



Michigan – Water Wonderland or Toxic Waste Dump?

President's Report at the Annual Meeting August 27, 2016

When MCWC completed the legal battle with Nestle and then finished paying off the debt several years later, we turned our attention to the threats to our clean water which had been increasing from the fossil fuel industry. Many of our members took a well-deserved breather and it has just been in the last year that the momentum of our organization has begun to build again. The focus shifted from the plunder and privatization of water in bottles for profit, to the outright pollution of the water as it was exploited for oil and gas extraction. New fracking technologies, huge increases in water usage and pollution, massive transport and waste storage projects have all taken the nations attention in the last five years. Michigan is no exception. The causes and effects of climate change could no longer be ignored. Water is central to it all.

Enbridge Pipeline 5: We chose to oppose the transport of oil through the waters of the Great Lakes, specifically calling for the shutdown of Line 5 through the Straits. We have for the last year participated on the Oil & Water Don't Mix action team and included this issue in our speaking engagements and tabling events along with the fracking ban. We have purchased and delivered many yard signs, helped with demonstrations, and educated regularly through tabling events. We have engaged also in tar sands resistance work with MCATS and Winona LaDuke and are committed to making sure tar sands oil is never transported on or under the Great Lakes.

Ban Fracking: MCWC chose to endorse the ballot initiative campaign three years ago which would result in a ban on horizontal fracking and frack waste. Last year at this time many MCWC members were scrambling to get the signatures needed to get the initiative on the ballot. Several of our members acted as coordinators and your president served on the Steering Committee of the Committee to Ban Fracking. For the six months of the campaign, until November of last year, this was the priority of the organization in terms of the commitment of time and member energy. The campaign failed once more to get the needed signatures, but doubled the number from the last attempt and is continuing to contest the 180 day rule and still gathers signatures. We have scaled back our leadership participation since last November and are currently more focused on the waste aspect of the initiative. We continue to endorse the campaign and some continue collecting signatures to turn in for 2018.

Gas Drilling: The glut of oil and gas reduced profits enough for the industry that there was a shift in focus from active drilling for gas to drilling to develop Michigan's potential

as a toxic waste dump. Permits for exploratory drilling are still being sought, and leases are secured at state auctions twice a year. Industry is getting everything in place to resume drilling when the money is right.

Injection Wells: The money currently is in the waste, including waste from other states. Our members began to learn of increased permitting requests for injection wells and toxic waste treatment. Thanks to the work of Mecosta-based activists and MCWC members, the work on injection well activities has exploded. The Clarke Library trove of data and the stirred up concern of the communities under threat of well permits have taken our work in new and powerful directions. The Mecosta County Water Protectors group approached us and is now the most active component of MCWC. It provides leadership to several counties and groups and has put the issue out in the public arena where it needs to be. Five of its members joined our Board. Our focus has once more shifted to the Mecosta area of the State.

U.S. Ecology in Detroit: At the same time we also began working with a community group in Detroit which was protesting a permit application for a tenfold increase in activity at a toxic waste treatment plant in the heart of the city. This is a prime example of environmental injustice and a threat to the drinking water of the entire region. We are therefore lending support in terms of funding and expert advice, as well as publicity to the local group. We have added one of the leaders of the local grassroots group in Detroit to our board.

Water Justice-Privatization:

In the last year water justice has been placed before the world in the form of the Flint Water Crisis. MCWC has taken an interest in this from the start, because we oppose the attempt to privatize water, we oppose the lack of access to clean water Flint shares with Detroit, and we certainly oppose poisoning anyone just to turn a profit and screw the poor. We are also opposed to the theft of democracy that makes it all too easy to deny the poor and minorities their human right to water. The third major focus of our education and advocacy therefore has been the issue of access to clean, affordable water in our major cities. We have all along advocated that water must be part of the commons, must be accessible to all equally, and must be covered by the public trust doctrine at the state level. Because of our reputation with the Nestle battle we were invited to several media events on the Flint crisis and asked specifically about Nestlé's involvement. This allowed us to speak in broader terms about the issues of pollution, plunder and privatization – to Amy Goodman of Democracy Now, to Carol Cain of Channel 62 in Detroit, to Up North TV, through our website, Facebook page, and at tabling events and panels.

Say a Prayer for the Great Lakes!

On June 22, 2016 Governor Snyder agreed to the diversion of water from Lake Michigan to the City of Waukasha, Wisconsin. Waukasha is the first and we pray the only city outside the Great Lakes Basin to be allowed to receive its daily community water supply from Lake Michigan. It is a pity our Governor wasn't as generous with the people of the City of Flint. Hopefully Governor Snyder will recognize that diversion of Great Lakes water outside the Great Lakes Basin can drain our magnificent Great lakes in a few short years. For diversion of Great Lakes water outside the Great Lakes basin let the motto be - "one and done."

