



Voices freshwater

Ensuring the Healthy Future of Our Waters

2014 Series, Issue One

IN THIS ISSUE:

- **Lending A Hand**

- **Accounting Insight Services Make Impact in Kalamazoo— Available to All Member Organizations Too**

- **Citizen Advocate Awards**

- **Mining Cumulative Impact on Lake Superior**

- **Kalamazoo Nature Center's Urban Nature Park Under Construction**

- **First Round of 2014 Freshwater Future Grants Deadlines is Fast Approaching!**

Public Comments Show Strong Support for Separating our Great Lakes from the Mississippi River

by Cheryl Kallio

Well now you have done it! But in a REAL-
LY good way. With your help, the message is getting out about what needs to be done to stop an Asian carp invasion.

I was at a public meeting in Traverse City, Michigan hosted by the Army Corps of Engineers about their newly released "GLMRIS" report on eight options to stop Asian carp and other invasive species. Many of you, along with Freshwater Future, have been communicating to decision makers for years that we think the strongest option to protect our Lakes from an Asian carp invasion is to separate them from the Mississippi River system and restore natural divides that originally existed. Indeed, the Corps report notes that separation is the strongest option.

After giving an overview of the report at the meeting, the Corps spent time taking comments from the public. Though we were in the midst of a snow-

storm, there were over 100 people at the Traverse City meeting, and overwhelmingly people spoke about the need to separate our Lakes from the Mississippi River. Anglers, boating associations, the local mayor, local groups and citizens were all educated about this issue, spoke passionately and agreed that the Corps must move forward the separation option. All agreed that the proposed 25 year time line is unacceptably long and we need shovel ready action expedited now. Similar support has been shown at the Corps' public meetings in Chicago, Ann Arbor, Cleveland, Milwaukee, the Twin Cities and Erie, PA.

It is important that we keep pressure on the U.S. Congress to take action on these findings. Now is a great time to speak out and let your members of congress know you want them to move forward with the separation of the Great Lakes and the Mississippi River systems.



Senator Carl Levin and Cheryl Kallio providing comments in Traverse City.

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DIRECTOR'S NOTE

Freedom from Fear

Jill Ryan, Executive Director



A recent message from Martha Beck about fear has gotten me thinking about the role fear plays in my life. It also got me thinking about the ways in which I can step out and eliminate fear by taking positive action.

The environmental issues we all focus on can produce fear if we let them. Some of my personal favorites are fear of contaminated water, fear of illness due to toxins, fear of losing a special place such as a local wetland and fear of lifestyle changes due to climate change.

The stories in this newsletter remind me that I can overcome my fears through action. The many citizen heroes highlighted here show the importance of personal action to our local communities and environments as well as to our larger Great Lakes and world communities.

While trying to save the world can be overwhelming and fear producing if we try to fix everything, focusing on making a difference in our own lives and communities provides the type of positive action that eliminates our fears and creates positive change in the world.

Some of my personal positive actions right now include thinking about the impacts of my purchasing choices, tightening up on my son's tendency to 'leave the lights on for ya,' monitoring local fracking activities in my area and thinking about how to create options for more individuals to be able to install renewable energy for their homes.

I hope your work is helping to create positive ways to keep the fear away in your life.

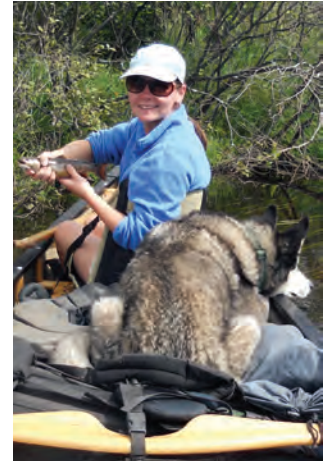
Inaction breeds doubt and fear. Action breeds confidence and courage. If you want to conquer fear, do not sit home and think about it. Go out and get busy.

Dale Carnegie

STAFF VIEWS:

Lending a Hand

by Emily Whittaker,
Policy Specialist



Emily Whittaker

When I started working with Freshwater Future in May of 2013, I was immediately awed by the rapport staff had with the boots-on-the-ground activists from around the region. I saw respect, trust and even friendship with some of the groups. As I began digging into my work, I began to develop these same relationships with our members.

