational collaboration, John has a remarkable ability to influence Great Lakes policies and issues.

For many years, John’s work was focused through Great Lakes United (GLU)—which he described as an international coalition of over 140 groups with some 100,000 diverse individuals, all working to protect the basin’s health and beauty. Today, John continues to dedicate his time to Great Lakes issues, with a particular focus on the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement and engaging stakeholders and the public in caring for our shared waters.

We are grateful for John’s unparalleled passion, contributions and dedication, and are pleased to present him with a Freshwater Hero award.

In Memoriam



Dan McDermott

Freshwater Future honours Dan McDermott who sadly passed away in September 2016. He was most recently the Director of the **Ontario Chapter of Sierra Club.**

Dan dedicated his life and career to protecting the environment. He tirelessly and bravely fought for our air and water. He never feared taking on even the toughest of opponents, including the nuclear and coal industries.

Dan was a mentor to many young activists. He inspired generations through his realistic but optimistic approach. He improved the quality of our lives in many ways, including through his work to stop acid rain and to establish Ontario as the first North American jurisdiction to phase out coal.

And like Freshwater Future, Dan believed in strong Canada-US cooperation. It was his idea to create the Sierra Club Bi-National Great Lakes Committee.

Undoubtedly, Dan will continue to inspire all those who knew him to follow their passion, maintain the course, and fight for clean water and air. He will go down in the history books as a Freshwater Hero.



Geoff Peach

“The Coastal Centre.” These words replaced the traditional hello when calling Geoff Peach at the Lake Huron Centre for Coastal Conservation, a greeting that was always accompanied by a smile from a man living his

passion. Having grown up on the Lake Huron shore, it shouldn’t be a surprise that Geoff grew up to be the voice of the coast itself. After working for all three Conservation Authorities with jurisdiction along the Lake Huron shore, Geoff co-founded the Coastal Centre where he worked as the Coastal Resources Manager and Coastal Science & Stewardship Advisor until 2017.

Geoff spent his life sharing his passion for coastal science with those who lived and played along the Lake Huron shore. He taught coastal municipalities about how the shore worked, and showed them how to better manage their beaches and coastal wetlands. He designed new programs to engage residents in coastal stewardship, and teach local students about healthy beaches. But it wasn’t just about what Geoff did for the Lake Huron shore, it was about the natural talent and energy he brought to the work. He made caring for the coast contagious.

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