

# Nepessing News

Winter 2017 -Edition



SIERRA  
CLUB  
FOUNDED 1892

The Nepessing Group represents the Sierra Club in Genesee, Lapeer and Northern Oakland counties.

## SAFETY OF FISH IN THE FLINT RIVER WATERSHED IS NOW IN THE HANDS OF THE LAPEER WASTEWATER TREATMENT PLANT.

By Linda Berker

As per an article in the Sunday, October 8<sup>th</sup>, 2017 edition of the County Press, "The Water Resources Division of the DEQ has been tracking elevated per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) concentrations found in surface water and fish samples taken from the Flint River and its tributaries, including the South Branch of the Flint River. Samples collected from the Lapeer Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP) and subsequent samples collected within Lapeer's sewage collection system indicated an electroplating facility in Lapeer is a significant source of the PFAS detected at the WWTP and in the Flint River." The DEQ and the WWTP have determined that Lapeer Plating and Plastics has been illegally discharging a toxic chemical: PFOS, a polyfluoroalkyl substance to its wastewater which is transferred by pipe to the WWTP. PFOS is a known carcinogen and endocrine disruptor. The plant has no method to remove this toxic waste from the wastewater which it then discharges to the

Flint River. The discharge of this toxic chemical is a violation of the Wastewater Treatment Plant's permit and has contaminated the fish in the Flint River watershed and has probably been occurring for years.

**FISH IN THE FLINT RIVER ARE NOT SAFE TO CONSUME IN UNLIMITED QUANTITIES AND CAN ALL BE EXPECTED TO CONTAIN SOME LEVELS OF PFOS AT THIS TIME. THE HALF-LIFE FOR PFOS IS 7 YEARS AND IT BIO ACCUMULATES.**

PFOS was generally banned from all US manufacturing in 2002 with limited exceptions for plating baths and was completely banned in 2015. The DEQ believes that the chemical is still present in the plating baths at Lapeer Plating and Plastics. As per the DEQ, the Lapeer WWTP is now

### INSIDE THIS ISSUE

PFAS	1
Fall Retreat	2
Labor Day	3-4
Something a Foul	4
Holiday Celebration	4
Board Elections	5-6
From President	7
Cyanobacteria	7

ordering Lapeer Plating and Plastics to clean out their tanks. Meanwhile our fish are contaminated and the DEQ recommends that depending on fish species, people limit their consumption of fish from the Flint River to one 8oz serving per year. Neither the method of cooking nor parts of the fish that you eat change this recommendation as PFOS is bio accumulated in the flesh of the fish. The surface water maximum standard for PFOS is 12 ng/l. Testing of the river water at the Lapeer Wastewater Treatment Plant's discharge to the river was 440 ng/l. Testing of the river at Gilkey Creek was 25 ng/l and 28 ng/l at the Flint Wastewater Treatment Plant, so the waste is present throughout the watershed. New rounds of testing are planned for 2018. Bald eagles, water birds and all animals drinking the river water may bio accumulate the PFOS and no animals other than fish have been tested to date.

**Sierra Retreat**  
**Robert Simpson**

Once again, the Sierra Club faithful gather on the shores of Lake Michigan from all over the state for the "fall" Retreat, over the last weekend of August. Among the Nepessing area attendees were Denny Crispell, Mikes Haley & Keeler, Sherry Hayden Keeler, Dr. Wendy Lawton, Janell Reeves, Fred & Alyce Townsend, Harold



the classes might have been former Odawa Chief Lee Sprague recounting his time at the North Dakota pipeline confrontation where he and other protesters were soaked by water cannons in the freezing cold and shot with



Gail Philbin

with two granddaughters (Amanda & Jordan) and two great grandsons and all had a good time as far as I could tell. This year 2017 has been the "Big Damp", if I had to give it a nickname and the trend continued as we had a chilly rainy Friday and cool temps throughout



