

Michigan Citizens for Water Conservation

A Tale of Two Cities Re-visited

The December, 2015 issue of this newsletter (view on-line at saveMIwater.org) contained an editorial which covered some of the issues and connections between events in Detroit and Flint and the water crises in both cities. Since that time MCWC, along with the rest of the world, has been witness to the unfolding tragedy in Flint. You know most of the story by now, but none of us know it all yet.

We know this tragedy was the direct result of state and federal government action and inaction. At all levels the people's right to clean, safe water was ignored and denied as the State continued its strategy of privatizing the resources of the predominantly poor and African American cities of Michigan through Emergency Manager rule.

We know that "saving money" was never the real agenda. Had it been, Flint would never have left the Detroit system, particularly after they were given an offer that would have cost less than the KWA is going to cost. This has been about making way for the further privatization of water and the infrastructure used to deliver it, in Flint and Detroit. Veolia, a private water corporation, is consulting with both cities for a reason. We are still trying to determine the private players behind the Great Lakes Water Authority (Detroit) and the Keregnondi Water Authority (Flint). Citizens in both cities are opposed to privatizing their water and are opposing these attempts by Emergency Managers and the State to give it away.

We know the water infrastructure has been allowed to run down in all cities with decreasing tax revenue, rising poverty, and predominant African-American and Hispanic populations.



Supporters of Flint water justice at State Capital in January.

People are forced to pay high bills for water they cannot even drink. Bottled water companies like Nestle make a fortune supplying water to relieve the crisis. Private companies then rush in to "save" the water supply by taking it over for profit. We know this never works for people, only for corporations. Rates go up, the infrastructure is seldom repaired, water quality goes down, shut-offs rise, the company takes its money and runs on to the next venue. Atlanta is a good example of this kind of failure, as is Cape Town, South Africa.

Meanwhile, in Detroit thousands are still shut off from water altogether and the Water Affordability Plan has yet to be implemented. The infrastructure is not being repaired so waste is everywhere. If they lose the revenue from

supplying Flint, the Detroit system will be even worse off and the urge to privatize will increase. Just what State government wants. We urge our members to pay attention to the work of the Detroit People's Water Board and Michigan Welfare Rights. The crisis in Detroit is still quite real, but not getting the national attention right now with the focus on Flint.

Flint is in a state of crisis that has gotten international attention, thanks to the work of the New York Times, Rachel Maddow, Amy Goodman, Michael Moore, MLive.com, The Detroit Free Press, Marc Edwards, Dr. Mona Hannah-Attisha, and the amazing grassroots leadership in Flint. Thousands of children and adults are now poisoned by lead. Bottled water and lousy filters are being purchased as short term solutions by well-meaning people everywhere. Yet not a single pipe has been replaced by the State to our knowledge. The State has chosen to direct appropriations to purchasing more bottled water and drops off filters without even checking to see if they work. They generally don't. The feds have attached appropriations for Flint to a very nasty energy bill that no one in their right mind wants passed, so help from Washington is on hold.

The plumbers are waiting to get to work once the signal is given. Some have started already as volunteers to replace pipes to some homes. The State still has done nothing but PR work and continues to support their cozy relationship with Nestle. They claim they will work on the long term needs of Flint's kids, but that is not looking hopeful.

Churches, environmental groups, people all over the country have donated emergency help, mostly in the form of bottled water and filters, some with cash. A few groups are providing social workers and health professionals and actually visiting homes. Although this is necessary emergency relief, it is long past the time when that **water should be coming in large tanker trucks**, taken for **free** from our good groundwater, just as Nestle takes it, and delivered in FEMA trucks for filling large containers which are also free. Nestle and other bottle companies should not be profiting from this crisis.



Demonstrators in Traverse City support Flint.

Michigan Citizens for Water Conservation has been participating in some demonstrations demanding justice for Flint, at the capitol in Lansing, and in Traverse City. We have been educating ourselves on the complex issues this crisis has raised up for the entire country. (visit our Facebook page for continuous updates.) Many cities face these aging infrastructure issues. We have spoken out to media, and researched the numerous possibilities for how groups such as ours can help out now that the damage is done. There are scams to avoid of course.

It is our position that water is a right for humans and ecosystems and cannot be removed from the commons. It must remain in the public domain, subject to public trust doctrine which is part of our constitution. The state is responsible for guaranteeing that all

citizens have access to clean, safe drinking water. When it fails to provide this, it must make amends and taxpayers must insist that government be held accountable.

