

# GREAT WATERS GROUP NEWSLETTER

WWW.GREATWATERSGROUP.ORG PHONE 414-258-5624
SUMMER, 2011 NO. 2

### Earth Day Celebration – Environmental Justice

By Dianne Dagelen, Conservation Chair



Congresswoman Gwen Moore

With people already rising to their feet as Congresswoman Gwen Moore walked to the front of the crowded room, she was met with applause before Conservation Chair Dianne Dagelen could finish her introduction. Environmental Justice was the topic of our Earth Day celebration, held at the Harley-Davidson Museum in the Menomonee Valley. Speaking with passion, Congresswoman Moore shared an appreciation of how minority groups are disproportionately the recipients of industrial pollution. We were touched by her encouragement to put our values into action. In the midst of the Menomonee Valley with its rich history of native settlers, economic and river trail renewal, open housing marches, and with the coal plant a block away, it seemed a fitting site to commemorate Earth Day while learning about environmental justice.

Our gathering drew more than 80 people, including 14 children involved in re-cycle art with Joan Janus. We began with larger-than-life colorful eco-puppets by Judy Dubrosky parading to Woodie Guthrie's "This 'Earth' is Your 'Earth," as performed by musicians Tim Maher and Kristina Paris. Following inter-faith readings, Dr. Francisco Enriquez, pediatrician at the Sixteenth Street Community Health Center, taught us about "Nature Deficit Disorder". He identified allowing unsupervised exploration of the environment as significant in developing social and cognitive skills.

#### **Butterfly Barb**

Agnew, founder of Friends of the Monarch Trail, and horticulturist Carrie Hennessy informed us about the "Uncertain Future of the Monarch Trail." In between talks, a Yellow Taxi and Museum Tree, along with a giant Monarch Butterfly, provided eco-props for song and dance, including "Las Mariposas" by Regina Gallero.

Rev. Will Brisco, president of MICAH (Milwaukee Inner-city Congregations Allied for Hope), gave our closing address on "Our Commission to Take Care of the Earth." Speaking of our responsibility



Singing and dancing to celebrate Earth.

to manage our planet's resources for all people, he cited the renewed sense of a multi-cultural community that is evident since the gatherings at the State Capitol this past Spring. As the audience rose to a standing ovation, our celebration concluded with Bob Dylan's "Blowin' In the Wind," along with swaying eco-puppets—Mother Earth and Sister Wind.

### From the Chair

By Janet Anderson



Earth Day. Well, it's been a busy Earth Day and Month! A well-deserved pat on the back for those of you who braved the less-than-ideal weather on April 16 and participated in a river or park clean-up. There are still other opportunities to get involved in Earth Month activities – see our website www. sc-gwg.org for ideas. By

the way, if you organized or participated in some Earth Day activity, please email me – I'd love to know what else was going on – janeta16@sbcglobal.net.

Thank you to those who attended our GWG Earth Day celebration in spite of the inclement weather. See Front Page article and photos about our Earth Day event.

A special thanks to the generous folks at the Harley-Davidson Museum who allowed us to use one of their rooms for our celebration when nasty weather drove us indoors. If you haven't been to the museum, I encourage you to visit – it is certainly worth the trip.

**Issues.** There have been a lot of environmental issues going on, notably in Milwaukee County. But, I am sure that there are others in the other counties that comprise our GWG. I am very interested to know what is going on in Ozaukee, Washington, and Waukesha counties – please email me and let me know what is happening in your neck of the woods.

Water. Asian carp remains an urgent issue. A group called Wisconsin Voices is working with the Water Table (of which GWG is a member) on goals and funding for a water campaign that addresses education, hydraulic separation of the Chicago River, additional funding for the Army Corp of Engineers and its study on the carp, congressional oversight of the study, and engaging Wisconsin officials in this fight. If you are interested in participating in this, please email me.

Add to that, the EPA will be having a mercury hearing in Chicago on Tuesday, May 24. This will be a critical hearing so we are asking people to turn out to let the EPA know that we want the public and environment

protected. Please attend if you can.