Mike Keeler

rubber bullets, tear gas and concussion grenades at the Standing Rock Sioux Reservation last winter. This was the native people and supporters standing against the laying of pipeline through Sioux

and Carol Steinman and Jean Gramich, who we traded to SEMG many years ago for a tree hugger to be named later. I was there



Chief Lee Sprague



Logan

the weekend, unlike most years when late August can be counted on to be warm and dry. The highlight of



Mary Anderson

lands and Lee had a large audience in attendance. Once again, Mike Keeler handled the



Anne Woiwode

live auction deftly, we had live music, Captain Porter did his workshops, building bird & bat houses and astronomy enthusiast Bob Victor hooked people to watch his various celestial sights from the porch of the Teepee. Also once more, the elusive "Green Flash" was not seen at sundown but



Dr. Wendy Lawton

there's always next year. There were classes on the ET Rover pipeline, painting landscapes, dealing with difficult people, tubing down Stoney Creek, beginning bird watching and bird call identification, Ann Woiwode's biodiversity hike,

Mike Berkovitz' politics & environment talk and of course the obligatory smores at the fireside nightly. All in all, another triumph in logistics for those who worked on the committee, headed by Cecilia Garcia. All those who have considered going in the past should be encouraged by the comments coming out post event, which were overwhelmingly positive.



Mike Berkovitz

## 2017 Labor Day Parade Denny Crispell

This year was the second time the Nepessing Group represented the Sierra Club at the Detroit Labor Day Parade. Unlike last year when Mike Haley thought we would find the parade on Woodward Avenue Michigan State Route 1. In 1909, the first mile of concrete highway in the world was built between Six and Seven Mile roads. In 1919 the nation's first three-color traffic light appeared. The auto industry grew up along Woodward. This year we had maps to locate the staging areas for the parade. But Mike Haley left that information on his printer. Because we had a smart phone that information was retrieved driving I 75. Because of the road construction finding the parade staging areas was not an easy. When we thought we were close we found parking near the Sierra Club's National offices on Second Street. We lucked out to find a port-a-potty on our way to the parade. People sure do respond positively to the Sierra Club banner. There was a voice from the sidewalk, "The Sierra Club!" We turned our heads and saw Debbie Stabenow. Mike Haley shouted, "Photo op!" and handed his camera to a skeptical staffer who may have thought we were exploiting the situation. She took four pictures. [If there is no picture, it didn't happen.] Later we found people collecting signatures for various petitions. Gretchen Whitmer thanked us for signing hers for her run for governor. Mike Haley told Gretchen that we were the Nepessing Group and Laurie Tata would want to say, "Hi." Mike said to Whitmer, "The only place that Line 5 is safe is in Enbridge's computer models."

2017 Labor Day Parade cont.

Whitmer replied, “As a lawyer, I don’t want to shut down Line 5 because it will be tied up in courts for years. I want to Enbridge to make a commitment for getting the oil transported in another modality such as a tunnel.” Next, we headed for the Detroit River Walk and to William G Milliken State Park and Harbor. One of Michigan’s state parks. While walking Janell Reeve, Mike Haley and Wendy Lawton kept an eye on Wendy jumping the fence and diving in to the Detroit River and swimming to Canada to be a Dreamer there. Next, we checked out the Jazz Festival. None of the food vendors were open so we jumped the People Mover to Greek Town to enjoy lunch. There Wendy did not use her smart phone, looking at both the city and People Mover maps and suggested getting off at Grand Circus instead of Outing leader Mike’s suggested Times Square stop. This was a wise choice because while walking on Woodward we came upon a Subway for a pit stop.

## Something’s a Fowl By Ellen Waara

Sierra Nepessing is like a gaggle of geese assembling for the long haul of migration as winter approaches.

We get outside, we connect with trees, we even hug and speak to them on our weekly—Linda Berker and team—Nepessing hike and meet ups.

We are an artistic sort of team: showing up at art walks on the second Friday (Mike Haley leads). We Urban walk and saunter past the Farmer’s Market on Saturday’s.

We sit and learn the art of measuring poop in fields spread with manure. And what to do with the data that drives regulating safe water!

