

FRESHWATER

VOICES

2023 ISSUE 3

SUSTAINING THE GREAT LAKES COMMUNITY ADVOCACY

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At Freshwater Future, our mission goes beyond water preservation—it's about supporting community action to safeguard the people and the waters of the Great Lakes region. We envision a future where lakes, rivers, and wetlands are essential for residents' well-being, and everyone has access to safe, clean, and affordable water.

To achieve this vision, we actively engage with advocates and decision-makers, mobilizing local communities and shaping policies that extend beyond local victories to have a lasting impact on the entire region. Understanding that our region's strength lies in the knowledge and abilities of its residents, we ensure that these voices are heard to influence policies and secure wins.

Our role is to support the vital work of grassroots organizations tackling water injustices in their communities

by providing not just funding, but also support to make their organization stronger and strategic guidance to local leaders and advocates.

For example, through the Great Lakes Network, Freshwater Future convenes community and policy organizations to a supportive advocacy table. By translating hyper-local lessons and victories into state, regional, national, and international policies, we ensure that incremental successes advance broader progress across water issues.

Recent triumphs, such as Pennsylvania's new environmental justice policy, the denial of Camp Grayling's expansion, and Canada's substantial investment in the Great Lakes Freshwater Ecosystem Initiative, exemplify our strategy (*read more on pages 2-3*). Thank you for being an integral part of fostering a legacy of local power for water justice that will endure for generations.


Give the Gift of Clean and Safe Water This Season!

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 send a greeting card to the recipient acknowledging your gift.

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



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CELEBRATING SUCCESSES AROUND THE GREAT LAKES

At Freshwater Future, we make it a priority to showcase the successes achieved by our community partners. These victories serve as sources of hope, motivation, and a feeling of accomplishment, fostering ongoing engagement and commitment to the continual protection of water resources.

When communities witness successful outcomes, they are more likely to stay engaged and invested in long-term efforts, ensuring ongoing support and participation. Analyzing success stories and victories provides valuable insights into what works and what doesn't. It helps organizations refine strategies, improve approaches, and adapt methods for even greater impact in the future. Through capacity-building efforts and funding support, we bolster grassroots organizations across the region, supporting their efforts toward water justice.

Chautauqua Lake Watershed Residents: No Taxation Without Representation

Freshwater Future used social media to inform Chautauqua Lake Watershed residents in Western New York about a scheduled county legislature vote to recommend a new watershed-wide tax district in order to fund unspecified lake rehabilitation projects.

We heard directly from hundreds of residents with concerns about being left in the dark since the agency only sent surveys to lakefront and lakefront access property owners, effectively excluding a significant portion of the community from the decision-making process. Local officials voted to abandon the proposal after more than 100 residents attended a public meeting to voice their opposition.

Your Voice Is Heard: Camp Grayling Expansion Denied

Freshwater Future's amazing network of advocates successfully opposed the U.S. National Guard's proposed 162,000-acre expansion around Camp Grayling, MI, the largest National Guard training facility in the country. Over 200 individuals utilized Freshwater Future's online advocacy platform to submit comments and express their concerns to the Michigan Department of Natural Resources. Widespread public opposition ultimately resulted in the rejection of the proposed 20-year lease expansion.

While a smaller 52,000-acre permit was approved for limited training, this win protects vital ecosystems and renowned waterways unique to the area. Freshwater Future remains vigilant on the issue and will provide future updates.

Canada Announces \$420 Million in Funding to Restore Great Lakes Areas of Concern

In April, the Canadian Government pledged to protect and restore the Great Lakes by committing \$420 million to the effort. Freshwater Future and our partners have long advocated for sustainable investments in the Great Lakes. The funding is now making its way to communities.

Funding was recently announced for 24 projects to rehabilitate toxic hot spots or Areas of Concern that have a legacy of pollution. The suite of projects include: efforts to reduce soil erosion and phosphorus loads, enhance fish and wildlife populations, improve water quality, and restore habitat quality. The projects also emphasize community engagement and participation of Indigenous nations, promoting collaborative decision-making to facilitate restoration.



Photo by marcbruxelle

Landmark Victory: Minnesota Supreme Court Overturns Mining Water Pollution Permit

After a five-year legal battle, WaterLegacy (a Freshwater Future grantee and past hero award winner) and its allies, including the Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa, emerged victorious this summer when the Minnesota Supreme Court declared the approval of PolyMet's water pollution permit by the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) "arbitrary and capricious."

