

GRANT DEADLINE

GREAT LAKES AQUATIC HABITAT NETWORK AND FUND GRANTS PROGRAMS

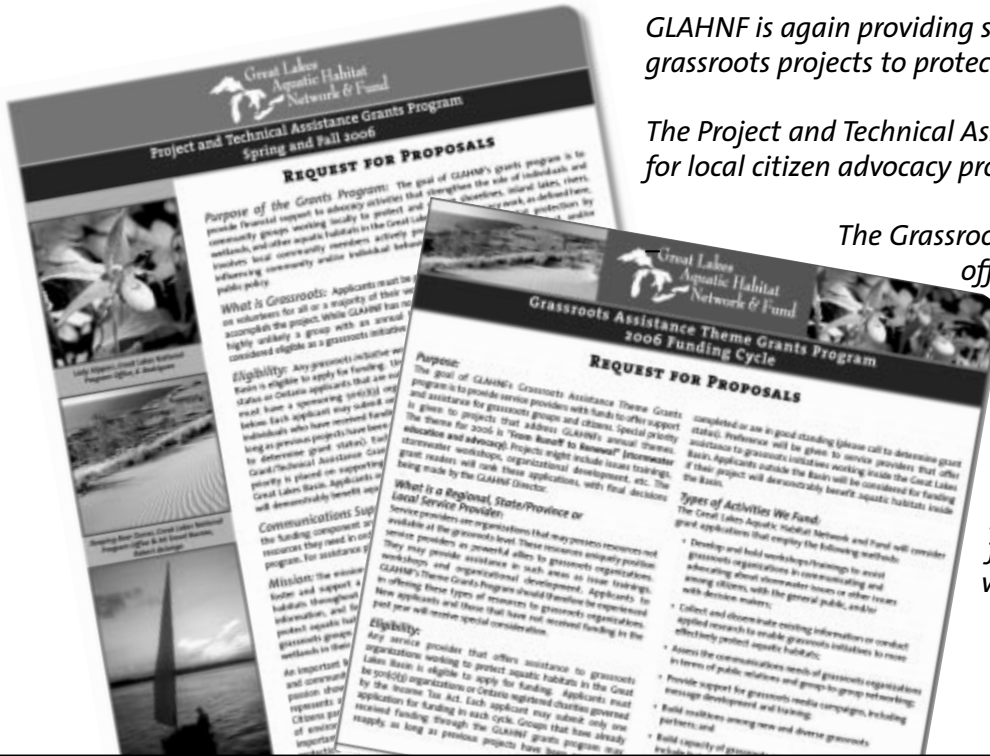
APPLICATION DEADLINE MARCH 31, 2006

GLAHNF is again providing several grant programs to benefit grassroots projects to protect rivers, lakes and wetlands:

The Project and Technical Assistance Program provides funding for local citizen advocacy projects.

The Grassroots Assistance Theme Program offers larger groups (service providers) funding to provide innovative services and assistance to local citizen efforts.

Detailed information, Requests for Proposals and application formats are available at www.glahabitat.org.



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Great Lakes Aquatic Habitat

GREAT LAKES: CONNECTING COMMUNITIES

EARLY SPRING EDITION 2006 VOLUME 14 ISSUE 1

IN THIS ISSUE:

Wider Horizons	2
Dam Evaluation in NY (Grassroots Profile)	3
Great Lakes Restoration (U.S. Basin)	4
Canada's New Environmental Policy (Ontario Basin)	5
Charges in Red Hill Valley (Lake Ontario)	6
The State of Lake Erie (Lake Erie - U.S. Side)	7
Stream Buffers for Niagara Rivers (Lake Erie - Ontario Side)	8
"Polluter Relief Bill" (Lake Huron - U.S. Side)	9
Water Levels Cause for Concern (Lake Huron - Ontario Side)	10
Citizen Action Saves Sand Dunes (Lake Michigan)	11
Lake Superior Basin Project (Lake Superior)	12
Resources	13
Thank You	14
Calendar	15
GLAHNF RFP's	16

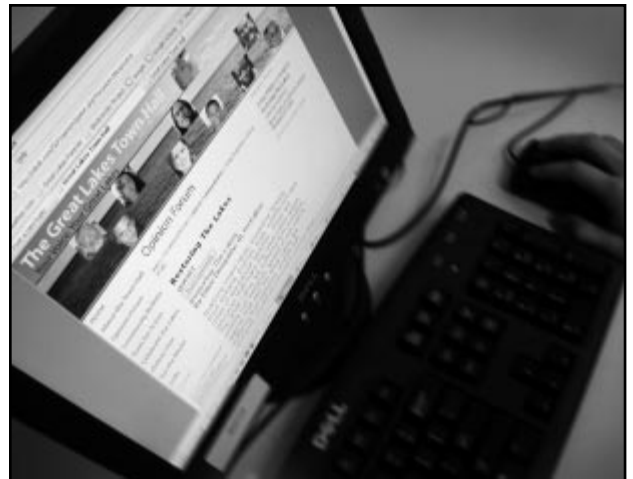
GREAT LAKES TOWN HALL LAUNCHED: New Site Seeks Dialogue and Engagement from 42 Million Residents

By Jeffrey Potter, Biodiversity Project

Imagine what it would be like if you could gather everyone concerned about the future of the Great Lakes into one room. You'd not only need a really big room, you'd also be certain to hear a lot of diverse opinions. Yet this was the vision of the Madison, Wisconsin-based Biodiversity Project who announced their online Great Lakes Town Hall this week.

The Great Lakes Town Hall is a Web-based resource that seeks to provide a forum for the rich diversity of residents of the Great Lakes region. Together, the eight Great Lakes states and two Canadian provinces are home to more than 42 million people. The Great Lakes are at the heart of this community and Biodiversity Project's new interactive Web site, www.greatlaketownhall.org, was designed to connect the many voices, opinions, ideas and experiences that shape our regional identity.

Biodiversity Project is launching the Great Lakes Town Hall as governments and citizens across the region debate major new proposals to promote water conservation and ban water exports, and provide billions of dollars in new public funds for restoring the health of the ecosystem. It also comes at a time when the lakes are under renewed threat from invasive species, sewage overflows, habitat loss, chemical pollutants, climate change and other problems.



Biodiversity Project's new interactive Web site, www.greatlaketownhall.org

"The Lakes are both magnificent and vulnerable," said Jeffrey Potter, Biodiversity Project's Director of Communications. "It's more important than ever to engage our community in the future of our Great Lakes," he added.

According to Potter, the Web was the most logical meeting place for a population living in an area roughly the size of France. "The size of the Great Lakes region makes it difficult to assemble citizens for meetings and action that could protect these treasures," said Potter. "One way to span the great distances among communities is with electronic communication."

Noted author and Great Lakes expert, David Dempsey, who served as an advisor to Michigan Governor Blanchard's administration and was appointed by Bill Clinton to the Great Lakes Fisheries Commission, is co-moderator of the Great Lakes Town Hall. Dempsey noted that, "Without leaving your home or business,

continued on page 2

DID YOU KNOW?

