



# Voices freshwater

Ensuring the Healthy Future of Our Waters

2016 Series, Issue Two

BRENDA JONES | GLOWING ROCKS | LAKE SUPERIOR

## IN THIS ISSUE

This issue highlights groups Freshwater Future works with to create an impact in the Great Lakes. From improving rules and regulation to removing invasive species to reacting quickly and persistently to threats, we all help create positive change for the health of our Great Lakes.

## Planning for Our Freshwater Future



Freshwater Future Staff and Board

As you may know, Freshwater Future has been engaged in a strategic planning process over the past few months. Over 400 of you provided input to that process by completing an interview or survey—thank you, your ideas are so important to us! Our board and staff recently utilized a weekend retreat to spend time discussing how we can incorporate your thoughts and ideas into our new plan.

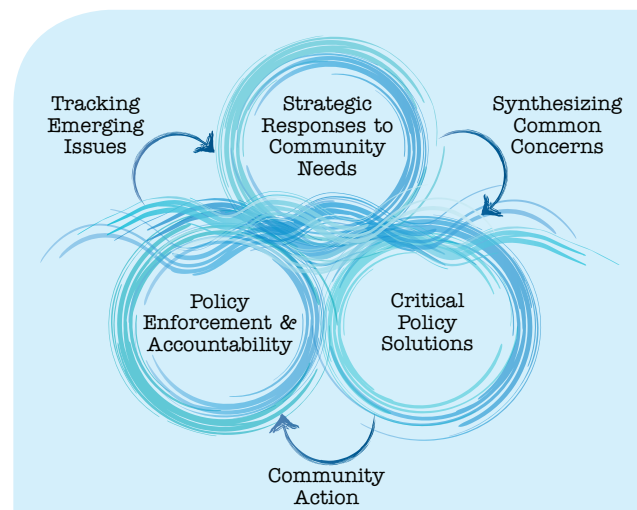
While we still have some work to do to finish the plan, we want to give you an update and an exclusive preview here. One message that came through loud and clear from your comments is that the three existing areas of focus for our work are all important to you, reinforcing our role in the Great Lakes. However, we also heard that we don't always do the best job of explaining those three work areas and the impacts that result from them. As a result, we developed a new impact model that explains how our different areas of work are not silos, but rather complement each other and provide synergies among the areas.

This is where the preview comes in. And, we want you to tell us what you think—we would love to hear whether you think this is a good way to explain our work, better ideas that you may have for explaining it, or tweaks to make it better. Just e-mail us at [info@freshwaterfuture.org](mailto:info@freshwaterfuture.org).

### Freshwater Future Impact Model

Freshwater Future helps create and strengthen community action on water issues through our grants programs. Through these grants community groups work on local issues impacting their water. We often learn of emerging issues that impact more than one community through these action projects.

Continued on page 2







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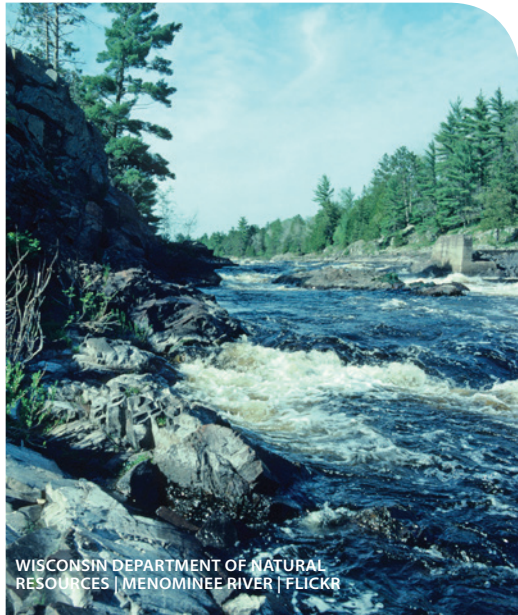


## New Open Pit Sulfide Mine Threatens Michigan's Menominee River

The Aquila project proposes to open a massive open pit sulfide mine on the bank of the Menominee River in Michigan's upper peninsula. Toxic metals in acid mine drainage from this form of mining have polluted waters everywhere that sulfide-ore mining has been done in wet environments, like in Michigan and around the Great Lakes region.

When the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality recently release the Aquila permit application for a 30-day public comment period, we were shocked to learn that the application was over 37,500 pages! Such an enormous application and short window to engage in the public comment period made it impossible for community members and groups to meaningfully participate. This is where Freshwater Future stepped in to help.