The court's decision reiterates the need for regulatory transparency and holds the MPCA responsible for upholding regulations. "This victory not only safeguards our environment but also underscores the potency of collective determination" remarked Paula Maccabee, Advocacy Director & Counsel for WaterLegacy.



Benton Harbor Replaces (Almost) 100% of Lead Pipes

Benton Harbor, MI residents and supporting allies finally have something to celebrate after the community has endured five years of unsafe drinking water due to high levels of lead. As the City looks to complete its final lead pipe replacement, the nearly 10,000 residents can be relieved that a major source of lead poisoning is now eliminated.

However, it took united community voices, like the Benton Harbor Community Water Council, and the support of many partners to ensure that local, state, and federal governments took action on this chronic public health crisis. This included a petition two years ago to the U.S. EPA for quicker action.

Looking ahead, Benton Harbor leaders and community members, 40% of which live in poverty, have more work ahead of them as local water bills become increasingly unaffordable.

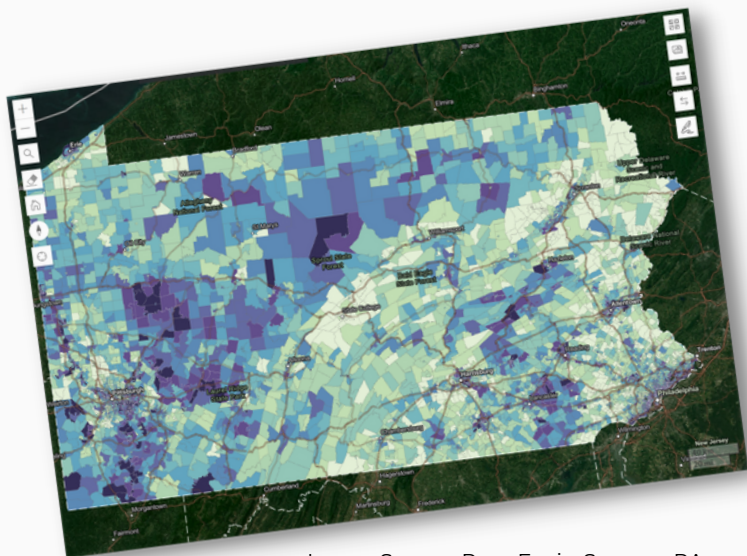


Image Source: PennEnviroScreen - PA.gov

Pennsylvania's Environmental Justice Policy is Improved

In October, the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) expanded its environmental justice definition to include 30 new indicators, beyond poverty and "minority populations", in their Environmental Justice Mapping and Screening Tool - PennEnviroScreen.

This broader approach, incorporating pollution and health criteria, increased designated environmental justice areas from 179 to 1,965, demonstrating a more comprehensive understanding of environmental inequities and a commitment to prioritizing impacted communities for assistance. Freshwater Future and members of our network submitted a letter to the Pennsylvania DEP recommending these exact changes this summer.



WORK IN PROGRESS

Freshwater Future has spent over twenty-five years working with community advocates and organizations to address everything from invasive carp to mining to water toxins and affordability in the Great Lakes region. While our focus areas ebb and flow as new challenges arise and wins secure new paradigms, novel issues emerge, too. As always, Freshwater Future is ready to meet the moment with our community partners.

Holding more than 20% of the world’s fresh surface water in a rapidly changing climate, it is no surprise that corporations are setting their sights on the Great Lakes region for economic opportunity. From industrial fish farming to commodifying public water, grassroots organizations are responding in real time to threats to their local ecosystems, ways of life, and freshwater resources. Freshwater Future is busy supporting these advocates with funding, organizational capacity, and amplifying their impact.

Fish Farming Williams County, OH

The William County Alliance, a local grassroots organization in Ohio and Indigenous communities in Indiana have been pushing back on the arrival of a company proposing a salmon fish farm near Bryan, Ohio, whose operations would require enormous water withdrawals from groundwater and local aquifers. Permits to the company have been granted to use 5.25 million gallons of water daily. The proposed fish farm not only threatens the city's source of water, the Michindoh Aquifer, but also could negatively impact the Great Lakes ecosystem should any of the GMO salmon escape the facility. As a grantee of Freshwater Future, the alliance completed water testing projects to educate their community and oppose big agriculture acquisitions. We will continue our support of the Williams County Alliance as they fight against corporate fish farming in their community.