Shoreline Use in the Great Lakes Basin:

- Residential - U.S. 26.5%, Canada 18.6%;
- Commercial/Industrial - U.S. 6.7%, Canada 2.6%;
- Agricultural - U.S. 1.5%, Canada 8.2%;
- Other - U.S. 65.3%, Canada 70.6% (Canada includes transportation/communications, recreation, extraction, water, wetlands, forestry, grassland, barren; U.S. includes public, beaches, forests, barren lands)

DIRECTOR'S NOTES

WIDER HORIZONS...



JILL RYAN

In this issue we hear a great deal about some potentially good things that are happening for the Great Lakes as a whole. You may be asking, but how does that

impact me? For most GLAHNF groups, the work is locally based and focused on protecting particular water resources in a community. So, asking this question is appropriate to ensure each of us utilizes our resources in the most effective way for our organization.

I hope however that you will consider how these "regional" efforts could eventually impact your work and your community. For example, if we consider the current effort to secure funding to "restore" the Great Lakes by implementing a restoration plan developed by over 1,500 diverse participants, we might think "this is just for the Great Lakes, it won't impact my local work." However, as we all know, regional efforts such as restoration are ALL implemented one local ecosystem at a time, in one community at a time.

As a result, we will try to keep you up-to-date by providing information on broad regional efforts to protect and restore the Great Lakes along with information about how those efforts may impact local communities and how you can get involved to shape those efforts. These efforts provide us with an important opportunity to have our "Great Lakes regional" voice heard by decision-makers at all levels.

If I have been of service, if I have glimpsed more of the nature and essence of ultimate good, if I am inspired to reach wider horizons of thought and action, if I am at peace with myself, it has been a successful day.

Alex Noble

Jill M. Ryan



GREAT LAKES TOWN HALL CONTINUED

New Site Seeks Dialogue and Engagement from 42 Million Residents

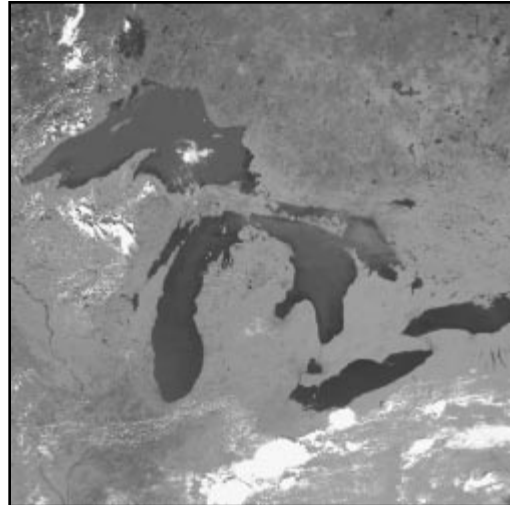


Photo courtesy of Great Lakes Environmental Research Laboratory, (c) G. Leshkevich, 1995.

you can join thousands of residents across the Great Lakes Basin and beyond to participate in the Town Hall community, creating and amplifying the public voice on Great Lakes protection and policy."

The Great Lakes Town Hall includes a variety of resources, opportunities for interactive discussions, networking, and more. The site also includes lighter fare in its "Celebrate the Lakes" sections, including Great Lakes arts news, photos, tourism suggestions, and more.

Paige Wilder, manager for the Great Lakes Town Hall, explained the guest speaker role like this, "Each week we invite grassroots activists, artists, officials, physicians, parents, young people and others to offer insightful commentary on their Great Lakes experiences and views. Of course, we also invite site visitors to comment on their thoughts.

"We're just getting started," noted Potter who expects to build the audience over the next year. The site seeks inclusive engagement by valuing every voice, by promoting the site beyond traditional political circles, and by inviting anyone who has a stake in the Lakes from hunters and environmentalists, to conservatives

and liberals, and First Nations, Canadians and U.S. Americans, to share their views.

Biodiversity Project hopes that their Web-based town hall will help Canadian and U.S. residents and grassroots groups showcase their achievements, broadcast their views, connect with each other, and reach the decision-makers whom they seek to educate on Great Lakes matters. "The best town hall traditions are inclusive and facilitate the expression of all perspectives," concluded Potter. "Our only agenda is increasing public engagement in the future of our remarkable, yet vulnerable, Great Lakes."

The Great Lakes Town Hall is funded by a grant from the Great Lakes Aquatic Habitat Network & Fund. Dave Dempsey, serves as Town Hall co-moderator, inviting guest speakers, introducing the weekly featured issue, and otherwise facilitating discussion and information exchange between participants. The site is managed by Paige Wilder, Great Lakes Forever Program Assistant, with technical assistance from Tamara Tsurkan. Jeffrey Potter, Director of Communications Programs, oversees the project and contributes content as needed.

If you're interested in visiting the Great Lakes Town Hall, simply log onto www.greatlaketownhall.org on the internet.

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Grassroots Profile

DAM EVALUATION IN NEW YORK'S LAKE ONTARIO BASIN

By Chris Stephens, New York Rivers United

Human attributes have altered The Great Lakes Basin ecosystem since human settlement, particularly in this most recent century of accelerated human population growth and economic development. Increasing human influences in the Basin have caused flow conditions in many rivers to fluctuate outside their natural range of variability.

Among the human influences affecting the natural flow of rivers include dams built for hydroelectric power, flood control, irrigation, and water supply. These dams significantly alter the riverine habitat and their riparian zones.

Today, some of the thousands of dams in New York, especially along the Great Lakes Basin, are aging beyond their expected lifespan, and some are causing a variety of safety, environmental, and other problems.

All dams exact heavy tolls on rivers and river life. Since there are more than 6,000 such dams in New York, virtually all of New York State's 17 major watersheds are fragmented and their health degraded by these dams. Dam removal can restore a river's natural values and open recreational and aesthetic opportunities.

New York Rivers United has received funding from the U.S. EPA's Great Lakes National Program Office to perform an assessment of barrier impacts on rivers. This is to determine which dam removal or upstream fish passage in the U.S. Lake Ontario Basin tributaries would provide sustainable habitat for fish and wildlife. The recommendations from this effort will serve as the primary basis for prioritizing U.S. tributaries for new fish passage improvement projects and will identify priority dams for future actions.

While looking at dams on the Grasse River, a tributary to the St. Lawrence in northern New York, New York Rivers United became involved with two other issues on this tributary: the ongoing PCB contaminants and the review of EPA-ordered alternatives. New York Rivers United is working alongside the St.



Effey Falls, a tributary to the Beaver River, was also restored. Photo courtesy of NYRU.



The Beaver River with its restored flows that were established through a Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) relicensing. This was once dewatered. Photo courtesy of NYRU.

Regis Mohawk Tribe's Environment Division to maintain the "free flowing state" as well as its natural beauty.