Freshwater Future provided funding to a local group, Save the Wild UP, to contract with an expert to conduct a technical review of the application. Freshwater Future worked with Save the Wild UP to ensure other groups and community members who care about these issues



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*Pembin Falls on the Menominee River, which forms the Wisconsin-Michigan border.*

in the UP had access to the technical review for their outreach and comments. Without this review, informed comments by community based groups and community members would likely not have been possible due to the size of the application.

Freshwater Future is committed to helping community based group like Save the Wild UP when issues such as these emerge.

## Planning for Our Freshwater Future continued from page 1

Based on what we learn from local efforts, we then can provide tactical responses to community needs utilizing our coaching and training services. Building campaign strategies, growing organizational abilities and strengthening leaders ensures that community groups can thrive and their projects can succeed. As we partner with local communities and help to build organizations and projects, we are also able to synthesize common concerns that impact multiple groups' abilities to succeed.

These common concerns can then be addressed through strategic policy, thereby eliminating the need for multiple communities to work on the same issue. Once policy solutions are in place, they of course have to be enforced and there has to be accountability for that enforcement. This brings us full circle back to communities who now have the policy solution they need and are present and passionate in their communities to ensure follow-through.

In addition to the impact model, we are busy drafting the new strategic plan, which we will share with you in the coming months. We appreciate all of your input that will make this plan and our work stronger and more sustainable, and we look forward to continuing to partner with your important efforts!

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# Friends of the Detroit River Grow Small Grants to Big Impacts: Improving Belle Isle

What happens when you give two passionate, dedicated water enthusiasts almost a half million dollars? In the case of Friends of the Detroit River (FDR)—they used it to knock out acres of invasive species and educate millions of people, all while creating green jobs for local youth on Belle Isle in the Detroit River.

Belle Isle is Detroit’s most popular open space for recreation, but it’s rich diversity of plants and wildlife is being threatened by aquatic invasive species like Phragmites and purple loosestrife.

In 2013, Freshwater Future helped FDR with a small grant from the Healing Our Waters grantmaking program to help them gain the capacity to submit applications for the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative funding.

FDR succeeded in securing a large grant from the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative, aimed at completing a comprehensive aquatic invasive species control and outreach program on Belle Island that hosts over 10 million visitors every year.

Knowing that many hands make light work, FDR reached out to a broad range of partners.

From local community groups and tourism providers, to government and academic partners, over a dozen groups worked together to treat over 50 acres of invasive species, to design and implement a sophisticated, wide-reaching education and engagement program, and to create “green” summer employment opportunities for local youth.

Freshwater Future was thrilled to help such a passionate and dedicated group; we value our role in supporting and building the capacity of grassroots groups like FDR. In the words of Tricia Blicharski, “Without the support of Freshwater Future in thinking through the project and the application, this work never would have happened.”

*PlantWise, LLC – An Ann Arbor based environmental restoration company mapped all invasive plants on Belle Isle with assistance from youth groups from the Greening of Detroit and Student Conservation Association.*

*Work began with a day-long training session for the youth corps emphasizing plant identification and GIS mapping skills.*



*“Science Saturday Talks” at the Belle Isle Aquarium focus on a variety of Great Lake issues including invasive species.*



*WeedEraser staff finds invasive plants in well established stands and as nearby juvenile growth.*



*Student Conservation Association and Greening of Detroit removing invasive honeysuckle and buckthorn.*



## Keeping Flint Front and Center

**Y**ou've likely heard of the extreme levels of lead in Flint, Michigan water on the news. But did you know the problem has *STILL* not been resolved? While residents have now been told they can safely drink their water with the use of filters, which is a start, funding to replace or repair the infrastructure that is the source of the problem has been held up in both the Michigan legislature and Congress.

### Why Flint is Different

We are now hearing that many communities have lead in their water, which is true, and this common problem due to aging infrastructure needs to be addressed in cities across the country. However, the reason the problem with Flint's water is so severe is not simply due to old pipes. It was made much worse when a river source was utilized and the water was not properly treated with anti-corrosive agents, due to the fact that river water is more acidic than the lake water that had previously been the source.

### Ongoing Trouble

Because the lead levels were so high and lasted so long, thousands of children were exposed to this highly toxic substance at a time in their development when they are more susceptible to its health impacts. This means these kids will need to receive special educational and health supports now and in the future.