Privatization of Water Utilities

The privatization of public water utilities has become one of the top water issues across the country and particularly in the Great Lakes region. When a system changes from public to private there can be a limit to public input and accountability, and a likely rise in service rates that can result in making water unaffordable. Keep Water Affordable or KWA, a community-based group in Pennsylvania is concerned about the risks of privatization and has organized to address privatization issues. As a fiscally sponsored project of Freshwater Future, KWA is launching a new website as a resource portal about what’s unfolding in Pennsylvania featuring a number of their take action initiatives.

Fighting for Affordable Water

In October, the Michigan House Committee of Natural Resources, Environment, and Outdoor Recreation met to discuss a package of bills related to water assistance. The WEL Coalition (Freshwater Future is a founding partner) was front and center during the meeting and proud that many coalition members testified and proposed amendments to strengthen the bill package aiming to ensure that true water affordability will be achieved for Michiganders.

As it stands, the WEL Coalition requests four amendments be incorporated to make this bill package as strong as possible:

- **End Shutoffs for Low Income Families**
- **Expand Tenant Protections to Existing Renters**
- **Decouple Funding to ensure utilities must find an alternate funding source to continue the program so that low income residents are protected**
- **Debt Forgiveness - Many customers face high arrearages. Without addressing this issue, we are setting up thousands of customers to fail.**



TAKING ACTION

Turning Research into Action: Targeted Rapid Response Communications

Freshwater Future's social media presence has become an essential tool for rapidly reaching residents in communities facing heightened lead levels and other water quality concerns. In response to the often inadequate emergency communications following public notices of elevated lead levels, we have observed a communication gap between residents and their local government. As a result, critical public safety information often fails to reach all residents during these "Action Level Exceedances."

By harnessing our online platforms, we enable individuals to not only access critical information but also actively engage by asking questions and sharing this vital knowledge with their extended networks.



NO LEAD IS SAFE

Tools to Keep Communities and Residents Safe

Healthy Eating to Reduce Lead Poisoning

Many communities struggle with lead pipes in their water infrastructure and lead paint in their homes. While there are no safe levels of lead, the foods we eat can help limit how much lead the body takes in.

Children who are particularly vulnerable to lead poisoning absorb more lead on an empty stomach than a full one! This guide will help you learn how healthy, cooking, and cleaning can help fight lead poisoning in your home.

Best Nutrients to Protect Against Lead

<p>CALCIUM 3 TIMES A DAY</p> <p>Found in milk, yogurt, cheese, green leafy vegetables, and calcium-fortified foods. Calcium helps repair and rebuild lead-damaged bone and helps lead excretion from the body.</p>	<p>IRON 2 TIMES A DAY</p> <p>Found in lean red meats, fish, chicken, game meats, eggs, dried beans, lentils, tofu, chickpeas, chickpea flour, and iron-fortified cereals. Iron helps reduce lead absorption in the gut.</p>	<p>VITAMIN C 1 TIME A DAY</p> <p>Found in citrus fruit, berries, kiwi, kiwifruit, guava, and other fruits. Vitamin C helps reduce lead absorption in the gut.</p>
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Reduce lead exposure with cooking!

- Wash hands before cooking and eating.
- Use cold water that has been flushed for 30 minutes before cooking.
- Avoid using imported pottery or ceramics.
- Cook with filtered water, certified for lead removal. Remove this water before adding to food.

Protect against lead with cleaning!

- Wash children's hands, toys, and bottles regularly.
- Clean other things not cleaning methods for.
- Avoid DIY paint removal during renovations.
- Report peeling paint to your landlord and health department if living.
- Test children and other homes for lead.

Learn more visit: freshwaterfuture.org

LEAD WATER PIPE REPLACEMENT

Keep Your Household Safe BEFORE, DURING, and AFTER Pipe Replacement

TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 1 Why Replace Lead Drinking Water Service Lines
- 2 Full or Partial Lead Service Line Replacement-What's the Difference
- 3 Before Pipe Replacement
- 4 Understand Your Rights and Risks
- 5 What to Know About Your Lead Service Line Replacement
- 6 During Pipe Replacement - Flushing and Filter Use
- 7 After Pipe Replacement - Flushing and Filter Use

freshwaterfuture.org

STAY SAFE from LEAD in Drinking Water

LEAD gets in our drinking water from plumbing, water fixtures, pipes, and solder. Lead can cause serious health problems if it enters your body from drinking water.