The second issue is entangled in the first: a new hydro facility has obtained a preliminary permit. It is on a site that was once dammed but has been free-flowing for the last eight years. Fish passage is a major issue with any new dam and because of these issues, the Grasse River has been nominated as one of America's most endangered rivers in need of protection.

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GLAHNEWS:

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Disclaimer:

The Great Lakes Aquatic Habitat News is intended to provide a forum for the free exchange of ideas among citizens and organizations working to protect aquatic habitats in the Great Lakes Basin. The interpretations and conclusions presented in this newsletter represent the opinions of the individual authors. They in no way represent the views of the Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council, the C.S. Mott Foundation, subscribers, donors, or any organization mentioned in this publication.

Great Lakes Basin Update - U.S. Side



TWO STEPS FORWARD FOR THE GREAT LAKES

By Chris Grubb and Molly Flanagan, Great Lakes Natural Resource Center, National Wildlife Federation

Historic Great Lakes Restoration Plan Released – First Benchmark is President's Budget



On December 12th, 2005, Great Lakes elected officials, tribal leaders, state and federal agencies, environmentalists, industry representatives, and others joined together in praise of a shared product: the release of the Great Lakes Regional Collaboration's Strategy to Restore and Protect the Great Lakes. The release culminated a year-long process to produce a blueprint for the lakes' restoration that was initiated by an Executive Order from President Bush.



Members of the Healing Our Waters - Great Lakes Coalition gathered in Chicago on Dec. 12, 2005.

According to Great Lakes scientists, the plan comes just in time. Prior to

the release of the consensus-based restoration plan, over 70 scientists in the Great Lakes released a report, Prescription for Great Lakes Ecosystem Protection and Restoration – Avoiding the Tipping Point of Irreversible Changes, that warned of disturbing signs of environmental decay and emphasized the urgency for acting to restore the lakes.

The unprecedented restoration plan recognizes that we have manageable solutions to the problems facing the Great Lakes. It contains common sense recommendations like investing in aging sewage infrastructure, restoring 550,000 acres of wetlands, planting urban and agricultural buffer strips, and cleaning up toxic hot spots. In total the plan calls for over \$20 billion of

state and federal investments in the Great Lakes over a period of five years.

While all the members of the Great Lakes Regional Collaboration stood in praise of the plan on December 12th, one notable sticking point is how to fund it. The Healing Our WatersSM – Great Lakes (HOW) Coalition, made up of over 85 groups dedicated to restoring the Great Lakes, has developed a campaign to secure investments from state and federal governments commensurate with the job at hand. The HOW Coalition will be looking at the President's Budget released in February as the first real signal of the federal government's commitment to the Great Lakes.

Readers can stay apprised of progress to restore the Great Lakes and get involved at <http://www.restorethelakes.org>.

*Great Lakes Restoration Plan: <http://www.glrc.us>
Scientists' Paper:*

<http://www.restorethelakes.org/PrescriptionforGreatLakes.pdf>

PROTECT THE WATERS

Great Lakes Governors and Premiers Sign Precedent-Setting Agreements to Protect Great Lakes Waters

On December 13th, 2005 after nearly five years of negotiations, two public comment periods, and tens of thousands of citizen comments, Great Lakes governors and premiers endorsed the Great Lakes – St. Lawrence River Basin Water Resources Compact and its companion bi-national agreement. The agreements provide the most fundamental change to the region's water laws in the last century.

The agreements protect the Great Lakes from harm by implementing a strong and effective water management system, including protections against water diversions out of the Basin and unwise water use within the Basin. This means closing the door on diversions of water to far-away places like the Middle East and the arid Southwest and also putting our own house in order to ensure that we are using water wisely here at home. The compact would allow the Great Lakes region to maintain control over Great Lakes water in the face of growing demand from across the nation and the world. The agreements guarantee the long-term protection and sound management of Great Lakes water. If implemented they would ensure that the water will be available for

the people and wildlife that depend on it and will remain protected for generations to come.

While the endorsement of these agreements is a tremendous victory for the region, it is only the beginning of a process that could take several years to complete. In order for the compact to become binding law in the United States, it must be ratified by each of the eight Great Lakes states' legislatures and also gain approval from Congress. This is a tall order and will require the active participation and support of Great Lakes citizens like you!

You can help make history by contacting your state legislators and letting them know that you support protecting Great Lakes waters and they should too.

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Great Lakes Basin Update - Ontario Side



ANTICIPATING CANADA'S NEW ENVIRONMENTAL POLICIES

By Krystyn Tully, Lake Ontario Waterkeeper

On January 23, 2006, the Conservative Party won 124 seats in the House of Commons, enough to oust the ruling Liberals and form the next Government of Canada. The election was our second in the last two years and the outcome – a deeply stratified Parliament with strong representation from four different political parties – suggests that we can expect another one before too long. In the meantime, there are two things that Great Lakes residents need to know about Canada's 39th Parliament.

First, the Conservatives may be the governing party, but they do not have enough elected members to overrule the opposition parties. This means the government is unable to introduce even the most basic changes without the opposition's consent, so we are unlikely to see dramatic policy changes affecting the Great Lakes in the short-term.

Second, the election has been an exciting time for journalists, pollsters, and political junkies, but not so thrilling for environmentalists. References to clean air and clean water can be found in every party's written platform, but they rarely popped up on the campaign trail. Most notably, environmental issues were not featured in any of the four leadership debates. The new government was not elected with any clear mandate to change, eliminate, or expand national environmental programs. So, without a lot of debate about air, water, or wildlife, it is hard to say exactly what they will do.

With Conservatives in power for the first time in thirteen years, Lake Ontario Waterkeeper thought it would be interesting to make a few predictions about the new government's environmental agenda. Based on the party's statements to the media and written platform, we predict that the following environmental themes (if any!) will develop in the Great Lakes Basin this year:

Cracking Down on Cargo Sweeping

One of two oft-repeated environmental promises on the election trail was the Conservatives' vow to crack down on the shipping industry. Last fall, articles in *Now* and *This* magazines drew national attention to the rampant practice of "cargo-sweeping"—cleaning out the holds of cargo ships and dumping the waste directly into the Great Lakes. The shipping industry dumps some 2,500 tons of petroleum coke, lead ore, coal and other contaminants into the lakes each year. The Conservatives railed

against the practice throughout the campaign. Cargo-sweeping is illegal, Waterkeeper has argued. And the Conservatives supported this position while in opposition. It is not yet clear what enforcement program they will introduce to curb the practice.

Abandoning Kyoto, introducing the Clean Air Act

The second oft-repeated environmental promise was the pledge to abandon the Kyoto Accord in favour of a "home-grown" Clean Air Act. Arguing that the Kyoto targets cannot be met, the new Prime Minister believes "made-in-Canada" targets will be more effective in reducing emissions of greenhouse gases. It is not yet clear how new targets would speed up emissions reductions or protect the Great Lakes from the effects of global warming.