Green Events. I want to tell you all how much I enjoy participating in 'tabling' events at the invitation of other groups and organizations. We have participated at quite a few already this year and we are scheduled for several more in the next month or two. It is always fun to meet and talk with others, to share ideas, and to be an environmental ambassador, so to speak. The next upcoming events are May 14-15 at Erehwon in Glendale, June 4 at the Wauwatosa Village Green Street Fair, and June 18 at Treasures of Oz. If you would like to join us at any of the upcoming events, please let me know. janeta16@ sbcglobal.net or 414-258-5624.

**Summer.** Summer is almost here so let me remind you that our monthly programs take a summer vacation for June, July, and August, resuming again in September. Be sure to get outside, enjoy the lovely summer days and nights, go canoeing or kayaking, learn your bird sounds, hike through quiet, off-the-beaten path natural areas, and do whatever lifts your environmental spirit.

Going further outside our GWG boundaries, put this on your calendar – the Green America's Green Festival/Expo is coming up soon and will be in Chicago May 14-15. For more info, http://www.greenfestivals.org/chi/updates/.

Another activity you might enjoy is the Midwest Renewable Energy Association (MREA) event the weekend of June 17-19 in Custer, WI. There is usually a bus that takes you there and back – and the trip goes much quicker and is fun when you travel with a great group of people. Check it out at www.mrea.org.

The Eco-Vision Sustainable Learning Center presents the EcoFair360 at the Walworth County Fairgrounds in Elkhorn, July 8 – 10. For more info, check out www. ef2011.ecovisionslc.org.



THANK YOU TO EVERYONE WHO CONTRIBUTED THROUGH WORKPLACE GIVING TO THE SIERRA CLUB FOUNDATION AND COMMUNITY SHARES OF GREATER MILWAUKEE.

# Energy and Sustainability Education

By John Bahr, Energy Chair

We participated in several community activities to promote renewable energy and energy efficiency. This has primarily involved participation in committees and staffing tables at energy and other environmental events such as the Tosa Green Summit where we promoted small wind power and solar energy as well as energy conservation and other Sierra Club activities.



Much of our current work is directed to our Green Neighbor Program. This program was organized by Rosemary Wehnes, Mike Arney and John Bahr to promote residential energy efficiency and conservation. It is structured around the Green Neighbor handout, "Start on The Green Neighbor Pathway," designed by Rosemary Wehnes, Mike Arney, and other committee members to provide a structured approach for home residents to increase

the sustainability of their homes and life style.

Our Green Neighbor Program offers three approaches to support individual efforts. The first is a "work alone" approach for those who want a self-directed program to follow at their own pace. Outside resources are available if wanted. We also offer two group-based approaches: a multi-session program for those who like to work with the structure and reinforcement of a group, and a single-session for those who still want the advantages of a group approach but with less time commitment.

Our multi-session program dedicates each session to a specific topic such as: Energy Conservation, Waste Reduction, Water Conservation, Transportation, and Food and Community. After each session, participants return to their own homes to apply the ideas provided in the group presentation, then return for the next meeting to report their results and learn from the reports of other group members. Group reinforcement is important in this process.

If you would like to participate in one of these programs, contact Mike Arney, mikearney3@aol.com; John Bahr, jpbahr@wi.rr.com; or Heather Hanson, heather.lee.hansen@gmail.com

# Think we've had a wet Spring in Wisconsin?

Well, yes, but if you really want wet weather, travel to Lloro, Columbia, which averages 523.6 inches of rainfall a year, or more than 40 meters.

On the other hand, if you like it dry, then keep going south to Arica, Chile, which gets just 0.03 inches of rain per year. At that rate, it would take a century to fill a coffee cup.

Wisconsin average precipitation per year? 32.64 inches.

### **Paper or Plastic?**

Not sure what to choose in order to be a good steward of the earth? Of course the best choice is reusable bags. But when you forget to bring yours into the store or have more groceries than your bag holds, should you choose paper or plastic? Here are some facts to consider in deciding (reference: www.onebagatatime.com):

- Fourteen plastic bags contain enough petroleum to drive a car one mile.
- 380 billion plastic bags or wraps are thrown away in America each year.
- Making a paper bag emits 70% more global warming gases than making a plastic bag.
- Paper bags do not biodegrade well in landfills due to a lack of oxygen.
- Cities spend up to 17 cents per bag in disposal costs, wasting millions of tax dollars.