Important Steps You Can Take to Reduce Lead in Drinking Water

Because the **lead pipes haven't all been replaced yet**, you can do the following:

- Install a water filter:** such as Brita (Brita faucet filter, model GAUF-1702), Pur (Pur 3-in-1 faucet mount, model number FM-37000) and ZeroWater (ZeroWater 25-Cup Dispenser, model number ZD-178).
- Make sure you use a filter certified to remove lead:** NSF A42 Standard (CS) along with a claim of lead reduction.
- These filters can be found at nearby retail stores** such as Costco, Home Depot, Walmart, and Target. Please check your local hardware store if you don't live near one of these chains or other stores.
- Use your filter properly:** Read the directions to learn how to properly install and the recommended frequency to replace the cartridge. Using the cartridge after it is full can make it less effective at removing lead.
- Do not run hot water through the filter.**
- Concerned about bacteria in your drinking water?** Use the **lead service line** from the other side of the meter. If you are concerned about bacteria in your drinking water, you should contact your local health department for more information on how to best reduce the concentration of lead.
- Flush your pipes:** Flushing your pipes can help decrease the amount of lead in your water. Flushing should be done before drinking, cooking, and making baby formula. Flushing should be done for 2-3 minutes. Flushing should be done for 2-3 minutes. Flushing should be done for 2-3 minutes.
- Use cold water:** Lead particles are caught in the service line and get into your water.
- You can also reduce a home water shutoff:** Turn off the water at the meter. Turn off the water at the meter. Turn off the water at the meter.
- Testing your pipes:** Testing your pipes can help determine if you have elevated levels of lead in your pipes and what additional actions may be necessary.

Learn more visit: freshwaterfuture.org/lead

SCAN ME

GREAT GIFT IDEA

Lead Water Testing Kit & Coffee

Superior Coffee Roasting Co. in collaboration with Freshwater Future and the Flint Community Lab are offering a lead water testing kit for \$40 that includes a complimentary bag of coffee.

Purchase the kit online and receive testing supplies, instructions, and a prepaid return shipping box. After analysis you will receive a report from the Flint Community Lab.

Scan the QR code to purchase or go to: superiorcoffeeroasting.com/shop-1

Freshwater Future's NO Lead is Safe Campaign features a helpful informational toolkit with shareable education materials to provide trusted resources to residents and community groups on how to stay safe from lead. Thanks to this toolkit, more community members are now aware of lead poisoning dangers and families are getting the help and information they need.

Our work is vital in raising awareness about lead poisoning, which can have severe health consequences, especially for children. Our outreach has resulted in increased testing and greater community efforts to reduce lead exposure. Thousands are now informed about the dangers, and residents are collaborating to address lead crises in their communities. View resources at freshwaterfuture.org/lead.

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

SPARKING CHANGE Freshwater Future Staff and Community Partners in Action

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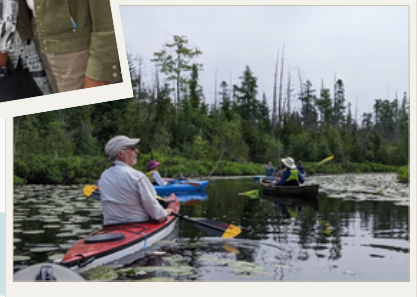
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LEAH SILVERMAN



Freshwater Future's Executive Director Jill Ryan, and Grants Coordinator Alana Honaker engage in discussion with partners Sister Pat Lupo, Hold Erie Coke Accountable and Bill Schleizer of Delta Institute.



Community organizers and advocates gathered in Benton Harbor for the All About Water Convening to network and learn from experts on current drinking water issues. Pictured: Dorothy Pinkney, Cecily McClellan, Reverend Ed Pinckney, Gwen Howard, and Gwen Winston.



This summer, Jill Ryan, Executive Director, led an educational kayak tour on beautiful Walloon Lake in northern Michigan. Freshwater Future was joined by folks from Walloon Lake Association and Conservancy and Petoskey Audubon.



