



# Voices freshwater

Ensuring the Healthy Future of Our Waters

BECCA NELSON | PICTURED ROCKS | LAKE SUPERIOR

2016 Series, Issue Three

## IN THIS ISSUE

In this issue we highlight the knowledge, the energy and the power to make change—these are the strengths that local communities bring to the protection of our Great Lakes.

## WHAT WOULD BE RIGHT?

# Creating the Change They Want to See

*By Callie Mabry, Faith in Place*

Chicago's South Shore has a rich history, spectacular architecture, and view of Chicago's skyline. In the 1950s it became a premier upper middle class community for African-Americans. Today, it's the last urban lakefront community where predominately people of African descent live. Yet, the neighborhood lacks much of the parks, green open space, and investment in storm water infrastructure found in white lakefront communities.

Because of this, residents experience a number of challenges including street and basement flooding, and sewer backups due to a lack of green space to absorb water runoff. Flooding not only damages homes, but also causes respiratory problems from the resulting mold and mildew.

Veronica Kyle recognized these challenges and the unique opportunity that communities of faith could have in addressing them. With funding from Freshwater Future she organized two green infrastructure visioning workshops through her role with Faith in Place. Faith in Place is a non-profit organization that empowers Illinois people of all faiths to be leaders in caring for the Earth.

She had one critical rule for the sessions—NO COMPLAINING! Working with a positive attitude and a focus on "What would be right?" residents used enlarged neighborhood maps to draw where they saw community assets, such as public lake shore space, and where they wanted to see change. Improvements to parks, rain gardens, community gardening, tree planting and the South Shore beaches—a vision for green infrastructure and a healthier community began to take shape.

*Continued on page 2*



*Visioning workshop attendees draw in the assets and improvements desired. Using a positive approach encouraged thinking of possibilities rather than generating complaints.*



*Members of the Church of St. Bride Catholic Parish prepare rain barrels for installation at neighbors' homes.*

PHOTOS: ERIC ALLIX ROGERS





## Creating the Change They Want to See continued from page 1

Leveraging momentum from the visioning workshops, residents, community groups, and Faith in Place turned these ideas into action.

Residents have begun to plant more native plant gardens and trees, recognizing the importance of plants to absorb water runoff and prevent flooding. The community garden club gave away tree saplings and milkweed to attract Monarch butterflies.

Faith in Place received funding for on-the-ground projects from the ChiCal River Fund, to work with nine houses of worship to reduce storm water by planting rain gardens, conducting facility water-use audits, and installing rain barrels.

One of the churches, the Church of St. Bride Catholic Parish extended beyond their own property to distribute 25 rain barrels to parishioners and neighbors—All combined these projects are not only diverting huge volumes of rain water from the sewer system, but helping to strengthen community ties throughout the South Shore.

The visioning conversations changed the scale of the issues, many people had been familiar with of the problems of flooding in their own homes and on their block, but had not realized that this was a common experience across the neighborhood. Now using the positive outlook that the visioning exercise promoted, residents are finding and implementing solutions on both scales—the individual and community. Ultimately doing, “What is right, while embracing the reality that there is much work to be done.”



An example of a native plant garden. Photo by Raymont Bell.

*Freshwater Future's Community Climate Program provided funds to help with this project. We have a number of other granting programs. Want to learn more? Visit us at [freshwaterfuture.org](http://freshwaterfuture.org) or call us at 231-348-8200.*



## Do You Know a Freshwater Hero? NOMINATE THEM TODAY!

Each year, Freshwater Future recognizes champions across the Great Lakes region who work tirelessly to protect the Great Lakes, whether their corner of the Great Lakes, of the basin as a whole.

**Nominate your local Freshwater Hero by providing the following:**

1. Who you are nominating
2. What organization they work with/or community they work in
3. What makes them a champion for their community

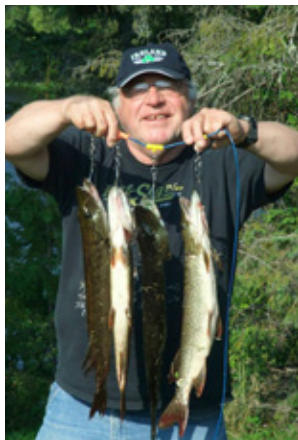
Email [becca@freshwaterfuture.org](mailto:becca@freshwaterfuture.org) with your nomination and qualifications by January 15, 2017.