We reject all attempts to tie aid for Flint to filthy energy bills in Washington or shady loan deals in Lansing. Funds to **replace all the pipes** must be provided by Lansing and Washington to cope with the damage done by the DEQ, the EPA, and the state Emergency Manager law which eliminated local control. The City of Flint cannot be blamed for any of this. They did not choose the economic decline that paved the way for State takeover. They deserve justice. The pipes must be replaced and local control must be returned to Flint and its **public** water department.

We reject all cozy deals with the bottled water industry that bring any profit to that industry at the expense of the people of Flint and the nation. We oppose all attempts to privatize the water delivery and waste treatment systems of any city. We are suspicious of the intent of the KWA in the first place, since it is running the pipe right along a corridor that is being leased out for fracking. Will those along the way who lose their good ground water to fracking operations find they have to pay for water from the KWA in the future? These are questions we are still researching and few are asking.

We are committed to providing support for the long-term needs of the affected, particularly the children. As a result we have chosen to follow the advice of Dr. Mona Hanna-Attisha of Hurley Medical Center, who exposed the lead poisoning along with Marc Edwards of Virginia Tech. She is asking that we stop sending bottled water and support the **Flint Child Health & Development Fund** which operates through The Community Foundation of Greater Flint and can be reached at flintkids.org. We have communicated with this 501c3 Foundation and they assure us that 100% of any money we send will go to the health fund. They appreciate fundraisers of all kinds and MCWC will be co-sponsoring several in the coming months. Go to flintkids.org if you want to make an individual contribution. Please do not send contributions for Flint to us. Send it to Flint directly.

--MCWC Board of Directors

WELCOME NEW MCWC BOARD MEMBERS!

Pam Gilbert is a retired elementary school teacher. She spends much of her retirement studying natural health and growing organic/biodynamic food on her farm. Additional time is spent educating the public on the environmental hazards of toxic chemicals used by the power companies, road commissions, lake weed control projects and current gas and oil production all of which threaten our water.

Linda Travis, married 47 years, two sons, two grandchildren, is a retired Ferris State University Assistant Professor from the College of Business and an Administrator in University College.

She was raised on the family Centennial Farm near Lake Odessa, MI. She has a BA from Michigan State in English Education and an MA from CMU in Community College Business Education. Besides family activities, she loves travel, reading, bike riding, downhill skiing, nature, animals, and watching grandchildren play basketball & soccer.

Ballot Initiative continues to gather signatures to ban Fracking and Frack Waste

The Committee to Ban Fracking in Michigan (letsbanfracking.org) continues to recruit more volunteers and paid petitioners in order to gather the remaining 100,000 signatures to get on the ballot in November of 2016. The signatures gathered in the 6 month campaign ending in November of 2015 are currently being verified by a paid organization using the official voter files of the State. Current law indicates that these signatures must be accepted if properly verified. The deadline for the 2016 ballot is June 1, so signature gathering must ramp up considerably following some winter slowdowns in the campaign.

Spring is close, snowbirds are returning soon, ice is melting, and we need to get out there and get going again. The campaign is moving into high gear again, particularly in the southern part of the state. Send any potential volunteers to the website to sign up and take the on-line training. A Coordinator will contact them. Two members of the MCWC Board are coordinators, and lots of our members have worked on this campaign.

As drilling new wells has slowed down for economic reasons, the industry has ramped up its preparations for new wells, seeking permits in such ridiculous places as a Southfield residential neighborhood, agricultural and lake country in Mecosta County, the I-69 corridor next to the new KWA water pipeline. Drilling may have slowed down, but permitting has not. They are getting ready for when the prices rise enough to make it profitable, and we must get the ban in place before that happens. Now is the time.

It is important to focus also on the issue of frack waste. Injection wells are coming in all over the state, ready to take the waste from Pennsylvania for now, and Michigan waste once production increases. The ban on horizontal fracking and frack waste would prohibit most of these wells. We must make this clear to people who are worried about the contamination of their ground water or the threat of increased earthquakes from these injection wells.

The campaign really needs an infusion of cash at this point, to pay petitioners where we don't have enough volunteers, to pay for the verification process, to continue the campaign to a win. Direct funds to letsbanfracking.org.

We would also suggest that members stay informed on these issues by subscribing to the blog published by Craig Brainard of the Sierra Club. You can find him at boomerbob1@gmail.com with The Fracking Linkletter. He also covers pipelines and related issues and gives the good news as well.