For a long time, paper bags were considered a more environmental alternative. However, consider their whole life cycle and you find a different story.

A look at paper bag manufacturing, usage, and even disposal problems and you will see why they are not a better choice. Compared to plastic, making a paper bag:

- emits 51% more global warming gasses
- creates 50 times more water pollution
- uses 4 times more raw materials
- consumes 2 times more energy

Once used, paper bags are unlikely to be re-used. They tear easily and are made for one time usage.

Although paper bags are biodegradable, about 80 percent of all paper bags end up in landfills. There, they do not biodegrade because of a lack of oxygen. They also cost more to landfill because they take up much more space by weight and volume than plastic bags do.

Between paper and plastic, choose plastic. However, reusable bags are by far the best choice for the environment. Help keep our forests green. Shop with reusable bags.

# **Notes From The Conservation Chair**

By Dianne Dagelen



All Aboard for the Zoo Train and Extended Bus Service: Help promote rail and increased bus service to address expected traffic delays during reconstruction of the Zoo Interchange. Scheduled for four years beginning 2013, I envision train/bus service similar to what was used in the 90s during resurfacing of I-94. The goal is to demonstrate that people will ride the train and bus if given the opportunity. If you are interested

in working with a coalition team to utilize alternatives to the usual orange barrel approach, contact Dianne Dagelen at ddagelen@sbcglobal.net or 414-771-1505.

### Zoo Interchange Comments Make a Difference:

According to Bill Mohr, DOT Zoo Interchange project manager, more than 800 comments have been recorded so far, with more being counted as each one is responded to. Because of the overwhelming response, changes in proposed city street expansions are already being considered. We are waiting to hear on storm water management alternatives. Thank you to all who took the time to send in comments to DOT and for spreading the word to others. We only get the opportunity to alter a major thoroughfare every 50 years. So it's important that we get it right.

### Cleaner Valley Coalition Meets with We Energies for Cleaner Fuel:

On April 15th the Cleaner Valley Coalition met with administrators of We Energies regarding its use of coal. Our request was for them to use the cleanest alternative fuel or process that will provide the healthiest air for surrounding families in the Menomonee Valley, most of whom are working class people of color. The Coalition is composed of various health, environmental, faith, community, and civil rights organizations including Milwaukee Latino Health Coalition, Sierra Club, MICAH, and Walkers Point Neighborhood Association.

In Milwaukee County 30,000 children have been diagnosed with asthma. Coal particulate is so fine that it cannot be seen, but contributes to heart and breathing problems.

We Energies met again with representatives of the Coalition. They announced on May 5 that they will be taking steps toward a natural gas pipeline for coal plant conversion. We applaud We Energies' first step. We will continue to be involved as to construction impacts and the creation of local jobs. A big thanks to all of you who worked on this issue.

# Outings and Events



### Can We Stop the Asian Carp?

Find out as you listen to staff from The Alliance for the Great Lakes tell you what the Army Corps of Engineers is doing... and not doing, what the Federal Government is up to and how environmental groups are mobilizing for fast action on protecting Lake Michigan from the carp.

SWAN (Senior Water Advocates Network) is putting on this three-hour program and extends a special invitation to all Great Waters Group Sierra Club members to join them for lunch and talks on this major threat to the Great Lakes.

#### Program details:

When: June 21, 2011 from 11 am to 2:15 pm
Where: Cafe Hollander, 7677 W. State St. Wauwatosa. A
full lunch will be served.

Schedule:

 $11{:}00\ am$  -  $12{:}15\ pm$  Talk: Efforts to Stop the Carp

12:30 - 1:15 Lunch

1:15 - 2:15 Talk and Discussion: Citizen Action

to Keep the Carp Out

Cost: \$12.00 per person.

Reserve your place at the table:

Contact Milwaukee Riverkeeper (Paul Schwarzkopf) by phone (414-287-0207) or send a check by mail to

Milwaukee Riverkeeper 1845 N. Farwell. Ave. (Suite 100) Milwaukee, WI. 53202

Limited seating, so reserve your spot soon. We'll have a lively discussion on a big subject over good food. For more information contact Dale Olen at daleolen@sbcglobal.net.