### Help is Needed Now

The children and adults in Flint who were exposed to this water need help now. The aging infrastructure that was damaged by corrosion must be addressed, the health and educational needs must be addressed, and the city and its residents must be allowed to move on. By not funding the critical assistance needed in Flint, decision-makers are not only risking health, education and further property damage, but they are holding Flint in this pattern of waiting for solutions. This is unacceptable.

Citizens in Michigan, with Freshwater Future's help, have already sent nearly 1,400 letters to Michigan legislators asking them to move the funding bill forward. We will continue to monitor these opportunities for you to weigh in and tell our elected officials that the health, education and property impacts to Flint are important to us all and must be addressed quickly.



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## First Diversion of Great Lakes Water Granted Under New Protections

One of the most significant victories for the Great Lakes came in 2008 with a new agreement that included protections from diversions or withdrawals that could harm our waters. It's called the Great Lakes Compact. Together with groups and community members from around the region, we succeeded in getting all eight Great Lakes States and the two Canadian provinces to pledge to protect the world's largest supply of surface freshwater—the Great Lakes.

The hallmark of these protections is a ban on diversions of water outside of the Great Lakes watershed. However, there is one exception to this ban on diversion. That exception is for communities that are within a county that is part way in, but not all the way in, the Great Lakes watershed. Along with this limited exception is the requirement that the water be returned to the Great Lakes watershed after it is used.

The Compact faced its first real test from such a town in Wisconsin called Waukesha. This community asked for diversions because its groundwater is contaminated with radium. However, Freshwater Future along with groups around the region didn't find that the original request met the strict requirements of the Compact. Together with these groups we asked that the application be denied and helped 11,000 citizens voice their concerns to the Great Lakes Governors and Premiers.

There is good news and bad news. The bad news is that on June 21st, the Great Lakes Governors voted to grant their request to divert 8.2 million gallons of Lake Michigan water per day. The good news is that the provinces and states took their role seriously, thanks in part to the many people who voiced their concerns, and worked hard to ensure additional conditions were placed on the approval of the application—most importantly that all water taken must be put back. With recent drinking water crises in Flint, Michigan and Toledo, Ohio, people are increasingly recognizing how fragile a resource clean water is. Freshwater Future continues to work hard to ensure that the intent of the Great Lakes Compact is followed along with other measures that protect 20 percent of the world's surface freshwater.





CHRISTINA CARSON | LAKE MICHIGAN VIEW FROM M-119



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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# Great Lakes Network Grant Program

Are you working collaboratively with other groups to develop, implement or alter policies in the Great Lakes Region? Email Nancy (nancy@freshwaterfuture.org) to find out if your project qualifies for up to \$5,000 in financial support from Freshwater Future.



*Great Lakes Network Grants are supported by the Fred A. and Barbara M. Erb Family Foundation*

## Congratulations to Freshwater Future's 2016 Spring Project Grant Recipients:

- Save the River (Upper St. Lawrence Riverkeeper), \$1500**  
Clayton, NY  
The stroke of two pens begins restoration of 64,000 acres of wetlands
- Religious Coalition for the Great Lakes, \$2500**  
La Grange Park, IL  
Protecting the Great Lakes Region from Fracking Impacts
- Pointes Protection Association, \$2500**  
Sault Ste. Marie, ON  
Protecting an Important and Rare Lake Superior Wetland
- Izaak Walton League-Indiana Division, \$3000**  
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Indian Dunes State Park Preservation Project
- Seneca Lake Pure Waters Association, \$3500**  
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- Native American Educational Technologies, Inc., \$3000**  
Hayward, WI  
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*Our Project Grant Program is supported by The C. S. Mott Foundation*



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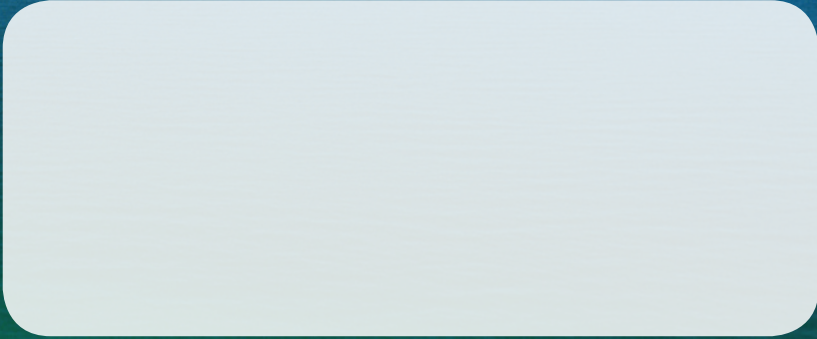




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