We collect meeting minutes, attend Flint Water coalitions, and listen to the beef of people frustrated by the betrayal of an establishment gone amuck.

We eat cookies lovingly prepared by Alice Townsend, and enjoy the safe space set by her husband Fred, who speaks with years of practicing presence.

We educate ourselves by learning with Denny about how a Boy Scout never spoils the land, but ages to enjoy and savor it more.

We learn about the art of diplomacy as Robert S. Aguirre takes the helm. For we are a rather battered group of sailors on this sea of strong winds, punctuated by irons where nothing seems to be shifting but the strange taste of the water.

Still we show up, just to know we aren’t alone, and that together our voices can sometimes harmonize in ways that surprise even us!

We come together, as have councils from indigenous times, listening to diversity and slowly working it out. Learning to defend the land and honor living things for seven generations to come.



*Please join us for the  
Lake Nepessing Sierra  
Club Annual Holiday  
Potluck  
Saturday, December 9  
Noon to 5 pm  
At  
Ligon Nature Center  
5213 East Farrand Road  
Clio, MI 48420*

Take Clio/Montrose exit off I-75. Proceed east on M-57 (Vienna Road) Approximately 7.3 miles to Genesee Rd., turn north (left) onto Genesee Rd., Turn east (right) onto Farrand Rd., Proceed east for .7 miles. Turn north (left) into the gate. Park on the Pavement in marked spaces only.

**BOARD ELECTIONS** ✓

**Vote for not more than five.**

- Mike Buza (taking Denny's Place)**
- Laurie Tata**
- Jack Minore**
- Ellen Waara**
- Linda Berker**
- Write-in:**

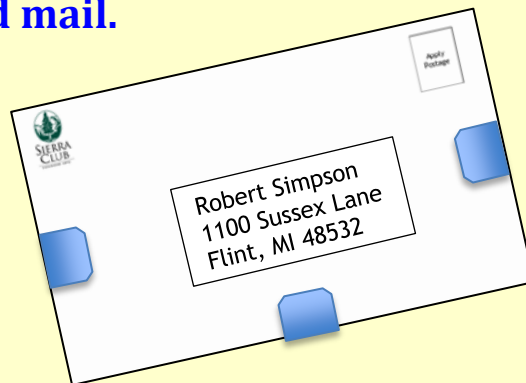
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**Please Post mark your ballot no later than January 4, 2018. Votes will be counted at the EXCOM meeting on January 10, 2018. Those who have two members in one household can vote on the same ballot. Please remove this sheet, fold in half, secure loose sides with tape, apply postage and mail.**

**Thank  
you!**





SIERRA  
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Apply  
Postage  
Here

Robert J. Simpson  
1100 Sussex Lane  
Flint MI 48532

## THE FLINT RIVER WATERSHED COALITION SUSPECTS CYANOBACTERIA MAY BE PRESENT IN THE FLINT RIVER WATERSHED.

By Linda Berker

The Flint River Watershed Coalition suspects that this bluish white blob with an oily sheen may be cyanobacteria in the Flint River. The blob was sampled in August of 2017 during the monitoring of the effluent released by the Consumer's Energy cleanup of coal tar laden sediment from a retired energy generation site, the site of an old coal power plant, near Flint U of M on the Flint River. The Flint River Watershed Coalition sent the sample to a lab for testing where the lab confirmed that this blob was not a chemical contaminant but could be microcystin produced by living cyanobacteria. These are the same toxic bacteria that cause liver damage and are now growing in Lake Erie due to the extensive releases of orthophosphates or farm fertilizer runoff.

Cyanobacteria can get their nitrogen from the air but also need Phosphorus which they can get in the form of water soluble dissolved phosphorus from farm fertilizer runoff.

Please be on the lookout for these strange looking blobs and report any sightings to the Flint River Watershed Coalition at: 810-767-6490.