Selling water to the world market

One Conservative member from British Columbia commented during the campaign that he hopes to increase sales of water to other countries. James Lunney suggested that water withdrawals would have minimal impacts on ocean levels, create jobs, and quench the thirst of an "increasingly desperate" world. Mr. Lunney

told constituents he had yet to hear an argument to dissuade him from the idea that Canada could develop a "good export market" for its water, aside from "emotional rhetoric." It is still unknown if Mr. Lunney's views are shared by party leaders or if the Conservatives are interested in joining Ontario and Quebec, as they work with the eight Great Lakes states to regulate water use in the Great Lakes Basin. In the future, the Conservatives hope to subject every international agreement to a vote in the federal Parliament, a process that the Great Lakes Basin Sustainable Water Resources Agreement did not undergo.

Beefing up property rights

Though it is highly unlikely that a fragile minority government will be able to change the Canadian Constitution in the near future, the Conservative Party hopes to add property rights to the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. The party also wants to pass legislation that will compensate people who are deprived of property as a result of government legislation or policy. This proposal harkens to the controversial "Takings Clause" in the United States, which is being used to strike down environmental protections unless the government compensates landowners. If this kind of legislation is introduced, the federal government might be forced to pay polluters to comply with environmental laws.

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Canada's House of Commons. Photo courtesy of Lake Ontario Waterkeeper.

Lake Ontario Basin Update



CITIZEN EFFORTS LEAD TO CHARGES IN HAMILTON'S RED HILL VALLEY

By Krystyn Tully, Lake Ontario Waterkeeper

On August 4, 2004, stones the size of softballs went flying through the air in a Hamilton, Ontario neighbourhood. Area residents watched as rocks smashed into a car window, a fence, a roof, and a driveway. "My kids play outside and if they were out there that day, who knows what could have happened," one resident told the local newspaper. "They could have been hit in the head."

The flying rocks came from construction on the Red Hill Creek Expressway, about 650 feet away. The Expressway was being built through the Red Hill Valley, one of the last green corridors linking the Niagara Escarpment to Lake Ontario. Instead of elevating the highway and bringing it over the top of the Escarpment, the City of Hamilton had opted to blast through the towering rock face, carving a notch into it and using the aggregate for the new road.

The company hired to do the blasting suspended its work and the city and labour ministry launched investigations. After deciding that a revised blasting program and repairs to damaged property were adequate, the City of Hamilton endorsed the company's work and construction resumed.

But local citizens groups were not satisfied. Members of Environment Hamilton and Lake Ontario Waterkeeper talked to residents who had witnessed the blasting, studied media reports, and dug up legal precedents documenting convictions under Ontario's Environmental Protection Act for flyrock.

The two groups put together a brief – a collection of documents that verified their concerns – requesting that the Ministry of Environment launch its own investigation. Representatives of Environment Hamilton and Lake Ontario Waterkeeper encouraged the Ministry to take every measure to ensure public safety:

"We believe the City of Hamilton's past environmental conduct places an onus on your regulatory agency to investigate environmental complaints quickly and diligently. As enforcement of our environmental laws is essential to preventing and deterring environmental crimes in the future, a duty of care rests with your office to ensure the facts in this case are investigated and dealt with in a legal and professional manner."



*Residents watch as the Red Hill Valley is bulldozed to make way for the Expressway.
Photo courtesy of Lake Ontario Waterkeeper.*



*Red Hill Valley under construction.
Photo courtesy of Lake Ontario Waterkeeper.*

The Ministry of Environment immediately responded, forwarding the brief to its enforcement department. A year and a half later, word came that the Ministry of Environment had charged the company with four violations of the Environmental Protection Act:

Two counts discharging a contaminant into the natural environment that causes an adverse effect and two counts failing to notify the Ministry of Environment following the discharge of a contaminant

After the charges were laid, it took the efforts of independent citizens' groups to again bring the information to the public. "The Ministry of Environment no longer announces when charges are laid," wrote one local reporter, noting that it was Lake Ontario Waterkeeper and Environment Hamilton who made details of the charges known.

The case has yet to go to court – a date is set for early February, 2006 – but Lake Ontario Waterkeeper and Environment Hamilton believe the charges will encourage the company to be more diligent in the future. The groups also hope their story will encourage more citizens to document environmental concerns and push for better enforcement of our environmental laws.

*For more information and updates on the story:
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Lake Erie Basin Update - U.S. Side



THE STATE OF LAKE ERIE

By Sandy Bihn, Western Lake Erie Waterkeeper

The fire on the Cuyahoga River, a Lake Erie tributary, got needed national attention in the 60's – some of the same signs and new ones are showing up in the research now. Then, phosphorous from wastewater plants and pollution were the major issues. Great progress was made to bring the lakes back. But Lake Erie is again showing signs of the past.

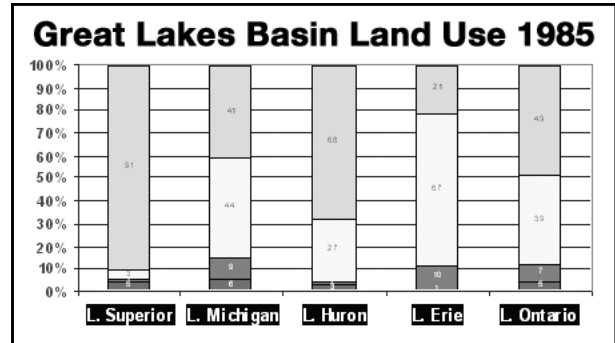
How serious is it? Why Lake Erie? Lake Erie is the warmest and shallowest of all the Great Lakes with the highest percentage of agricultural and residential development in all the Great Lakes. Lake Erie's basin is but 21% forested while Lake Superior is 91% forested.

The western basin of Lake Erie, with an average depth of twenty four feet, requires one million cubic yards to be dredged annually from the Maumee River and Maumee Bay (with an average depth of but five feet) to maintain the Toledo shipping channel. It is the most dredged area in the Great Lakes. The root of this problem is the Great Lakes largest watershed – the Maumee with sediments from draining the old Black Swamp pouring into the ditches, creeks, rivers, bays and ultimately the lake. Draining the swamp, dredging, introduction of invasive species, wastewater discharges, nonpoint sources and toxics are all contributing to warning signs for Lake Erie and particularly for the western basin.

What are the issues causing concern? They include algae blooms, growing percentages of phosphorous and nitrates in the waters, nonnative white perch dominating the fish population in the Basin and invasive species. The dominant fish in the western basin of Lake Erie are for the first time, the white perch, which are known to eat walleye larvae. Many believe the white perch will significantly reduce the walleye population. White perch began to overtake Lake Ontario until a cold winter that froze the lake for two months and killed the white perch. Such a scenario in Western Lake Erie to control the white perch population seems unlikely.

Lake Erie is the most biologically productive Great Lake and produces more fish than all of the other Great Lakes combined. It is very important to watch Lake Erie to know what may be in store for the other Great Lakes.