" It is becoming clearer that the human water crisis and the ecological water crisis are deeply connected and that finding the answer to one will necessitate finding the answer to both. This will require seeing water differently than we do now and putting its protection at the centre of our lives." ---Maude Barlow, *Blue Future*, 2013

Oil & Water Don't Mix Campaign to Shut Down Line 5 continues

This Coalition of most of the environmental groups in Michigan is continuing its efforts to shut down the Line 5 oil transport pipeline in the Straits of Mackinac before there is a spill in the corroding pipe that does serious harm to the Great Lakes and its ecosystems.

There was hope that we could achieve this before the dangers of winter, but that has not happened. Enbridge continues to assure the State that the pipe is safe even though their own study has shown numerous places where it is corroded. Attorney General Bill Scheutte continues to appoint task forces to study the issue. Opposition continues to build to the point where Enbridge now has a PR campaign to discredit the opposition rather than shut down the pipe.

The Coalition has been focusing on building public awareness and support by introducing resolutions in communities all over the state. We printed a sample of one in the last issue. There are now over 25 townships, counties or cities that have passed such a resolution. If you wish to introduce one in your community, please go to the OWDM website for the "how to" information and samples. There are also good "Frequently Asked Questions" sheets at that site.

The Action Team of OWDM, which MCWC is working with, also organized a Lobby Day event in Lansing which was quite successful, thanks to the organizing work of Food & Water Watch staffers. MCWC was able to contribute some funds toward breakfast for the volunteers who spent the day distributing information packets to legislators. Sixty volunteers participated in the day.

..."it is imperative to create new laws more compatible with the laws of nature. If humans, other species, and the planet are to survive, we must adopt an earth-centred form of governance based on the conservation, protection, and restoration of watersheds and nature. We must build all policies--environmental and economic--around the needs of Mother Earth." ---Maude Barlow, *Blue Future*, 2013

Successful research by the Mecosta County Water Protector's Committee.

The Clarke Historical Library on the first floor of Central Michigan University's Library holds a treasury of information on the oil and gas drilling history of the state of Michigan. The library has stored on microfiche the Michigan Oil and Gas Producers weekly journals dating from 1942 through 1969. These journals provide a weekly record of oil and gas permitting and drilling activity in Michigan. The records are well organized by County and Township. The library also has paper records with more details of selected oil and gas wells from the same period. The Clarke Library records can be helpful in determining an area's vulnerability for aquifer contamination from permanent storage of toxic brine via injection wells. The more gas and oil drilling, the more likely that permanent storage of toxic brine in an injection well will cause groundwater contamination in an area. This contamination occurs when injected toxic brine migrates to unplugged drill holes or drill holes with plugging that has deteriorated. Toxic brine can migrate and make its way up old drill holes with access to an aquifer.

Democracy Now Comes to Mecosta

It was a great honor to be invited by Amy Goodman of *Democracy Now* to be involved in an interview in Mecosta with regard to our history with Nestle and their connections to the Flint Crisis. We met at the home of Terry Swier and spent four hours with Amy, her producer Laura and cameraman Sam. We also took them to see Deadstream and the Ice Mountain plant in Stanwood. A truly rewarding day for us.

Amy Goodman interviewed Terry Swier, Peggy Case, and Glenna Maneke. New board members Pam Gilbert and Linda Travis were there for support and also were able to provide them with information on developments in Mecosta with wells and toxic brine on the roads. Included in the interview were questions about fracking and pipelines, but these were not included in the final show, which was focused on Flint and Nestle. Hopefully they will be able to incorporate this information in future work.

The crew had spent the weekend in Flint reporting on the water crisis. They did an excellent job of interviewing the key grassroots leaders in Flint, which is included in the first 45 minutes of the hour-long show aired on Democracy Now. The Mecosta portion is the last 15 minutes. Go to democracynow.org and get the show for February 17 in the archives.



Democracy Now crew with MCWC board members after interview in Mecosta.



Democracy Now crew at Ice Mountain plant in Stanwood.

House Parties & Speaking Engagements Wanted

MCWC Board of Directors members would like to get to know the membership better and listen to your concerns and suggestions. We would also like to share more with you about the issues we are engaged in on your behalf. One or two of us are willing to travel wherever we are invited. If you can host a small gathering in your home, please contact Peggy at 231-275-2244.

We have also purchased a screen and projector and are able to do slide shows and primitive power points to accompany talks on the water issues facing us. We are looking for opportunities to speak to groups about the triple threats of **pollution, plunder, and privatization** of our water. We also would talk about grassroots efforts to deal with these threats and what MCWC is doing to protect water and our future. If you can set up an invitation for us, please contact Misty Sheehan at 231-326-4014.