It didn't take long for me to realize that concerned citizens have a variety of needs, including something as simple as lending a hand, or a shoulder, during hard times. I have been approached by groups who are frustrated and need help working with fellow activists. I've been contacted by individuals who are pouring their heart and soul into their work but they are left feeling downtrodden and unrecognized.

People don't only need funding, technical expertise and consulting to get their work done. They also need emotional support, especially at times when they feel like no one is listening. They are all people who do enormous things for the greater good and sometimes need a simple "Thank You." While it's not specifically on our list of programs and services, this organizational practice remains alive and well, setting us apart as a special resource.

We are there to lend that helping hand not only when things get tough for you every day heroes, but also when congratulation is in order too. I hope you take time to look at our Grassroots Advocate Awards and see some of the incredible work done by your fellow Great Lakes citizens. I hope it inspires you to keep up your work as it does for me.

Accounting Insight Services Make an Impact in Kalamazoo, Available to All Member Organizations Too

The Kalamazoo River Cleanup Coalition (KRCC) started as a grassroots citizen action group in 2007 to oppose an EPA-approved plan to dump PCB-contaminated river sediments dredged from the Kalamazoo River into the former Allied Paper site, inside the city limits of Kalamazoo, Michigan. In addition to this main priority, KRCC has partnered with other organizations and local funders to provide environmental education programs for at-risk youth at Pretty Lake Vacation Camp, storm water education for Kalamazoo Public School students and several “Kanoë the Kazoo” floats.

We recently spoke with KRCC’s Executive Director, Gary Wager, about his experiences utilizing Freshwater Future’s accounting Insight Services.

Freshwater Future (FF): Why did you decide you needed bookkeeping help?

KRCC: Because I’m a staff of 0.5, and surely the last person to be in charge of tracking pennies! Otherwise, we have an all-volunteer

board with limited time. We needed a simpler system. We hardly used Quickbooks, but updated to the latest version of the software. It was time to go ahead and start using it.

FF: What did Freshwater Future provide?

KRCC: We received some technical assistance from your staff who provided an online training session so we could learn how to effectively use Quickbooks as quickly as possible.

FF: How have things been since utilizing Freshwater Future’s bookkeeping services?

KRCC: We’re now ready to have our Treasurer set up an effective system to track our various grant funds and running balances.

Learn more about Freshwater Future’s Insight Services Grant Program, including help for accounting services, at freshwaterfuture.org/grant-programs/



Members of KRCC work for a clean Kalamazoo River.



Citizen Advocate Awards:

It is award season—Golden Globes, Grammys, Oscars—but the best awards of all (ok we're biased) are Freshwater Future's Annual Citizen Advocate Awards. May the following individuals and organizations give you hope and inspiration that by working together we CAN protect and restore our precious Great Lakes.



Amy Jo Smith

You know what Lucille Ball had to say, "If you want something done, ask a busy person to do it. The more things you do, the more you can do." Amy Jo Smith is living proof of Lucille Ball's words: she is the Executive Director of Environment Erie, CEO of Eco-Cheeks (a cloth diaper business) and a full-time Mom.

Amy Jo was a Freshwater Future board member for six years, and when she was asked to do something, Amy Jo

always followed through quickly and thoroughly. She was a great ambassador for Freshwater Future, promoting our services and programs and connecting other groups working in Pennsylvania. Thank you Amy Jo serving on Freshwater Future's Board, both as a member and our secretary.



Stacey Smith

Energetic, enthusiastic, and woman of action is what comes to mind when Freshwater Future staffers think of Stacey Smith—and this impression was made just over phone conversations. Stacey Smith has channeled her positivity to restore the health of Onondaga Creek in Syracuse and revitalize her community.

The grassroots group she helped organize, Onondaga Creek Conservation Council, is transform-

ing a decrepit urban park into an oasis with climate savvy plantings. Stacey led the charge by asking for help and input from everywhere she could. Several universities, Roots & Shoots club, and 100 Black Men from Syracuse have all helped. What matters most to Stacey, though, is when the children from the neighborhood help with planting projects and take pride in their accomplishments and enjoy the restored park. Stacey's work has helped many reconnect to the natural world in their neighborhood.



