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Power of Small Wins: Adding Up To Success

“Do you want to sell sugar water for the rest of your life or do you want to change the world?” It was this question posed by Steve Jobs to John Scully, CEO of Pepsi, that convinced him to join Apple.

At Freshwater Future, we too want to change the world and make our part—the Great Lakes region—better. Our goal of ensuring the healthy future of the waters in the Great Lakes region is BIG. To achieve this means taking the longview: we are running a marathon, not a sprint. It requires being strategic, responding to conditions out of our control, and not giving up. Tenacity is needed, strengthened and fueled by recognizing and appreciating progress

and milestones. If we take the time to recognize the steps toward success, it re-energizes and inspires us to keep moving forward.

In this issue of Freshwater Voices, we’ve highlighted some recent milestones of success. The wins may be small—but they are still important, getting us closer to the finish line of the marathon. All of these small victories require the work of many people—including you. **Your donations, actions, and involvement are reflected in this progress. Thank you for helping us achieve the small wins along the way to restoring and protecting the waters in our region—or in other words, changing the world.**



This spring, Freshwater Future organized a delegation of leaders from Great Lakes community-based organizations to participate in Great Lakes Days to meet and educate elected officials about water issues. The delegation met with Senator Debbie Stabenow and members of the Congressional Black Caucus in Washington, D.C. requesting support to ensure federal policies and funding for safe drinking water and more. (left to right: Hilliard Hampton, Freshwater Future; Norma Health, Storehouse of Hope; Senator Debbie Stabenow; Candice Mushatt, City of Flint; Jill Ryan, Freshwater Future; and Latia Leonard, Freshwater Future.



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US EPA Responds to Local Groups by Requiring Precautions for Wetlands on the Back Forty Mine Project

There isn't a single sulfide mine that hasn't released toxic acid pollution into nearby waters. That's why the Great Lakes region's recent sulfide mining boom is so concerning. In the U.S. alone, metallic sulfide mining has contaminated over 12,000 miles of rivers and streams with sulfuric acid, arsenic, lead, mercury, and other toxic metals—threatening local water supplies and human health.

Naturally, Aquila Resources' proposed open-pit, gold-zinc sulfide mine (named "Back Forty project" by the company) in Michigan's Upper Peninsula raised an immediate red flag. Staged just 100 ft from the Menominee River—the U.P.'s largest river and a tributary of Lake Michigan—this mine would be built in a precarious position. To build the mine, Aquila requested a permit to destroy valuable wetlands along the river.

Utilizing funds from Freshwater Future, the local environmental groups Front 40 and Mining Action Group of the Upper Peninsula Environmental Coalition, working alongside mining experts, carefully fact-checked and documented gaps and flaws in Aquila's

wetlands permit and presented their case to regulators, and it turns out the EPA was listening.

The EPA announced its objections to the original wetland permit in a March 8th letter to the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ). A supporting document, signed off by other federal agencies charged with enforcing the Clean Water Act, identified seven deficiencies in the mining company's wetland permit. The letter also directed the MDEQ to resolve those deficiencies within 90 days, or deny the permit.

The MDEQ issued the final permit on June 4th, but the persistence and expertise of Front 40 and Mining Action Group has reduced the risk of this mine and given the public valuable oversight opportunities as the project moves forward. These groups have done incredible work safeguarding our waters. Freshwater Future is proud to have funded and supported the work of Front 40, the Mining Action Group, and Save the Menominee River Coalition. Your donations support this work and when the next mining companies come knocking, we'll be there to help get small and big wins.



Freshwater Future applauds these active community members, including representatives of the Menominee Tribe, Front 40, Save the Menominee River, and Mining Action Group, for their work and efforts to educate decision-makers about the threats to water quality from the proposed Back Forty mine.



Dale and Lea Jane Burie are founders and members of the Save the Menominee River, a Wisconsin based grassroots group that has engaged residents in efforts to prevent pollution to the Menominee River from the Back Forty mine. They recently filed a contested case to challenge the MDEQ wetland permit.



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Flint Youth are the Future Water Warriors

More than 15 Flint youth dedicated time this summer to learn about drinking water, water quality and scientific testing of water. The youth collected over 120 samples from residences, community centers and City Hall to evaluate the lead content, with and without filter use. Freshwater Future successfully launched this pilot youth water testing program this summer in partnership with the Flint Development Center, Genesee County Hispanic Latino Collaborative, Flint Neighborhoods United, and the University of Michigan Biological Station.

In addition to learning about water testing, the youth also learned about other critical skills, such as communication both verbal and written, increased filter education provided by Flint Neighborhoods United, and cultural awareness of water issues impacting Flint's high Latino and Hispanic population with the Hispanic Latino Collaborative.

Students also conducted water sampling in the Flint River with the Flint River Watershed Coalition and learned about Genesee County Parks projects to convert contaminated industrial sites into parks.