Phosphorous was key to turning around Lake Erie in the 60's. Ongoing studies by Heidelberg College show that dissolved phosphorous has been increasing in western Lake Erie tributaries since 1995. Now ten years later, with the phosphorous problem again growing, Lake Erie is experiencing dead zones (a lack of oxygen) in Sandusky Bay and the central basin of Lake Erie.



White = Agriculture, Light Gray = Forest,
Dark Gray = Residential, Black = Other
Ohio Sea Grant, Ohio State University

The source of the phosphorous may be wastewater plants, zebra mussel excretions, and nonpoint sources including 'factory farms.'

Researchers also believe that Lake Erie's 'warning signs,' in addition to those already mentioned stem from water level fluctuations, global warming, and dredging (increasing flows and decreasing the normal water flow patterns into marshes and wide dispersion patterns). In the extreme western basin there are three coal-fired power plants that use about three billion gallons of water a day. Two of the plants discharge the heated waters into the very shallow Maumee Bay. The three plants entrain an estimated ten billion fish per year and impinge hundreds of thousands fish. The cumulative impacts of heating the water and killing these fish, in the shallowest and warmest area in the Great Lakes are unknown.

Lake Erie is the only Great Lake above sea level with waters turning over every two to three years. The clock is ticking on the Great Lakes and Lake Erie with the 'warning' signs: phosphorous, pollution, algae, dead zones, large fish kills, heated waters from power plants, and invasive species. Great Lakes restoration funding was needed yesterday. Every day we wait increases the vulnerability and future of all the Great Lakes, but particularly Lake Erie. The burning of the Cuyahoga will not happen again, but will it take another Lake Erie major event to motivate congress, states, and local governments to provide the resources necessary to clean up and preserve the world's greatest fresh water supply? The wake-up call is before us. The only question is will we respond quickly enough?

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Lake Erie Basin Update - Ontario Side



BUILDING STREAM BUFFERS FOR NIAGARA'S RIVERS PROJECT

By Patti Green, Niagara Restoration Council

The Niagara Restoration Council (NRC) has been actively involved in environmental projects in the Niagara River Watershed in south eastern Ontario for over ten years. In that time we have partnered with the community to design, implement, and monitor various projects. Two current endeavours include a fish barrier removal project in the Niagara River watershed, and a wildlife corridor enhancement project within the subwatersheds of the Fifteen, Sixteen, and Eighteen Mile Creeks.

The Niagara Restoration Council (NRC), through its project, 'Building Stream Buffers for Niagara's Rivers,' aims to improve water quality and enhance wildlife habitat through the planting of riparian vegetation along watercourses in the Niagara region. In the last couple of years, the NRC has undertaken several highly successful riparian buffer plantings on municipal property, golf courses and high traffic areas that provide many opportunities for public involvement and benefit.

The project aims to restore streamside vegetation for the fulfillment of many ecological purposes, such as the provision of critical shoreline habitat for wildlife. Buffers also promote bank stabilization and protect stream banks from erosion, thereby reducing sediment loads into the creek. Plants protect water quality through the filtration of pesticides, fertilizers and overland surface flow before they reach the watercourse. Vegetation further moderates water levels and flow velocities through long term bank storage.

Maple Park, one of the NRC's most recent buffer planting locations, is a public recreation park owned by the City of Welland that has a 350 meters section of Draper's Creek running through it. Prior to restoration in 2004, the banks of the creek were barren of sufficient vegetation, providing no buffering or filtration capacity to the creek, or habitat for wildlife. Fish and wildlife sightings were essentially non-existent.

In 2004, the City of Welland allowed the NRC to plant an experimental section along 140 meters of the creek, and due to its great success in the first year, further buffer plantings occurred in 2005. The "before" photograph illustrates the prime candidacy of Draper's creek for riparian buffer restoration.

The site was prepared through the removal of sod, and then planted with over 20 species of native riparian grasses, shrubs, and wildflowers including black-eyed susan, blue vervain, cardinal flower, butterfly weed, swamp milkweed, New England aster, as well as dogwoods and willows. Over forty volunteers and local landowners from four of the neighbouring properties came to assist with planting!

Due to the success after the first year of planting, the City of Welland agreed to have the Niagara Restoration Council continue the planting of an additional 210 meters of Draper's Creek in Maple Park in 2005.



*Maple Park
"before." Photo
courtesy of NRC.*



*Over 40 volunteers came to plant!
Photo courtesy of NRC.*



*Draper's Creek in Maple Park with
experimental buffer strip.
Photo courtesy of NRC.*

The project was made possible with the financial assistance of the Government of Canada's Great Lakes Sustainability Fund, TD Bank Friends of the Environment Foundation, and the Niagara Community Foundation, as well as the logistical and technical support from the Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority and other project partners.

Overall, the project has been very successful, and has realized many of the goals of the 'Building Stream Buffers for Niagara's Rivers Project'. The project has created an opportunity for the public to learn about riparian buffer strips, and their function in an ecosystem. Landowners have become very involved with the project, and have agreed to help maintain the "no mow" zones alongside the creek. Signs explaining the project have been erected on site, and provide information regarding their importance.

The 350 meters buffer strip established has resulted in the creation of 3000 meters² of wildlife habitat. Immediately following the planting of vegetation, an increase in wildlife was seen, including a greater presence of dragonflies, butterflies, and ducks. It quickly became evident that the vegetative growth was stabilizing the banks and reducing erosion. A few months after planting, the creek began to form some minor bank undercutting, leading to the creation of superior refuge areas for fish. This riparian vegetation demonstrates the ability of buffer strips to perform vital ecological functions, while being pleasing to the eye in a municipal park!

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Lake Huron Basin Update - U.S. Side



GOVERNOR GRANHOLM VETOES 'POLLUTER RELIEF BILL'

By Michelle Hurd Riddick, Lone Tree Council

The Saginaw News chose an unfortunate headline ("Cleanup bill nixed") to lead their coverage of Governor Granholm's (MI) recent veto of a bill that would have let polluters off the hook for dioxin cleanup in the Tittabawassee River watershed. House Bill 4617 is anything BUT a cleanup bill. This Trojan horse piece of legislation is not a cleanup bill and the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) rightly defined it as a "Polluter Relief Act." In paragraph three of her press release on the veto, the Governor points out the devil hiding in the detail of the legislation.

Governor Granholm states, "In addition to these deficiencies, House Bill 4617 is poorly drafted, containing incomplete citations to administrative rules. These technical problems were identified by the Department of Environmental Quality yet were ignored during the legislative process. These technical omissions have consequences. By referencing the incorrect rules, this legislation would foreclose the ability of the state to protect surface water from contamination, increasing health risks for homeowners and Michigan's environment."



*Examples of waters that could be impacted by this legislation.
Photos courtesy of Paul Pounders.*

The failure to include the administrative rules in the bill would have eliminated the soil and sediment contact criteria for dioxin. With the sweep of the legislative pen these bills would eliminate the 90 parts per thousand soil contact criteria for dioxin.