CCBB Member Gene Champagne testifying.

Concerned Citizens of Big Bay

Persistence is a key attribute for environmental advocates and Concerned Citizens of Big Bay has just that. This small group of dedicated individuals in the U.P. continues to be involved in the unfolding story of Eagle Mine in Marquette County. While the permits have been issued for the mine, there is still a great deal of work yet to be done.

Concerned Citizens of Big Bay has been instrumental in shedding light on the dealings between the mining company and local authorities in the construction or improvements of mine haul roads. Members of CCBM dug deep into the notes of meetings and found that the "improvements" were actually plans to build brand new sections of road through the watershed. They began organizing and alerting fellow activists about public hearings, meetings, and comment opportunities. CCBM was successful in getting the Marquette County Board of Commissioners support because of their persistence and desire to protect this beautiful area of the U.P.

With a limited budget and no staff, it is amazing to see how much power we all wield simply through our actions. Freshwater Future is pleased to present this award to these unsung heroes and we hope they keep their persistence up.

Protect Our Water and Environmental Resources (POWER)

Since 1987 POWER has worked in Ontario, formed by concerned citizens, worried about using the Acton quarry as a waste dump. Through their citizen engagement and community awareness, the dump was stopped, helping save the Niagara Escarpment. Their efforts were emboldened and continue to this day.

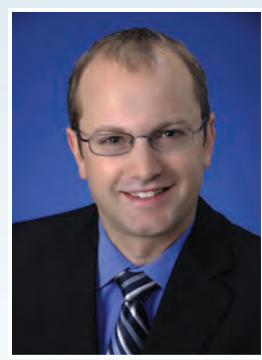


INTO THE COVE © ROBERT DE JONGE



Protecting the Niagara Escarpment is one of the main focuses of POWER.

POWER realized there was a lot more work to be done to promote environmental protection and preserve, protect, restore and improve their natural resources. Freshwater Future applauds POWER for their continuation and development of more projects beyond their original goal, like informing their community of the importance of biodiversity and increasing recycling to prevent more waste from entering their landfill. Thank you for keeping up the good fight!



MIKELAYTON.CA

Mike Layton
Mike Layton is a dedicated environmental and community leader in his home-town of Toronto. Commitment to the protection and restoration of the Great Lakes has led him to serving on the Boards of Freshwater Future and Great Lakes United, acting as a member of Environment Canada's Great Lakes Canadian Advisory Panel and working at Environmental Defence as Deputy Outreach Director where he championed initiatives such as the Green Energy and Green Economy Act.

Most recently, Mike was elected as one of Toronto's youngest Councilors. He brought his experience and commitment to the Great Lakes to city council. In the summer of 2013, Mike spearheaded the "Cut the Carp: Taking Action on Invasive Species in the Great Lakes" campaign to raise awareness on the threat Asian carp pose to the ecological and economic health of the Great Lakes. Mike's motion to call on governments on both sides of the border to take action to fight the invasive species in the Great Lakes was passed by the city council of Toronto.

Thank you Mike for your dedication to keeping the Great Lakes clean, healthy, and Asian carp free!

Mining's Cumulative Impact on Lake Superior

Communities in the Upper Great Lakes region are no strangers to mining. Since the early days, mining has impacted those who lived and settled here, including their descendants living in the area today. Mining impacts communities on a social, environmental, and economic basis and it is imperative that we understand just what those impacts are.

When an application for mining is sought, it is required that the company applying for the mining permit analyze the impacts it will have to that particular community. These analyses have been done on a project by project basis, but what about the big picture? What about all of the "allowable" pollution under permit standards that eventually migrates to the big lake? What if there are dozens of projects that release small amounts individually, but when added together, could make a big problem?

As more and more mining projects come on line, it is important to keep that big picture perspective in order to protect the communities of the Great Lakes. That is why Freshwater Future has been working with local, regional, and statewide partners in developing a request to the U.S. EPA to conduct a Cumulative Effects Assessment. This assessment would provide the big picture that communities need when weighing resource decisions.