## Journey Through Southeast Asia

with Dale Olen

May 16, 7pm

Three months ago, Dale and Joelyn Olen hiked and boated their way through Thailand, Laos, Vietnam, Cambodia, and Myanmar to learn about the people, land, water, and animals of these intriguing places. Dale will help us experience the people and areas of SE Asia through pictures and narrative. We will see how Vietnam has moved on from its civil war and the U.S. involvement in the 60s and 70s. We will also get a look at the forces at play in Myanmar (Burma) as it struggles with military rule and many human rights issues. Don't miss this last monthly program of the season at Mayfair Mall in the Community Room, lower level, Room G110, located in the Garden Suites East area.

as well as dancing - food and libations, too. River Rhythms takes place from June 8 through August 31, however, we will plan a SC event around three particular Wednesdays. See http://www.westown.org/westown/river+rhythms for a complete listing of entertainment.

When: Wednesdays, June 22, July 27, August 24.

*Where:* Pere Marquette Park in downtown Milwaukee (3rd Street and Kilbourn Avenue).

Below you will find the concert listing:

June 22 - Brother

July 27 - Milwaukee Battle of the Bands

Aug. 24 - Reverend Raven and the Chain Smokin Altar Boys

Contact: Janet Anderson at 414-258-5624 or Chris Zapf at 262-786-9584 -- or just show up! Look for a green Sierra Club sign. Hope to see you there!

### **Biking along Gitchee Gumee**

Friday, August 5 through Sunday, August 7, 2011

Bike the shores of Lake Superior on Grand Island near Munising in Upper Michigan. This gorgeous island is almost entirely owned by the Forest Service and offers a beautiful 26mile mountain biking trail around a nearly untouched island above the steep cliffs of Lake Superior. We will have lunch at the remote North Beach where the bolder ones among us may want to swim in Gitchee Gumee. We will be camping at Pete's Lake just south of Munising. This National Forest campground offers swimming and is situated on Bruno's Run - a nine mile biking and hiking trail which runs through the woods and along eight lakes in the Hiawatha National Forest. Those who can arrive by Thursday or early Friday may want to join us to bike or hike this great trail on Friday. Plan to bring a dish to share for a Saturday night group dinner at the camp site. These are moderate to difficult trails and a mountain bike is recommended but a cross over bike may suffice.

Where: Pete's Lake, Munising, Upper Peninsula When: Friday, August 5 through Sunday, August 7 Contact: Ed Anderson at 414-520-2751 for more details.

#### **Concerts in the Great Outdoors**

Wednesdays, 6:30-9 pm in Pere Marquette Park

What better way to enjoy the summer than with a nighttime concert in the city. **River Rhythms** is a free concert event and many a Sierran can be found there. Join us for listening

# **Quetico / Boundary Waters Paddling Adventures, 2011**

Five Separate Outings:

**July 29 - August 6, 2011,** Trip Leaders and contact info: Mike McQuilkin at 253-219-9208 or Scott McQulkin at 253-988-4394.

**August 6 - 14, 2011,** Trip Leader and contact info: David Thomas; email david@thomerwald.net or call 414-344-1044.

**August 13 - 21, 2011**, Trip Leader and contact info: Eric Uram; email Eric.Uram@SierraClub.org or call 608-233-4120

**August 22 - 31, 2011,** Trip leader and contact info: Bill Mathias; email wj.mathias@gmail.com or call 920-339-0437.

**August 27 - September 5, 2011** Trip Leader and contact info: Frank Remfrey; email: fremfrey@wi.rr.com or call 262-542-0176. Co-leader: Bill Moore; email environ1@ sbcglobal.net or call 262-785-9022.

For specific details and descriptions of these trips go to the GWG website at http://sc-gwg.org and follow the Outings and Events link.

#### Sierra Club Outings Liability & Carpooling

To participate in a Sierra Club outing, you must sign a liability waiver. To read a copy of the waiver, go to the Internet at www.sierraclub.org/outings/chapter/forms/. Carpooling to outings' sites is encouraged. However, the Sierra Club assumes no responsibility and carries no insurance for carpooling. Participants assume the risks of such travel. CST 2087766-40. Registration as a seller of travel does not constitute approval by the State of California.

