REFLECTING ON THE CLEAN WATER ACT AND LOOKING TOWARD A FUTURE WITH STRONG PROTECTIONS FOR OUR WATERS

In the month of October, the 50th anniversary of the adoption of the U.S. Clean Water Act provided a chance to reflect on the landmark law. What exactly did the Clean Water Act change about how we care for our water? The biggest successes of the Clean Water Act are that it required permits for all pollutant discharges into navigable waters and set standards for sewage and pollution discharges. It also required states to monitor and report water quality of surface waters to the federal U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Importantly, the Act contributed historic investments of more than one trillion dollars to drinking water and wastewater infrastructure, particularly in the first 30 years of its existence.

Community-based organizations that step up to ensure the Clean Water Act and other laws and regulations are enforced make a difference. Without their efforts to monitor and review industrial activities, wetland permits, pollutant discharges and many other land use decisions, the protection of our waters wouldn’t happen.

One of the founding tenets of Freshwater Future has always been the recognition and value of community action to protect our water—lakes, rivers, wetlands, shorelines, drinking water and groundwater. Since 1996, we have supported people working on threats to water by providing technical support, funding, tools, and connections. Through our grants programs, Freshwater Future has provided over $5.1 million for over 1300 projects, many of which focused on the enforcement of environmental regulations.

Community partners, the Flint Community Lab provides STEM opportunities and trains student citizen scientists.

2022 Grantees

Freshwater Future is proud to support the following organizations:

Spring Project Grants ($31,374 Total Awarded)
- Association for the Wolf Lake Initiative
- Coalition to SAVE the Menominee River
- Environment North
- Junction Creek Stewardship Committee
- Michigan Hydro Relicensing Coalition
- Seneca Lake Pure Waters Association
- WaterLegacy
- Wellington Water Watchers
- West Grand Boulevard Collaborative

Communication Grants ($135,000 Total Awarded)
- Groundwork Center for Resilient Communities
- Michigan Environmental Council
- Michigan Radio
- Minnesota Environmental Partnership
- Wisdom Institute

Voice Builder Grants ($41,000 Total Awarded)
- Kettle Lakes Association
- Water Walkers
- Wisdom Institute

Special Opportunity Grants ($34,449 Total Awarded)
- Benton Harbor Water Council
- Evergreen Community Development Initiative
- Grandmont Rosedale Development Corporation
- WaterLegacy
- Benton Harbor Water Council
- Flint Community Lab
- Project NEED Foundation
- Michigan Coalition Against Tar Sands

In this issue of Freshwater Voices, we are highlighting the work of some of our community partners and the work they are doing to prevent the destruction or contamination of waters in the Great Lakes region. Every day, groups like those featured on the following pages inspire us and energize us to improve and expand our support to get the on-the-ground changes needed to solve water issues.
Clean Wisconsin will use marketing expertise from the Freshwater Future Communications Technical Assistance Grant to create a Natural Climate Solutions campaign that engages audiences across the state. Clean Wisconsin will learn which messages resonate best and build a campaign designed to meet those audiences where they are. Reducing carbon emissions and using more nature-based solutions to combat climate impacts are important for protecting Wisconsin’s waterways. With the help of this grant, Clean Wisconsin will engage key audiences to unlock the potential of nature-based action to address the crisis of climate change.

**SPECIAL OPPORTUNITY GRANT SPOTLIGHT:**

**WaterLegacy - Support for Fond du Lac Band Objection to Federal Mining Permit**

The Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa has filed a Clean Water Act objection to the PolyMet copper-nickel mine federal water pollution permit, which is located near Lake Superior. In support of this objection as a downstream “state”, WaterLegacy is creating action alerts, organizing public comments, providing honoraria to citizen experts, and providing scientific and technical comments to support the Band’s position that the Army Corps must revoke and not reissue the PolyMet federal wetlands destruction permit. This process is critical to protect the environmental health and water quality in the Lake Superior Basin as well as to set precedent for tribal rights and sovereignty.

**COMMUNICATIONS GRANT SPOTLIGHT:**

**Clean Wisconsin - Natural Climate Solutions**

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**FALL PROJECT GRANT SPOTLIGHT:**

**Sterling Water Stewards - Protecting a Regional Sole Source Aquifer**

A proposed bottling plant located in the recharge area of the sole source aquifer that supplies drinking water to the Village of Fair Haven and portions of the rural Town of Sterling in New York could threaten both the supply and quality of the communities’ public water. Additionally, rural landowners in the township could experience threats to their well water from potential bulk water extraction or other land use activities on adjacent land. The grant will assist the group to advocate for wellhead protection in the recharge area and tools to prevent damage to the aquifer from extraction or toxins.

**VOICE BUILDER GRANTS SPOTLIGHT:**

**Wisdom Institute - Passing the Torch, Preserving the Flame**

Wisdom Institute is training at least ten elder Black women who will be deployed as Ambassadors on water policy in Detroit. The Ambassadors will assist the Wisdom Institute in their work for a deep, collective stand for water as a human right, a plan for affordability and gender just policy-centered governance in Detroit.

Strategic communications support through the grant will assist with messaging, outreach, social media, website design and database building.
IN MEMORY OF RUTH OGAWA

Freshwater Future lost a long-time supporter and a trailblazing champion of the Great Lakes with the passing of Ruth Ogawa on October 6, 2022. Earlier this year, we were fortunate to celebrate Ruth’s accomplishments by honoring her with a Freshwater Future Hero award. Thanks to Ruth’s vision, advocacy, and hard work, she nurtured many organizations and was instrumental in environmental protection and addressing social issues in Northern Michigan and throughout the Great Lakes Region. Ruth’s family reflects on her dedication, “Ruth devoted her life to caring for the environment, the underserved and unhoused. She made things happen that few imagined possible. She was a big picture thinker and a tireless doer.” Ruth and her family have requested memorial gifts to be directed to Freshwater Future along with APS Foundation in Albuquerque, NM.
Do you have someone on your holiday list that already has it all? Why not make a donation in honor of family and friends to Freshwater Future this holiday season. The recipient gets to be a part of helping more people and communities in the Great Lakes Region access clean and safe water. Freshwater Future will also send a greeting card acknowledging your gift.

Just scan the code to link to our online donation page or go to freshwaterfuture.org and click on the donate button. Thank you!