These incomplete citations and administrative rule omissions in HB 4617 were not limited to just dioxin. It includes a lengthy list of chemicals harmful to people and all biota. One section omitted lists the rules (exposure/transport pathways) that DEQ must consider in a generic residential cleanup. The omission of the rules for soil direct contact and sediment cleanup would prevent the DEQ from considering any of these criteria for generic residential cleanups. In addition, the omission of another rule could mean the DEQ would be unable to require response activity to address other risks (such as food chain contamination) that are not ordinarily factored into generic cleanup criteria.

Michigan is the only state entirely in the watershed of the Great Lakes. Either the Great Lakes are a national treasure to be protected or they are not. Either public health matters or it does not.

Governor Granholm did not nix a cleanup bill. She defended public health and our water resources.

DEQ and EPA sampling demonstrate that dioxin is pervasive in very high concentrations along 52 miles of river and floodplain in the Saginaw Bay Watershed, Michigan's largest watershed. These rivers empty into the Saginaw Bay of Lake Huron. For more information go to www.trwnews.net.

To be added to the Dioxin Update List, please e-mail Michelle, michdave@aol.com and ask to be added to the list.

BEACH DOOMING

2006 Important Year for Wetlands Beach Dooming

After the low water years of 2000 and 2001 a group of property owners upset about the presence of emerging coastal wetlands convinced the Michigan legislature to pass "beach grooming" amendments. Unfortunately, these amendments amounted to the first substantial weakening of the Michigan Wetland Protection Act in its over 25 year history. The one silver lining in that dark cloud was a "sunset provision" that called for the amendments to only be in effect until December 31, 2006. The same property rights group that pushed for the original amendments will likely be pushing to remove the sunset provision, and it will be critical for grassroots advocates to remind legislators of the importance of protecting our coastal wetlands. Stay tuned to this column throughout 2006 for more.

Lake Huron Basin Update - Ontario Side



WATER LEVELS A CONCERN IN LAKES MICHIGAN AND HURON

By Mary Muter, Georgian Bay Association

Back in 1999 when water levels began to decline, no one was surprised as the levels had been well above average for 30 years, and we all knew that Great Lakes water levels are cyclical. In others words we expected the decline. But when levels stayed low for five years and approached record lows, some people began to ask questions. And in the relatively shallow waters among the 30,000 islands on Georgian Bay, the impact of sustained low levels was significant. The main concern was that the wetlands not only dried up but also began to convert to grassy meadows. Wetland biologists told us that once that happened it would take a decade or more for the wetlands to re-establish if and when the water levels returned to more normal levels. And even more worrisome was the reality that the aquatic life forced out of these particular wetlands could not find similar habitat on the adjacent steep granite shorelines. Since wetlands are needed by over 70% of Great Lakes fish at some point in their life cycle for spawning, nursery or feeding habitat, we knew that this loss of wetlands could further threaten the already declining Georgian Bay/Lake Huron native fishery.

It was then that the Georgian Bay Association (GBA) began its own investigation into what might be causing this steep decline in water levels. It is a very complex topic, for many factors

influence levels; so from our membership we formed a committee with several engineers reviewing extensive historical data. We came to the conclusion that, at the place where Lake Huron drains out, there appeared to be an increase in the conveyance capacity of the St. Clair River that could be contributing to the lower lake levels. Then GBA Foundation decided to retain the internationally respected coastal consulting engineering firm W.F. Baird and Associates to review our findings. This was a huge undertaking by a relatively small non-governmental organization (NGO), and GBA Foundation had certainly not done anything like it before. Baird then confirmed our findings and added more shocking ones. The research report is available on our website: www.georgianbay.ca.

According to the Baird Report, Lakes Michigan and Huron – considered one body of water because they are connected at the Straits of Mackinac – have permanently lost an additional 12 inches since 1970 because of ongoing erosion at the mouth of the St. Clair River. This erosion has gone undetected since the 1962 dredging for navigation.

All told, the dredging and erosion have accounted for a water loss from the lakes equivalent to 28 Lake St. Clairs or 1/4 of Lake Erie, according to the Baird Report.

Because the extra water moves so quickly through Lake St. Clair, the Detroit River, and Lake Erie on its way over Niagara Falls, it has not raised the levels of those waters appreciably, reported Dr. Rob Nairn, the principal researcher. A modest resurgence in Great Lakes water levels during the past two years is part of a natural cycle, but doesn't mask the fact that the Huron/Michigan waters are still a foot below where they would be without the erosion, Nairn said. During the last half of 2005, the resurgence seems to have ebbed away. And the problem can't be explained by natural forces, said Nairn. Geologists say that erosion in the St. Clair River basin stopped between 2,000 and 3,000 years ago. But it began again in the 1900s because of man-made factors including:

- Dredging of the channel to 27 feet deep to accommodate ships;
- Erosion at the sites of sand and gravel mining that took place in the river in the early part of the 1900s; and
- Erosion-control structures protecting beaches on lower Lake Huron that deprive the St. Clair River of sediment that normally would have washed into it and filled holes in the river bottom.

The Georgian Bay Association took the Baird Report to the International Joint Commission (IJC), and we were told that this level of work by an NGO was unheard of. We are pleased that the IJC recently announced a revised Upper Lakes Levels Study that includes best mitigation designs and costs.



Top Photo; 1999.

Bottom Photo; The same wetland 2001-03.

continued on page 14

Lake Michigan Basin Update



CITIZEN ACTION SETS THE STAGE FOR DECISION TO PROTECT LAKE MICHIGAN SAND DUNE

By Jamie Morton, Alliance for the Great Lakes

A long-awaited decision by Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) Director Steven E. Chester, denying Dune Harbor Estates, LLC for a second time a permit to tunnel through a 4,000-year-old barrier sand dune on the Lake Michigan shore near Muskegon, Michigan was recently celebrated by local groups and citizens.

Chester's decision, unless appealed, brings to a close a nearly five-year dispute between local residents, municipalities, environmental groups and Nugent Sand -- a mining company that created Dune Harbor Estates, LLC. Nugent has mined dune sand at this site for nearly 100 years and is preparing the area for a residential housing development. As part of their end use of the site Dune Harbor pursued a permit to build a pipeline through the dune to dump treated mining wastewater into Lake Michigan and to regulate the levels of two inland lakes created by the mining company's activities in order to maximize acreage for the residential development.

The dune is among those recognized by the state as "critical" and as such is protected under Michigan law. The state describes a critical dune area as a "unique, fragile, and irreplaceable resource." Because of their fragile nature, most uses and structures on dunes are prohibited unless a permit is granted by the DEQ. In addition to the potential of negatively impacting the protected dune the project would have also disrupted beach walking opportunities, potentially impacted the health of Lake Michigan and may have resulted in the over-development of sensitive dune areas.

During the permitting process, Muskegon Save Our Shoreline members and other concerned groups and citizens worked diligently by educating themselves on the issues, working with regional organizations to gain support, capturing media attention and organizing protests to raise public awareness about the adverse effects the project would have on the local environment and Lake Michigan.