# Reflecting on Earthquakes and Tsunamis

By Dale Olen

A 9.0 earthquake off the shore of Japan spawned a giant tsunami-a natural and normal activity for a small planet in a middle-sized galaxy with just the right stuff to birth life. While we humans understandably labeled this Earth event a "catastrophe," from Earth's four-billion-year-old point-of-view it shakes out as a common and predictable occurrence--a subduction of tectonic plates out in the Ring of Fire.

Once we caught our breath after viewing the shocking power and the terrible destruction to people, buildings, and land, we have a chance to wonder about this stunning, yet cyclical Earth process. Holding to the belief that wisdom comes from the earth, we consider what this natural event might be teaching us about the way we live and relate.

What immediately impresses is the sheer power and strength of Earth's activity and the weakness and helplessness of most living creatures who inhabit her, especially the human family. Many of us know the powerless feeling of watching a tornado roaring toward us or a river overflowing during a hundred-year storm or watching water rise in our basements. So we can imagine every ounce of strength and control draining from the Japanese people as they stood on their hillside and watched a 46 foot wave roll through their town tearing and crashing everything in its path.

Earth is much stronger than we humans are. Yet for the past three hundred years we have tried to fight her for "King of the hill." We have acted like teenagers whose magical thinking often brings pain and grief. We have believed we can build anywhere and use every natural resource, manipulate any Earth process because "nothing bad will happen to us." We myopically believe that we can move to Arizona or Las Vegas and somehow sufficient water will show up. We think we can keep putting carbon dioxide into the atmosphere and the small rise in temperature won't affect us, except maybe make Wisconsin a little warmer, which most of us might like on these May days anyway. We think we can keep chopping down forests to grow more food and make more lumber and paper, and somehow all the species being extinguished will spontaneously pop up somewhere else. And so what if a lot of bugs and little animals die off, right?

When it comes to earthquakes, parts of the human community have attempted to make buildings safer and more able to bend with tremors to keep bricks and beams from falling on the heads of people inside and out. But most of us still carry that magical thinking--"It won't happen to me"--as we walk the streets of San Francisco or drive through the tunnels around Milford Sound in New Zealand where they get 200 tremors a month.

Most people around the world and in Southeast Asia where the earthquake occurred do not have a choice about *where* they live. But many of them do have a choice about *how* they live on this land of threatening earthquakes and tsunamis. For one thing, they do not build tall buildings, except in big cities like Tokyo and Bangkok.

Just before the earthquake struck off the shore of Japan, I was in Inle Lake, Myanmar. Wedged between two mountain ranges, in

the middle of the country, these water people felt the tremors of the quake. (A month ago, Myanmar suffered its own 7.5 earthquake.) But here were people who have figured out how to live with the processes of Earth. They have given up their magical thinking and respect the power of Earth. In Inle Lake, water stirs as the blood of the Burmese people. They thrive on this grand lake that runs a yearly cycle of rain and monsoons in the winter and heat and drought in the summer. When the wet season comes, the lake shores run up and touch the surrounding mountains. The water rises seven to twelve feet, flooding all their farmland, washing out their walking bridges and many structures, including some homes. But the people know the waters are coming so most build their homes on stilts. As the waters rise, they bring everything beneath their houses up through a trapdoor to dry safety. Then they go fishing. In spring, they build new wooden bridges and bamboo buildings. They plant their gardens of vegetables, flowers, and rice on the newly silted nutritious soil that has formed. They even gather the new silt and create floating gardens so they can use the water that remains when the hot, dry summer befalls them in March and April.

The Burmese people paddling around Inle Lake are literally "going with the flow" of Earth. Historically, indigenous people have understood the power and dominance of Earth and their complete dependence on her, much like a new born child relying on its mother for the stuff that sustains its fragile life. They traveled *to* the water, whereas today many of us *make the water come to us*. They let rivers meander and lived along them where they could rather than dam them up and force the water to run in straight lines. They had few possessions and built structures of bamboo and wood that could be easily re-built when storms struck rather than constructing skyscrapers near fault lines or nuclear plants with 13 foot barriers because there would never be a 46 foot wave attacking their power plant.