January and February Activities of the Mecosta County Water Protectors Committee

The Mecosta County Water Protectors (MCWP) have been very busy over the past two months as we continue our opposition to the Class 2 Toxic Brine Injection Wells in Fork Township, Mecosta County. Numerous letters of opposition sent to the EPA from concerned citizens gained us an EPA Public Hearing on January 21st at the Chippewa Hills High School auditorium near Remus, MI.

The MCWP E-Board had numerous planning sessions in order to inform citizens and encourage a strong turnout. Over 100 citizens attended the hearing and over 50 signed up to speak. Not one citizen spoke in favor of the well. All voiced concerns for the potential poisoning of their aquifer, since wells are the sole source of water for the citizens of Fork. The permitted well, Smith 1-17, is only one mile from the village of Barryton and its elementary school which houses 260 students. It is also near two creeks that drain into the Chippewa River which meanders through the village.

To the dismay of the MCWP and the citizens at the hearing, the EPA confirmed that another Class 2 Toxic Brine Well, Hartman 3-16, had already been permitted by the MDEQ and the EPA in 2014. The revelation of Hartman 3-16 only further confirmed the faulty permitting process in which both agencies do not adequately and truly offer the public an opportunity to ask questions and pose their concerns with the health and safety dangers imminent in such a permitting.

After the EPA hearing, the MCWP saw a need to merge with a larger organization. At the suggestion of Glenna Maneke we met with MCWC president Peggy Case and sought membership, while retaining the MCWP as a committee under the MCWC umbrella. This seemed like a perfect fit because all of us are concerned with keeping Michigan's water safe and clean.

Since the EPA hearing, our members have attended various Township and County Commission meetings, road commission meetings, and Big Rapids City Commission meetings. We have gained letters of support from many sources, and two Township Boards have passed resolutions in opposition to toxic brine injection wells.

We have planned more outreach and informational sessions for the public. A very successful meeting was held March 16th at the Fork Township Hall. There was some media coverage and a number of new people came on board to oppose these wells. Additionally we are continuing research on the dangers of old, unplugged wells in Fork. Several of our members have already researched and located documentation in the Clarke Library at Central Michigan University of a huge number of drillings (88) that were punched through Fork Township's aquifer between 1942 and 1968. This is something the MDEQ did not address in its original permitting process. These drillings offer a very real potential for the migration of injected toxic waste to the Fork aquifer. If the MDEQ had truly and effectively informed the public of the permitting process and a hearing had

“The **Safe Drinking Water Act** requires actual notice be given to the people potentially affected by a toxic brine injection well. Proper public notice to the Fork Township community was not given for either Hartman 3-16 or Smith 1-17. This economically stressed community, which totally relies on well water, does not want to awaken to find poisoned well water – in 2 years, 10 years, 20 years, ever.

Therefore, we request your personal and immediate intervention.”

“As of January 21, 2016, the MDEQ still listed Hartman 3-16 as ‘producing’ while the EPA had it listed as ‘permitted’ for injection. These diverse listings highlight an obvious miscommunication between the MDEQ and the EPA, leaving the public vulnerable, uninformed and concerned.”

--from Letter to Governor Rick Snyder, sent by Mecosta County Water Protectors Committee, February 29, 2016

been publicized and held, some of this old drilling information would have been disclosed by longtime citizens of the area.

Finally, several MCWP members headed to Lansing on February 29th in an attempt to hand deliver a letter to Governor Snyder, requesting he reverse the permitting of Hartman 3-16 and Smith 1 -17 because of the totally inadequate public notice process by the MDEQ. We cite Governor Snyder's own words about the "broken culture at the MDEQ" in his State of the State address. The reception from the Governor's representative was not very cordial, so we released the letter and other information to the press corps and as many media outlets as possible.

---Linda Travis

Coalition Against Expansion of US Ecology

When US Ecology in Detroit applied for a permit to expand its operations tenfold, it got the attention of the neighborhood as well as those from Detroit and Hamtramck who depend on the Detroit Water and Sewage Department for their water. US Ecology already is permitted to dump its "treated" low-level radioactive waste into the DWSD system. A tenfold increase of activity, much of it including frack waste known to be very toxic, cannot be healthy for anyone. Some of the chemicals and radioactive material can never be completely removed, and the air around the plant will see an increase of air pollution. Of course frack waste is exempt from the Clean Air Act and the Clean Water Act, so the industry gets away with self-monitoring. We know where that leads.