# This Autumn We Lost Two Amazing Great Lakes Leaders, Jim Mahon and Diadra Decker.

## *Remembering Diadra Decker, Citizen Activist and Leader*

**D**iadra passed away peacefully on October 30, 2016 at her home in Inver Grove, Minnesota. She was a dedicated civic activist working on many environmental issues for over 30 years. Diadra was a founder of WaterLegacy, a grassroots organization committed to environmental health and environmental justice by protecting Minnesota's fresh water resources and the communities that rely on them. As president of the organization from 2009-2015, Diadra led efforts to push for stronger laws and regulations at the federal and state level to protect Minnesota waters from sulfide mining pollution. Her involvement contributed to key accomplishments including, upholding a water quality standard to protect wild rice, collaboration with tribes, and increasing civic engagement on mining issues. Diadra's dedication was inspiring to many people. She will be greatly missed.



## *Remembering Jim Mahon, Environmental and Worker Advocate*

**J**im lost his battle with cancer on October 17 at his home in London, Ontario. Jim was a long-time board member and president of Great Lakes United (GLU) and environmental representative with the Canadian Auto Workers Union. He was a champion of zero discharge of persistent toxic substances (his favourite GLU t-shirt was the one that said "Zero means Zero"—a frustrated response to industries endless debates about what zero really meant). Special refinements that Jim added to these campaigns included the need to recognize that workers were the ones being most immediately and devastatingly affected by these chemicals in their workplaces, and, therefore, the need to unite worker activists and environmental activists in the campaigns, the need for "just transition" (ensuring that the financial and emotional harm to workers was minimized as we transitioned from an economy and society based not on toxic chemicals but on clean production and green chemistry), and extended producer responsibility. He was always quick with a smile and a story. Jim and his passion for water and the Great Lakes will be greatly missed.

## THE GREAT LAKES NETWORK It's All About Collaboration

**D**oes your organization work to protect and restore Great Lakes waters? Do you see value in collaborating with other groups who have the same interests?

We believe that by working together, we can achieve more.

At nearly 50 organizations strong, the Great Lakes Network allows your organization to:

- Gain access to the knowledge and expertise of others
- Support collaboration through building support for your ideas with fellow advocates
- Access tools, funding and services
- Work together to take coordinated action on specific issues such as Lake Erie nutrients

**Joining is easy!** Membership in the Great Lakes Network is open to all non-governmental organizations, funders, indigenous groups and individuals whose work is aligned with advancing Great Lakes policy and are sponsored by a current member.

**To inquire about becoming a member, please email Nancy Goucher at [nancy@freshwaterfuture.org](mailto:nancy@freshwaterfuture.org)**



Coal tar sealcoats, which are widely used on driveways and parking lots, contain a host of potential and confirmed carcinogens. They are a threat to our health as well as dangerous for local waterways, fish and wildlife.

## Real Movement to Restrict Toxic Driveway Sealants



*Spring Lake Cub Scout Troop 3054, led by Cheryl Kallio, spoke to the Spring Lake Township Board about banning coal tar sealant. As a result of these efforts, Spring Lake Township passed a ban that takes effect January 2017.*

For the first time ever, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is taking measures to restrict the use of coal tar sealcoats. Coal tar sealcoats, which are widely used on driveways and parking lots, contain a host of potential and confirmed carcinogens. They are a threat to our health as well as dangerous for local waterways, fish and wildlife.

The EPA's measures were a result of the settlement of a lawsuit filed by a coalition of environmental organizations, led by Waterkeeper Alliance. Starting in 2019, industrial facilities such as federally regulated airports, factories, refineries and many other industrial sites, will either have to eliminate a discharge of the toxic chemical that runs off coal tar sealcoats (an option would be to re-

surface with a safer sealant) to be covered under the agency's industrial stormwater multi-sector general permit (MSGP) or apply for an individual permit.