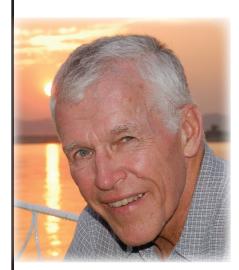
Basically, indigenous people faced Earth, understood and respected her power, and accepted their relationship to Earth as one of utter dependence on a strong, nurturing, and sometimes dangerous mother. Today, we think we are masters of Earth, that we are stronger than she and need to control her. Unfortunately we do not pay close attention to Earth. Rather we deny her strength, close our eyes to the instability we have brought to Earth processes, and run to our financial institutions to protect our money. We have not listened well to the hefty voice of Earth telling us to watch our behavior: "There are consequences when you try living outside the curve of Earth's natural flows."

If I could presume for a moment to interpret the wisdom Earth tried speaking through the Japanese tectonic clash, this is what I heard:

"Turn your eyes toward me, not your backs. Do not deny and never forget my power and your dependence on me. Give up your arrogant conviction that you can control me, master me, and take from me anything you desire. Instead, enter me with respect and openness. Learn as much as you can about me, and then determine how to live in the curve of my strength, my nurturing authority, and yes, in my occasional disruptive jolts."

### **GWG Newsletter Suspended Indefinitely**

By Dale Olen



Newsletter Editor

The Great Waters Group is suspending its Newsletter because I am retiring as its Editor. This edition, Summer, 2011, is the final one until a new volunteer editor can be found.

Six and a half years ago, Mike Prausa passed the yellow-andblack Newsletter over to me and I have enjoyed publishing it for you these years. For the past year, I have been looking for the next volunteer to take up the Newsletter and keep Sierra Club infor-

mation flowing to you. Alas, I have been unsuccessful at finding that volunteer. Because of other environmental commitments, I no longer have the time necessary to put out the Newsletter.

So, here is the plan for communicating with you in the immediate future:

- 1. GWG will continue to seek a new volunteer member who will take over the editing and publishing of the Newsletter. I will train that person and get him/her up to speed. Until that time there will be no more GWG Newsletters.
- 2. Our revised and active **website** will be the best way for us to reach you. Please go to www.sc-gwg.org. Bookmark that site and check in regularly for all that's happening in the Group.
- 3. We also will communicate with you through our Great Waters Group **E-Letter.** About 1,000 of our Group members are already on the mailing list. You know who you are because you have already been getting the E-letters. For the rest of you who have not received E-letters, we do not have your email addresses. Please send your email address to Heather Hansen at heather.lee.hansen@gmail.com. Heather is our Membership Chair and will get you onto our mailing list.

I know a number of you like getting the paper copy of the Newsletter (I do too), but given the circumstances, we must rely on these electronic modes of communicating for the time being.

Let me say farewell to you as editor by making one more call to any member who might be interested in becoming GWG Newsletter's next Editor. We hope the Newsletter tradition can continue.

See us at our website, www.sc-gwg.org or www.greatwatersgroup. org.

### Join Sierra Club Today



### With your help, we can stop global warming and clean our waters.

If we want clean, fresh water, we have to slow down the earth's rising temperature. Water, as ice, liquid or vapor in the atmosphere, receives the greatest beating from global warming. Work with us on creating policies and industries for renewable energy technology. And then continue working with us in making sure we have enough clean, water for all people.

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# **Protect America's Environment**For Our Families, For Our Future

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You are still curled in the future, like seeds biding your time. Even though you are not yet born, I think of you often. I feel the promise of your coming the way I feel the surge of spring before it rises out of the frozen ground. What marvels await you on this wild Earth! When you do rise into the light of this world, you'll be glad of your fresh eyes and ears, your noses and tongues, your sensitive fingers, for they will bring you news of a planet more wonderful and mysterious than anything I can tell you about in mere words.

Scott Russell Sanders Writing to children not yet born.

#### **Volunteer Leadership Committee**

Janet Anderson, GWG Chair: 414-258-5624 Heather Hansen, Vice Chair & Membership: 812-360-0652

Dianne Dagelen, Conservation Chair: 414-771-1505 John Bahr, Energy Chair, 414-256-0932 Dave Hetzel, Fundraising Chair, 414-228-9512 Gary Hofmeister, Outings Chair, 262-821-1088 Dale Olen, Newsletter Editor, 262-255-3628

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