Another goal of the project is to develop a community lab run by and for residents in Flint. The lab, as developed by community leaders, will provide residents with a trusted source of water testing, job and skill development, and an educational path for youth career fields of water quality and environmental justice. Your contribution will help us foster the next generation of water warriors, environmental scientist and advocates, building and sustaining a healthy great lakes region for years to come! A webpage is dedicated to the lab where news and updates can be found on our website, www.freshwaterfuture.org. There, you can track the lab's development and learn how you can help make this happen.



These Flint youth learned about water testing and collected over 120 samples to test for lead in resident's homes and community centers.



Genesee County Parks staff member Janet Van De Winkle talked with students about a restoration project to clean-up a contaminated site and convert it to a green space along the river.



Genesee County Hispanic Latino Collaborative sponsored students not only helped to collect water samples for residents but also spent time assisting with the food pantry.



The Flint River Watershed Coalition worked with the students to collect samples in the Flint River and discuss water quality issues with the river.



HARD FOUGHT WIN AGAINST INVASIVE SPECIES: U.S. Senate Rejects Weaker Ballast Water Standards

In late April, the United States Senate voted down a provision exempting ballast water pollution from Clean Water Act protections. **You and 700 of Freshwater Future's supporters, alongside organizations big and small across the region, successfully convinced enough Senators to vote the measure down.**

Ballast water is what ships use to provide stability and balance while in transit, and invasive species can hitch a ride to new locations as ships uptake and discharge ballast from one location to another. It is estimated that 55-70 percent of invasive species in the Great Lakes come from ballast water—including some of the most disruptive and well-known, like zebra and quagga mussels. Aquatic invasive species currently cost the United States \$9 billion



Discharging ballast water

dollars per year in damage and control costs, including \$6.4 billion for zebra and quagga mussels alone.

Lowering safeguards at the state and federal levels would open up the Great Lakes to new, destructive threats to native ecosystems. The shipping industry has fought tooth and nail to force states to adopt weaker national standards and restrict the scope of those federal protections. **Supporters like you help us send our elected officials a consistent and loud message to keep invasive species out of our waters.**

Freshwater Future will continue to fight for strong regulations to prevent the introduction of harmful nuisance plants and animals—and provide many ways for you to get involved.



Upgrades to the Weak Link in the Chicago Waterways— Brandon Road—Will Help Keep Carp Out

Bighead carp, black carp, grass carp, and silver carp (collectively known as “Asian carp”), pose a unique risk to the Great Lakes ecosystem. Spurring quick and decisive action to prevent their spread has been one of our top priorities for many years.

The primary focus currently is on “Brandon Road”—it’s a bottleneck lock and dam in the Chicago waterway that’s widely considered to be one of the most vulnerable in terms of allowing aquatic species to roam between the Mississippi and the Great Lakes basins. In February 2017, the Army Corps of Engineers completed the Brandon Road Study to address this vulnerable area, but release of the study was blocked by the Trump Administration. Freshwater Future and our partners engaged our supporters to contact their members of Congress and demand release of this critical study. **As a result of public pressure, and with strong bipartisan support the report was released on August 7, 2017.**

From the beginning, Freshwater Future has argued for the complete separation of the Mississippi and Great Lakes water systems; the connection is man-made and has resulted in the transfer of numerous invasive species that have inflicted severe ecological disruption

in both basins. One of the options in the report was a step in that direction—closing the lock and dam for good. But we also support the “tentatively selected plan,” which involves technological and structural upgrades to the Brandon Road lock and dam that should keep carp species from crossing the barrier and moving on to Lake Michigan.

The States of Michigan, Wisconsin, Ohio, the province of Ontario, and the city of Chicago have all volunteered to be local “cost-share” partners, meaning they’ve committed to providing the remaining 35% of the construction costs related to the tentatively selected plan (an estimated total of \$275 million). However, the federal government has indicated that the State of Illinois must be a cost-share partner for the project to move forward. Only in May did Illinois Governor Rauner indicate that the state may be willing to partake in the partnership.

Freshwater Future will continue to monitor negotiations and press for Illinois’ commitment to the plan without any amendments to weaken it. Your efforts have brought us this far, and we’re one step closer to keeping Asian carp out of the Great Lakes for good.



Over 400,000 Engage on Water Withdrawals

The Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ), was inundated by over 80,000 comments and 340,000 petition signatures opposing the permit to increase to nearly double the water being withdrawn from one of Nestle Waters wells. As a result of this public outcry and a scientific review commissioned by Freshwater Future, the MDEQ was forced by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to require additional information and monitoring.

Before production can begin, a monitoring plan must be submitted to the MDEQ and baseline data collected. In addition, Nestle Waters is facing two legal challenges for the expanded project: one by Osceola Township and one by Michigan Citizens for Water Conservation

alongside the Grand Traverse Bay Band of Odawa and Chippewa Indians. The former is over zoning approval for the pumping station and the latter contends that the state did not follow the law or gather sound data during the permit approval process

Critics charge that Nestlé Waters is unjustly exploiting a public resource, but Michigan law permits any private property owner to withdraw from the aquifer directly below for free, given they pay a nominal \$200 paperwork fee each year. In the context of Detroit's ongoing massive water shutoffs and Flint's continued billing for lead-poisoned water, Nestlé Waters's bargain deal has predictably sparked outrage across the state.