The annual Water is Life Festival (a sponsored project of Freshwater Future) celebrates our connection to water. Laurie Breighner, Freshwater Future Grants Specialist shares resource information with attendees at the festival's new location along Bayfront Park in Petoskey, MI.



(front to back): Program Co-Directors Kristen Haitaian, Anna Bunting, and Alexis Smith on the steps of Congress at Great Lakes Day in Washington, D.C.



Exploring New York's environmental and water resources issues: Freshwater Future Program Co-Director, Anna Bunting (right), engages in a discussion with Sally Howard from the Great Lakes Ecoregion Network (left) amid the picturesque backdrop of Turning Point Park along the Genesee River in Rochester, New York.



At the October All About Water convening in Benton Harbor, community partners and Freshwater Future staff enjoy time together learning and sharing. (left-right): LaTanya Bell, Angela Penneron, Alicia Gray, Freshwater Future's Community Program Coordinator Kwame Hampton, Valerie Burris, Monique Thompson, Zaire Hopkins, Gwen Winston, and Jinx Kay - Photo Credit: Zaire Hopkins



Families Reclaiming Our Environment (FROE), a past Freshwater Future grantee, hosted a community picnic in September near St. Clair, Michigan to educate the community on local heavy industrial pollution. Freshwater Future staff member Kristen Haitaian and University of Michigan - Ann Arbor Masters students are collaborating on a research and advocacy project with FROE.



Freshwater Future Communication and Development Director Leslie Burk (right) joins Kirsten Plont (left) from Superior Coffee Roasting Co. and Joanie McGuffin (center) from Lake Superior Watershed Conservancy at Riverfest in Sault Ste. Marie for a day of education and getting folks out on the water.

FRESHWATER FUTURE

DISCLAIMER: Freshwater Voices is intended to provide a forum for the free exchange of ideas among citizens and organizations working to protect water resources in the Great Lakes Basin. Interpretations and conclusions presented in this newsletter represent the opinions of the individual authors. They in no way represent the views of Freshwater Future, funders, members, donors, Freshwater Future Canada or any organization mentioned in this publication.



Welcome New Staff

Lisa Ross is the Database Manager at Freshwater Future. Lisa's extensive career spans diverse database management in construction, manufacturing, research, nonprofit, and community outreach sectors. She spent ten years as the Database Manager at United Way of Asheville and Buncombe County in North Carolina. Her commitment extends beyond her professional role volunteering with homeless initiatives and mentoring programs.

THANK YOU to All of Our Donors

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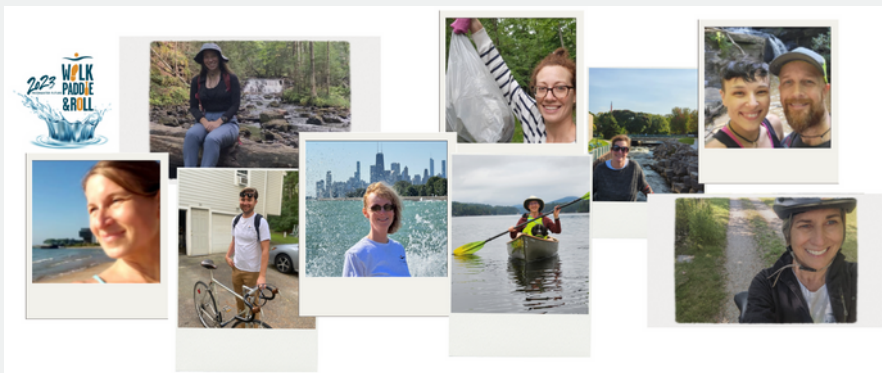
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Pennsylvania Lake Erie Water Association
Presque Isle Audubon Society
Reform Gravel Mining Coalition
Sterling Water Stewards
Superior Rivers Watershed Association
WaterLegacy
Wisdom Institute
Yellow Dog Watershed Preserve

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Your donations to the Freshwater Future's Walk, Paddle, and Roll surpassed our \$8,000 campaign goal for clean, safe, and affordable water.

The Freshwater team of board and staff cleaned up parks, hiked the Adirondacks and the Picture Rocks lakeshore, and even gave up using a car – all to earn your donations.

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