This facility is in a poor, devastated community that is desperately trying to rebuild and preserve what life remains there. A coalition has formed and is meeting regularly to fight this expansion. It is supported by the Committee to Ban Fracking in Michigan, as this waste would not even be coming our way if we were to achieve a ban on fracking and frack waste. The work is also supported by MCWC because the threat to the Detroit water system from an increase in waste water dumping is great. The same players who brought us Flint are being asked to permit this expansion. Will they do it? Raise your voice. Stay tuned for postings of events by the Coalition that hopes to stop this madness.



Committee to Ban Fracking protest at US Ecology

What Can MCWC Members Do?

** Continue renewing your membership dues, and thank you for that. Please also update your email so we can create a new list-serve and return to using this method of communication in the future.

** Join any protest demonstrations we announce in your area. Check our website calendar (saveMiwater.org) or Facebook page for dates and locations.

** Volunteer to gather signatures for the Committee to Ban Fracking in Michigan by going to the website letsbanfracking.org, hit the volunteer button and then take the short webinar training. Donate money on this same site.

** Write letters to editors wherever you are calling for the shut down of Line 5 immediately. You can also mention sending oil under the St. Clair River through a pipe that was built in 1918 is an equally stupid idea just approved by the feds.

** Send direct donations to flintkids.org and also help publicize any fundraisers we have to support the Flint Child Health & Development Fund.

** Set up speaking engagements for MCWC speakers on any of the issues our mission supports. Contact Peggy Case at 231-275-2244 or Misty Sheehan at 231-326-4014

** Share your stories as you work to protect water for all in Michigan. Contribute to future newsletters. We want to hear from our members and support your work.

Permit Issued to Drill in Southfield Neighborhood

The infamous Department of Environmental Quality has granted a permit to Jordan Development Company of Traverse City to drill for oil in the middle of a Southfield neighborhood with the blessing of the Word of Faith Christian Church, owner of the property. The church and Jordan are in it for the money only. The DEQ is doing its “legal” duty to “foster the development of the oil and gas industry,” as written in current state law. Neither the city of Southfield or the neighborhood is pleased about this. They seem to care more about the quality of their groundwater and their air.

For several months the community (Stop Drilling Southfield) has been meeting and protesting to prevent the permit. Neighbors have expressed their concerns in public hearings. The City of Southfield is working to put a residential zoning law in place once their current moratorium against drilling expires, and there is a woodland ordinance already. They have been forced to file a lawsuit to prevent the possible contamination of groundwater and air around the site.

In response, the DEQ put in a few minor rules and as usual is assuring the public that ...”The DEQ will closely monitor the project to ensure there are no impacts to groundwater.” This is the word of Hal Fitch of the DEQ office of oil, gas and minerals, which has also been assuring us for several years that fracking is perfectly safe and never contaminates anything. This is the same department that was so vigilant in Flint.

Residents aren’t buying it and neither is MCWC. There should be no drilling in Southfield, or anywhere else where groundwater could be contaminated and air polluted. That pretty much covers the state and makes the ballot initiative even more crucial. It is more important than ever that we leave these toxic fossil fuels in the ground and actually have a quality environment. Protest will continue as the lawsuit progresses.



MCWC member Peg Collins at Word of Faith protest.

TO CONTINUE THE FIGHT

Donations and memberships can be made online at: www.saveMIwater.org. Or mail your check along with the form to the right to:

**MCWC
P.O. Box 1
Mecosta, MI 49332**

We'd love to get you signed up as a sustaining member. We can't promise you fancy address labels, coffee cups or trinkets as a reward. We only promise to apply your money to the work of saving our waters into the seventh generation. You can have your pledge sent or transferred directly to the MCWC account. Contact Glenna Maneke at (231)972-0500 or manekegl@hotmail.com to arrange this.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT!!!

**Michigan Citizens for Water Conservation
P.O. Box 1
Mecosta, MI 49332**

Name _____

Address _____

State/ZIP _____

Email _____

Individual _____ **\$25**

Family _____ **\$40**

Lifetime Individual _____ **\$250**

Lifetime Family _____ **\$500**

Other _____



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MCWC is a 501c3 grassroots group organized in December 2000. Our goal is to conserve, preserve and protect the public's natural resources. Our efforts have concentrated on research and education so that informed decisions are made regarding protection of the quality and quantity of Michigan's groundwater, wetlands, lakes, streams, ponds and wildlife.

Help preserve natural resources – recycle this newsletter by sharing it with a friend!