"The decision proves citizen involvement to protect the environment is essential and effective," according to Darlene DeHudy, vice president of Muskegon Save Our Shoreline, a group that for the past 30 years has served generations to come through its ongoing efforts to protect the Lake Michigan shoreline. DeHudy encourages "all citizens to be vigilant and stand up for the environment. It can truly make a difference."

If allowed, this permit would have critically weakened the laws that protect our dunes in Michigan. This decision sends a strong message that the DEQ is prepared to uphold the laws that protect our Great Lakes resources, like our sand dunes. DEQ's decision to deny the permit has strengthened the Sand Dune Protection and Management Act of Michigan so that it can better protect these special places. Dune Harbor Estates is expected to appeal the decision.



According to The Nature Conservancy, "The sand dunes of the Great Lakes support more unique species and communities than any other part of the Great Lakes system." And Lake Michigan dunes contain the largest assemblage of freshwater dunes in the world.



Local citizens protest Nugent's proposal to tunnel through the dunes.

For more information:

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Lake Superior Basin Update



LAKE SUPERIOR BASIN PROJECT FOSTERS A SENSE OF PLACE

By Joanie McGuffin, Lake Superior Conservancy and Watershed Council

We live in Ontario, near the eastern shore of Lake Superior between Batchawana and Goulais Bays, arguably one of the most beautiful landscapes on Earth. Four very different seasons, a wide variety of ecosystems, a rich cultural history with First Nations, and a significant geographic location create an incredible natural classroom just waiting to be experienced. In our nearby city, Sault Ste. Marie, there is a high school that has been doing just that.

In 1992 Bob Moore and John Ferguson, department heads in geography and English at White Pines Collegiate & Vocational School, discovered the Rivers Project. The Rives Project began as a pilot project of 8 schools along the Mississippi and lower Illinois River. Collecting and analyzing water samples, students were learning in a hands-on way about the river flowing past and influencing their communities. The Rivers Project had evolved to include mathematics, social studies and language arts. This cross-curriculum study got Moore and Ferguson imagining a similar program at their high school using the connectivity of the Lake Superior watershed and shoreline. They quickly understood the formidable impact such a program could have on the lives of the teachers and students involved.

By integrating curriculum around the central theme of the Lake Superior watershed, and by providing opportunities for students and teachers to work collaboratively, the Lake Superior Basin program would instill a sense of belonging to and a sense of pride about living on the greatest expanse of freshwater on Earth. "Our idea was to start with White Pines [schools]" Bob recently explained to me "and then share this with schools and students around Lake Superior." The teachers began to develop partnerships in the community with businesses, and federal and provincial government agencies. A wealth of support ensued from the private sector.



*Students investing in Harmony Beach.
Photo courtesy of Joanie and Gary McGuffin.*

A critical component of the Lake Superior Basin project was the adoption of Harmony Beach. Ontario's Ministry of Natural Resources provided dune grasses and pine for regeneration. The government agency's shorelines technician, Peter Burtch, helped organize the first student field trip to the shores of Batchawana Bay where the restoration began. Not long afterwards, a contingency of more than a dozen teachers from a variety of subject areas came to the beach to find out how they might "use" the Lake Superior experience in their teachings. Even the skeptics were quickly won over.

This hands-on restoration of a heavily used public beach provided students with ongoing opportunities to excel in the arts, language, science, technology and social studies with environment at the core. Other events have included: planting trout fingerlings in Lake Superior; participating in a sweet grass ceremony with native elders near White Fish Island; sketching Ojibway pictographs at Agawa Bay; cutting holes through the lake ice and operating Echmann dredges to retrieve bottom sediment samples for analysis; and the orchestration of a huge blacklight multimedia theatre production complete with an original musical score employing Lake Superior stones as percussion instruments.

As the project progressed, the students took more and more ownership in Harmony Beach. They cared about and cleaned up the refuse left by careless people. They worked with the Ministry of Natural Resources to place signs on the beach forbidding vehicular access to protect the fragile dune grasses. The students took their concerns about water quality to the public through the local media. They raised funds to produce educational signage



*Bird's eye view of Harmony Beach.
Photo courtesy of Joanie and Gary McGuffin.*

continued on page 14

Resources



Why Bad Presentations Happen to Good Causes

Would you like to deliver more engaging, informative, and persuasive presentations? Do you supervise colleagues who must give presentations on a regular basis? *Why Bad Presentations Happen to Good Causes* was written by Andy Goodman and was designed and published by Cause Communications. Based on unprecedented research across the public interest sector, and incorporating the advice of twenty highly regarded public speaking experts, *Why Bad Presentations Happen to Good Causes*, can help you avoid the most commonly made mistakes (“The Fatal Five”), structure your information in ways that help audiences absorb it, use PowerPoint more effectively, and deliver your talks with greater confidence.

If you work full-time (paid or unpaid) at a nonprofit, foundation, government agency or educational institution, you may request one complimentary copy.

For more information, please visit:

<http://www.agoodmanonline.com/purple.html>

CharityAdvantage

CharityAdvantage is a membership-based organization for US nonprofits. Choose to subscribe as either a “Tech Associate” or “Tech Partner.” The “Tech Associates” subscription is free and entitles the subscriber to: Computer Donations - IBM & Dells, Free Software- Over 500 titles, Fundraising Resource Center, Nonprofit Education, Technology News, Technology Consultation.

Learn more at: <http://www.charityadvantage.com/index.asp>

New Report on the Great Lakes: “Partners in Pollution”

The Canadian Environmental Law Association and Environmental Defence, through their PollutionWatch project, released a new report on the Great Lakes in 2006, “Partners in Pollution: An Assessment of Continuing Canadian and United States Contributions to Great Lakes Pollution.” “Partners in Pollution” is a groundbreaking report that offers, for the first time in many years, an assessment of continuing Canadian and U.S. contributions to Great Lakes pollution. It uses a matched pollution data set collected through Canada’s National Pollutant Release Inventory and the U.S. Toxics Release Inventory, to analyze the releases and transfers of pollutants on both sides of the Great Lakes border for 2002 and the trends between 1998 and 2002.

The report is available in full at www.PollutionWatch.org.

Tools “For the Media”

On the Great Lakes Forever web site, in the “For the Media” section you’ll find all of the latest press releases, fact sheets, and images you’ll need to write a timely, informative, interesting story on the health and future of the Great Lakes. The “For the Media” section offers several image banks of royalty-free images to use with your Great Lakes stories as well as various fact sheets including: Water Supply Fact Sheet, Habitat Protection Fact Sheet, Invasive Species Fact Sheet, and the Homeowner Tip Sheet for Great Lakes Protection.