According to the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement, the U.S. EPA has stated obligations to conduct activities such as a Cumulative Effects Assessment, since they are committed to the prevention of environmental threats before they turn into problems. In addition, one of the main objectives of the Agreement is to develop a better understanding of the Great Lakes ecosystem. In order to develop that understanding, the Agreement specifically says that it cannot be achieved by addressing individual threats in isolation.

To support this request, 59 businesses and organizations from across the Upper Great Lakes basin signed the Cumulative Effects Assessment request letter and it was sent in December 2013 to the U.S. EPA's Regional Administrator. We look forward to hearing their reply and will continue to work with all of you in the meantime to protect the waters of this area.



BRENDA JONES ~ GLOWING ROCKS, LAKE SUPERIOR

Kalamazoo Nature Center's Urban Nature Park Under Construction

By Ryan Koziatek, Stewardship Field Director, Kalamazoo Nature Center

As Richard Louv points out in his book *Last Child in the Woods*, it has become more apparent in our increasingly "plugged-in" lifestyles that having healthy green spaces and habitats are key to having healthy children, families, and communities. The Kalamazoo Nature Center aims to prove this concept with the Urban Nature Park in downtown Kalamazoo. We are taking a 4-acre brownfield, rehabilitating it with native plants, and establishing a safe and accessible park.

The Kalamazoo Nature Center acquired the urban property in 2005, an urban property on Portage Creek that was cluttered with broken-up concrete slabs, scrap metal, and coal remains from the lot's previous life as a rail yard. Although it was a mess, we weren't discouraged—we had a vision of an oasis that would add to Kalamazoo's mosaic of a continuously improving downtown and we had a multi-step plan:

- 1) Remove waste from past industrial activities;
- 2) Wetland restoration and boardwalk construction; and
- 3) Upland restoration with native plants and construction of a pathway for visitors.

By 2007, we cleaned up all the debris and then we learned of the U.S. EPA's plan to clean-up polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) from sections of Portage Creek, including an area that bisected the Urban Nature Park. The removal of the contaminants was part of a much needed cleanup related to the Allied Paper, Inc./Portage Creek/Kalamazoo River Superfund site. After hundreds of soil core samples measured the effectiveness of the PCB cleanup, we received the go ahead to continue with restoration.

The EPA process to dredge the contaminated soils involved diverting the water and drying the stream bed, thus preventing PCBs from being stirred up and flowing into the Kalamazoo River.

Once all the snow melts this spring, I can't wait to get going on the next phase of the project restoring the wetland. We'll start by removing the sediments from a railroad bed, restoring an old bridge, building a boardwalk, and then lots of planting. In 2015, we plan to focus on the restoration of adjacent upland areas by planting an oak savannah.

One highlight of the project has been the chance to help transform an industrial piece of land into a thriving habitat that includes humans; a place that can remind us of our connection to the natural world. It's also motivating and exciting to watch the enthusiasm for the project grow amongst all of the project partners and residents. There is still a lot of work to do, but we are looking forward to sharing this biologically diverse green space in our growing community for all to enjoy!

For more information about the Urban Nature Park, contact the Stewardship Field Director, Ryan Koziatek, at rkoziatek@naturecenter.org.

Information on the EPA's efforts can be found at www.epa.gov/region5/cleanup/kalproject/.



Thank You to All of Our Donors from December 1, 2013 through February 28, 2014

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The First Round of 2014 Freshwater Future Grants Deadlines is Fast Approaching!

New year, new projects? Freshwater Future is here to help fund those great new projects you have in line for 2014. Our five grant programs offer a variety of funding areas to help your work on issues facing the Great Lakes and their waters.

Projects Grants: Spring Deadline, March 25, 2014

Project Grant Awards (\$500 to \$3,500 USD) help projects that actively promote water resources protection and restoration through advocacy.

Climate Grants: Spring Deadline, April 30, 2014

Climate Grant Awards (\$500 to \$5,000 USD) assist projects that aim to engage communities in preparing and responding to climate change impacts in the Great Lakes Region.

For more details on these and all our grant programs, including how to apply, visit us at freshwaterfuture.org/grant-programs.



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