### From the President~ Robert Aguirre

Where to begin? As I ponder the events and the year that is gone past, and in thinking about the future, I feel our Nepessing group has two very essential missions: first, the ongoing outreach opportunities to introduce local citizens to the beautiful State of Michigan through hikes. These hikes principally take place in or near our immediate area; however, we're not restricted geographically. We also host events that take place across the state and into the Upper Peninsula (specifically with the adventure down the Two Hearted River). Every one of these outdoor opportunities allows us to come closer to the essence of our purpose--observing and experiencing the land we share with so many different species.

Our second mission is to continue our advocacy work to ensure that for generations to come, all our children will have the same opportunities to explore this beautiful state, and hopefully leave it in far better condition than the preceding generation. This activism and advocacy has been enthusiastically demonstrated by our Nepessing Group in a number of ways over the past year. For instance, fifty dedicated participants travelled to Washington DC on a Nepessing-sponsored bus to participate in the Climate March in the spring of this year. We have consistently stayed in touch with our local legislators and participated in "Lobby Day" regarding issues including:

1. Energy Freedom:
  - Eliminate the current cap on net metering
  - Enable everyone to participate in community renewable energy projects
  - Ensure that customers are able to produce their own energy and use it or sell it back to the utility at a full and fair price
2. Agriculture pollution stemming from large farm operations and waste disposal, which is having a dramatic impact on the various watersheds leading to the Great Lakes, the single largest source of fresh water in the world.
3. Enbridge Pipeline 5, over 60 years old, runs along the bottom of the Straits of Michigan that connects Lake Michigan and Lake Huron. An oil spill here would have a significantly dramatic and long-lasting negative impact on a major portion of the State of Michigan.
4. Our consistent participation in Arbor Day and the distribution of trees to be planted throughout the area is another area that we as a club endorse and participate in.

While our community still suffers under the cloud of a contaminated drinking water system in the City of Flint as the result of deliberate/negligent oversight, it is also a reminder of something we have become complacent about, that we take for granted--the simple act of being able to take a drink of water from our faucets. Water is the essence of life; Water **is** Life. We cannot escape this reality. So, we as a community and a country have significant, increasing challenges ahead--and our commitment as members of the Nepessing Group of the Sierra Club takes on a new urgency. I urge you to remain not only clear-eyed about the future, but optimistic as well. It is our collective energy and good will and intention that will make the difference going forward.

Finally, we have a new election for Executive Committee members coming up for the new year (2018). Five (5) of the nine (9) board members are up for reelection for two year terms

It should be especially noted that a long-time Sierra Club - Nepessing Group member and activist has chosen to step down from the Executive Committee. Denny Crispell has been a driving force within the club for over twenty years, a hike leader and tremendous chairperson of the Executive Committee. It should be noted with appreciation that he has firmly indicated he intends to remain a vibrant and active member of our group--we will hold him to this commitment! Thank you Denny for your years of service and dedication!

I hope everyone had a wonderful Thanksgiving and that each of you may enjoy a peace-filled holiday season ahead. Please remember our holiday party at the Ligon Center on December 9, 2017 from 12pm (noon) - 5pm. See you there!

Robert J. Simpson  
 1100 Sussex Lane  
 Flint MI 48532

Make everyday Earth Day,  
 please recycle!




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*Visit us on the Web!*

[www.michigan.sierraclub.org/nepessing](http://www.michigan.sierraclub.org/nepessing)

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#### **Board Members and Volunteers**

At-Large	Fred Townsend
At-Large	Ellen Waara
At-Large	Jack Minore
At-Large	Carol Graham
At-Large	Thomas Haley
At-Large	Linda Berker
At-Large	Terry Reechko
At-Large	Laurie Tata
At-Large	Denny Crispell

#### **Officers**

Chair	Robert Aquirre
Vice Chair	Laurie Tata
Treasurer	Richard Naber
Secretary	Mike Haley

#### **Committees**

Conservation	Ellen Waara
Outings	Denny Crispell
Political	Laurie Tata
Media/Programs	Bob Simpson
Membership	Laurie Tata
Fundraising	Linda Berker
Website	Lynn Livingston
Newsletter	Rebecca Gale-Gonzalez