Find these tools on the web at: <http://greatlakesforever.org/>

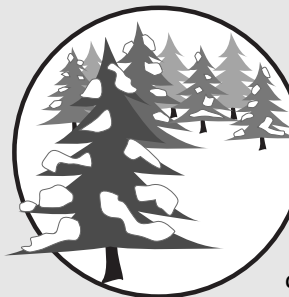
Project FLOW

Fisheries Learning on the Web or FLOW, is a free, web-based collection of lessons and activities about the Great Lakes ecosystem, fisheries and stewardship. Each lesson addresses state and national educational standards and benchmarks and includes objectives, activity plans, materials lists and assessment rubrics. FLOW provides Michigan Science teachers with hands-on activities that are “plug-n-play.” Project FLOW is a project of the Michigan Sea Grant.

For more information please visit:

<http://miseagrant.umich.edu/flow/index.html>

SAVE A TREE



SUBSCRIPTION INFORMATION:

Please e-mail Emily at emily@watershedcouncil.org if you have any changes to your contact information.

If you wish to receive GLAHNF correspondence electronically, please include your email address

and be sure to note “electronic subscription” in the subject of your e-mail.

Thank You!



We wish to thank our November, December and January Donors...

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THANK YOU!

Your generous donations enable us to continue to support grassroots aquatic habitat advocacy all over the Great Lakes Basin.

continued from page 10

Lake Huron Basin Update - Ontario Side



Unfortunately we have learned that the IJC had looked at this loss of Huron/Michigan water on at least three previous occasions. The last time was in the early 1960's, when they knew engineers were again lowering lake levels by dredging for the 27-foot channel. But at that same time the IJC discovered that Chicago was taking too much water; so it forced Chicago to cut back. Then water levels rose, and the interest in mitigation was lost. The problem has now come back as the ongoing erosion continues to allow more water out. Recent bathymetry data shared with us by the US Geological Survey show that additional erosion at the outflow of Lake Huron took place between 2000 and 2003.

We are hopeful that a solution can finally be put in place. The first action will be to cover over the eroding areas with hard rock substrate to stop the erosion of exposed soft clay. This may actually improve a resurgent sturgeon spawning habitat in the very deep, fast flowing part of the river, where it is now over 60 feet deep. (Ships need only 30 feet of depth.) And then flexible control gates such as were designed previously could be put in place. One thing we know we don't want, or need is locks. They would lead to very challenging ecological problems.

Until something is done though, the forecast for future water levels is not good – especially if climate change is added to the mix. The other Great Lakes have the capacity to hold back water under any scenario. Something has to be put in place for Lakes Michigan and Huron.

For more information:

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continued from page 12

Lake Superior Basin Update



and to take their story on the road to share with students around Superior. By providing the students with a real hands-on project in the field, the teachers of White Pines were encouraging community interaction to find solutions to problems. The students were empowered by their capacity to make a difference. They had control over improving the quality of their lives and that of other living things. The more time the students spent on the project, the more their feeling of attachment to the Lake grew. One riveting experience that stands out in the participants minds was when a group of students came up from the River Project in Illinois. As the school bus descended into the Goulais River valley en route to Harmony Beach and the Chippewa River, the Illinois students had their faces pressed to the window panes. During the water testing, one student from White Pines overheard two Illinois students exclaim incredulously, "My test says this water is safe to drink!"

White Pines principal Mark Zorzit is highly supportive of the program. "A common vision for the entire school provides purpose and meaning and motivation to learn. For students wanting to solve problems and help society, this gives them a sense of hopefulness to impact the world."

For more information:

Joanie McGuffin

*Lake Superior Conservancy and Watershed Council
Goulais River, Ontario • adventurers@sympatico.ca*

Calendar



Great Lakes Aquatic Habitat Network and Fund

March 31, 2006, Spring Grant Applications Due

Applications to the Project, Technical Assistance and Grassroots Assistance Theme Grants Programs must be submitted electronically by March 31st, 2006.

For more information, please see our website, www.glahabitat.org or call Emily at (231)347.1181 ext. 107.

River Rally, May 5-9, 2006,

Bretton Woods, New Hampshire

River Network's National River Rally 2006 will help grassroots groups harness the power of citizen involvement to protect rivers and build healthier communities and watersheds. The River Rally will bring together hundreds of friends of rivers, water keepers, monitors, watchdogs, stewards, guardians and others involved in watershed protection and restoration.

For more information please visit:
<http://www.rivernetwork.org/rally/>

13th Annual International Conference on the St. Lawrence River Ecosystem

May 16-18, 2006, Cornwall, Ontario

This year's conference follows up on the theme of source water protection, defined as plans and actions taken to secure the integrity of streams, rivers, lakes and underground aquifers used to supply private wells and public drinking water.

For more information please visit:
<http://www.riverinstitute.ca/index.html>

2006 Annual Ontario Nature General Meeting and Conference: Greenways & Waterways, June 2-4, 2006

Join us in Kitchener for exciting field trips, informative programs and innovative ideas. Ontario Nature _ Federation of Ontario Naturalists and our hosts the Kitchener - Waterloo Field Naturalists invite you to our 75th Annual General Meeting and Conference. More information is available at <http://cobalt.gold-en.net/~kwfnconference>.

For more information, please contact Jennifer Baker:
jenniferb@ontarionature.org.

Aquatic Invasive Species Awareness Week

June 3-11, 2006, Michigan

Governor Jennifer Granholm has proclaimed June 3-11, 2006, as Aquatic Invasive Species Awareness Week in Michigan to encourage people to find ways to prevent the spread and introduction of aquatic invasive species in our waters. Aquatic Invasive Species Awareness Week is an opportunity to learn about aquatic invasive species, their impacts on Michigan waters, as well as what you can do to prevent their introduction and spread in your local area and throughout the state.

Visit <http://www.michigan.gov/deq/> for more information.

Wetlands 2006 Symposium

August 28-31, 2006, Traverse City, Michigan

The Association of State Wetland Managers, Inc., Michigan Department of Environmental Quality, Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, sponsors and cooperating parties invite you to participate in Wetlands 2006, an international symposium providing a forum for presentations and discussion on the scientific, legal and management tools relevant to sustaining and restoring wetlands and watershed functions.

For more information please visit:
<http://www.aswm.org/calendar/wetlands2006/wetlands2006.htm>

International Indigenous Forum on Biodiversity (IIFB)

Conference of the Parties VIII (COP8)

Curitiba, Brazil, March 20-31, 2006

The International Indigenous Forum on Biodiversity (IIFB) is preparing for the upcoming Conference of the Parties VIII (COP8) related to the Convention on Biological Diversity to be held in Curitiba, Brazil from March 20-31, 2006. Scholarships are available for 5 or more North Americans. If you are interested in attending, please notify the North American Regional Coordinator, Fred Fortier at ffortier@sncf.ca as soon as possible.

Restore America's Estuaries' Conference,

December 9-13, 2006, New Orleans, Louisiana

The 3rd National Conference on Coastal and Estuarine Habitat Restoration will bring timely national attention to the challenges and opportunities to comprehensive coastal ecosystem restoration throughout the U.S. Through field sessions, participants will see first-hand how the city, the parishes and coastal Louisiana are being rebuilt and restored.

For more information please visit:
<http://www.estuaries.org/conference>