For several years, Freshwater Future has supported Michigan Citizens for Water Conservation with the grants and consulting services as they continue to watch over the water in their community. Check our weekly email—Freshwater Weekly—for future updates on this issue (Not getting the Freshwater Weekly? Go to www.freshwaterfuture.org to sign up!)



Birds Love Water-Not Loosestrife

In 2016, our Executive Director, Jill Ryan, was leading a paddle excursion for the Petoskey Regional Audubon Society on the Indian River Spreads. At the wetland complex at the mouth of the river where it enters Mullett Lake in northern Michigan, the group noticed purple loosestrife (an invasive plant) had expanded significantly. Purple loosestrife pushes out native plants that are important for birds and wildlife.

After seeing the increasing purple invasion at this location, we contacted the Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council to request their help in controlling purple loosestrife by introducing a specific type of beetle to reduce the invasion. Working with Petoskey Audubon members, Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council planted the beetles in this location in 2017.

This summer, when Jill led a repeat excursion with the Petoskey Audubon Society, the group noticed a drastic reduction in purple loosestrife thanks to the beetles. Pleased to see their hard work from the year before paid off, the birders were also fortunate to see 18 bird species, including 15 Common loons, Sandhill cranes, and a bald eagle.



PHOTO BY SUSAN LYMAN

Kenyon Stebbins, organizer of the paddle event shared, "Jill enlightened us about the many water-related issues affecting the Great Lakes, and the many good things her non-profit is doing to try to ameliorate problems and prevent future disasters." (Pictured left to right; Art Schoolmaster, Cynthia Donahey, Jill Ryan, Esther Summers, and Kenyon Stebbins.) Photo by Susan Lyman.

Urban Work Boosted with Summer Interns

Freshwater Future was fortunate to have two interns this summer from the Doris Duke Conservation Scholars Program through the University of Michigan's School for Environment and Sustainability (SEAS)—Lourdes Abreu Torres and Ki'Amber Thompson. The program's purpose is to diversify the conservation field by supporting and developing students from traditionally underrepresented

groups. The scholars spend two summers at the University of Michigan doing research and internships in the environmental field. Lourdes and Ki'Amber helped pilot a youth education water testing program and community lab in Flint, Michigan with our partners the Flint Development Center, Flint Neighborhoods United, Genesee County Hispanic and Latino Collaborative, and the University of Michigan BioStation.



Lourdes is an undergraduate student at Rutgers University. She is majoring in Environmental Science and minoring in Latino and Caribbean Studies and plans to graduate in May 2019. Growing up with one foot in the Dominican Republic and another in New Jersey, she became interested in the environment and Environmental Justice and contamination issues after seeing the differences between the environments in both areas.



Ki'Amber was born and raised in San Antonio, Texas and is a first-generation college graduate. She graduated in May 2018 from Pomona College with a Bachelors of Arts in English and in Environmental Analysis with a concentration in Environmental Justice. A high school environmental science class sparked her interest in environmental issues where she strongly connected to issues of food and water access. This helped her understand her own personal experiences of food insecurity in her neighborhood, and she became inspired to conserve water where ever she could.

Welcome New Staff



Alicia Smith, as our Associate Director of Policy, will be managing the Great Lakes Network and be guiding Freshwater Future's engagement in state and federal policy. In Alicia's most recent position she served as the Executive Director of the Youth Commission and Manager of Youth and Recreation for the City of Toledo. She is the founder of a Toledo, Ohio community organization, Junction Coalition that started as an opportunity to help the community help themselves through partnering with others to address social, economic, and environmental issues and improve the community's quality of life. During the 2014 harmful algal bloom that made Toledo's water unsafe for days, Junction Coalition helped families access clean water through the crisis and has continued to work for long-term solutions for safe, clean and affordable drinking water. Alicia's doctoral studies at the University of Toledo focus on the educational development in disenfranchised communities. She feels honored and privileged to served the under privileged and provide opportunities of advancement.

Thank
You!

Nancy Goucher for her leadership and hard work as a Freshwater Future staff member to establish the Great Lakes Network as an effective communications and organizing network for organizations in the US and Canada. Congratulations on her new position with the University of Waterloo working on the Global Water Futures project, we look forward to continuing to work with her in this role.

Tim Veverica, University of Michigan Biological Station for technical assistance on lead sampling and building a water quality lab.



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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Remember Freshwater Future in Your Will

The Great Lakes comprise one of the most valuable ecosystems on our planet. Protecting this resource requires community involvement and that is what Freshwater Future is all about. Freshwater Future sparks action for a growing network of community-based groups and concerned individuals who work to support the creation and enforcement of laws that protect the waters in the Great Lakes region. The health of our waters for our children, grandchildren and future generations depends on us. You can help us ensure that there will be resources for community-based action groups and individuals working to protect their local lakes, rivers, and wetlands. Consider a planned gift to Freshwater Future by remembering us in your will or through a gift of securities. Leaving a legacy to Freshwater Future will ensure these freshwater treasures are healthy for many generations.

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