There are easy alternatives available to coal tar sealcoats that don't have these harmful side effects. Two years ago, Freshwater Future launched a campaign to raise awareness of these toxic products and restrict or even ban their use. In partnership with our network of community groups around the Lakes and with funding from the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, we were successful in reducing the use of coal tar sealcoats around the Great Lakes.

According to the Waterkeeper Alliance, the settlement agreement includes:

- EPA will propose that industrial facilities that use coal tar based pavement sealants, which discharge very high quantities of PHAs (A persistent bioaccumulative toxin), will be ineligible for coverage under the MSGP.

To learn more, check out the Waterkeeper Alliance news, <http://bit.ly/wkcoalatar>

*\*EPA's MSGP (Multi-Sector General Permit) is utilized in states that do not have primacy for this permitting program.*





STEVEN HUYSER-HONIG | NOVEMBER GALE

# 100 Events for 100 Years!

By Henrietta Saunders, League of Women Voters Lake Michigan Region

The League of Women Voters was born in 1920 out of the suffrage movement. Nineteenth Amendment activists envisioned an educated citizenry as key to better policy outcomes—and so do we. The League emphasizes water issues and climate change, working across four states through the League of Women Voters Lake Michigan Region (LWVLMR). Freshwater Future has been a consistent partner in our education and advocacy efforts. We were especially grateful for their help last year.

LWVLMR board members hail from every “corner” of Lake Michigan, representing diverse communities with a variety of interests. Jill Ryan consulted with us on strategic planning and did an excellent job, respecting our history and values while reinforcing the motivation and vision that guides our work. Jill facilitated an important board retreat where we hashed out goals. She provided support before and afterward so that we could translate the strengths, weaknesses and opportunities we face into constructive action.

One initiative that emerged from this work is to provide 100 community engagement meetings before 2020—the 100th anniversary of the League. Already exceeding our expectations, this broad outreach effort goes hand in hand with strengthening leadership and financial resources. Backed by the Freshwater Future-supported strategic plan, LWVLMR is more able to respond to community interests on water issues than ever before. Check out our website at [LWVLMR.org](http://LWVLMR.org) and reach out to collaborate in your community. We plan to keep going for another hundred years—at least!



Members of the League of Women Voters Lake Michigan Region enjoy a native plant tour.



Members enjoying the lake shore during the League of Women Voter Lake Michigan Region's 2016 annual meeting.







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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# Freshwater Future Welcomes New Faces

## Hilliard Hampton



All his life, Hilliard Hampton has been a hands on problem solver and hands on leader. A four-time elected Mayor, police officer, small business owner, education leader—all of these experiences are what Hillard brings to his role at Freshwater Future as our Associated Director of Urban Partnerships. Hilliard values the role of community and diverse perspectives in developing solutions, and excels at listening to and integrating others' perspectives while also maintaining the broader picture to reach a successful conclusion. We welcome Hilliard and his experiences to the team.

## Stephanie Altrock



Stephanie is responsible for office management of our Petoskey office, bookkeeping for the organization, and support for staff working in remote offices. Stephanie brings a wealth of experience and professionalism to our administration. Her work history with county government, as a private business owner, and well planner in the oil field brings a breadth of practical and innovative approaches to her position. Stephanie is a Michigan native who recently returned home. She is grateful to once again be surrounded by clean lakes and rivers. Stephanie lives in Charlevoix where she enjoys nature, photography, cooking, and the arts.

### Thank you to our volunteers!

Gretchen Brown | Karen Knapp | Pat Kovach | Doris Lark  
Nancy Staley | Lurli Vaughan | Bev Warner

### Thank you to John Jackson

for contributing the memorial for Jim Mahon

### Congratulations to our Fall Project Grant recipients:

Anishinaabe Nijii ~ Protect the Earth | Farms not Factories  
Highway J Citizens Group | WaterLegacy  
Lake Michigan League of Women Voters



# Thank You to All of Our Donors from July 1, 2016 through November 30, 2016

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In Honor of Becca Nelson's Birthday, Given by Judy Davidson  
Merry Christmas Jamie, Keeping Lake Ontario the beautiful body of water that you so love, Given by Bethann Morgan





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