What We Are Accomplishing: We sponsored several demonstrations in Traverse City in support of the people of Flint, traveled to Lansing to protest, used our website and Facebook page to educate and advocate, and continue to ask questions not being asked by enough people to date. We are researching the Keregnondi Water Authority as a highly suspect effort to privatize public water. We joined the discussion on water justice at the People's Institute at Circle Pines recently. We have made presentations to the Muskegon Watershed Assembly, Big Rapids Methodist Church, Chippewa Watershed Conservancy, City of Big Rapids Well Head Committee, and General Federation of Women's Clubs (GFWC) of Big Rapids. We are also presenting at the Detroit Bioneers Conference on October 28 on the issue. We co-sponsored a fundraising concert in Beulah for the Flint Child Health & Development Fund that raised \$7600. We will be sponsoring another in Birmingham in November 18 for the same group.

Meanwhile the Mecosta County Water Protectors Committee has been spreading its work to Osceola County, Isabella, Barry and beyond. They have been putting pressure on the EPA, submitted FOIA requests to the DEQ, held meetings, prepared for hearings, contacted media, written letters, brochures, given talks, all focused on the wells and the waste. They are in a position now to begin training other groups in how to research in specific locations and how to force hearings and public comment which has been so lacking. The entire committee is now on the MCWC board of directors, which represents a significant shift in our energy and our work.

We have also recently become involved in supporting a group in Osceola County opposing a permit for a potash mine that comes with 8 injection wells. They have become a Water Protectors Committee of MCWC also and added a member to our board.

Other related issues are on the table, awaiting our attention. CAFOs, agricultural runoff waste, septic systems, old contamination sites, and more await our attention as our capacity develops. Contact us through our email address if you want to get involved.

The organization is gearing up to make significant contributions toward water justice and water conservation. We are also entering the arena of rapid climate change. We therefore need to examine our human and financial resources and establish clear priorities in the coming period based on realistic measures of our capacity and a clear articulation of our goals. Time is running out for human participation in a livable planet. Time is running out for access to clean water.

Peggy Case, President

Hersey Potash Mine Hits Another Snag Project Already More than 2 Years Behind Schedule

Osceola County, Michigan 9/16/16:

Michigan Potash Company anticipated quick approval of 11 waste-injection wells in Hersey & Evert Townships for their planned solution-mine and hoped to break ground this Fall. Permitting problems have now thrown that timetable out the window. This setback adds further delay to a project which was originally slated to start in mid-2014.

On July 8th, the US Environmental Protection Agency announced that pending permits for 3 waste-injection wells were on hold for an indeterminate amount of time due to a high volume of interest from private citizens.

What is Potash Solution-Mining?

"MPC's potash mine would be a huge undertaking, producing over a million tons per year and leases on 14,000 acres of land in two counties," according to Doug Miller who lives near the site. "Solution-mining pumps tremendous quantities of fresh water into underground salt formations, where it dissolves the minerals, forming large caverns. The resulting hot, highly-corrosive brine solutions (laced with traces of toxic 'control-fluids') return to the surface and are piped to a central refinery. The water is boiled off to produce the desired products. Remaining wastes are then injected into the ground under high pressure."

Area Residents Feel Project Is Being "Railroaded"

As Ken Ford, who lives down the road from the proposed site sees it: "Michigan Potash (MPC) has issued press-releases and held meetings with local boards to create the impression that this project is a 'done-deal'. If you buy into that view, it's totally disheartening. Take a quiet rural area and suddenly introduce 140 large trucks per day, nauseating hydrogen-sulfide gas emissions, dust, equipment roaring 24/7, and waste-wells that threaten your water. That'll destroy an area's way of life."

"Kept In Dark" About Waste-Wells, Landowners Then Flood EPA With Letters

Very few local residents had heard about MPC's planned waste-disposal wells. "I had no idea these wells were in the works," says Douglas Miller, who lives close to the site. "It was almost by chance that I discovered these waste-well permits. Public participation was neither wanted nor welcome." Once a few local landowners realized what was afoot, they called others and urged them to press the EPA for a public hearing. The effort was successful, and resulted in the permits being held up.

Residents Joined By Large Environmental Group

In their search for information on waste-disposal wells, landowners encountered members of Michigan Citizens for Water Conservation (MCWC), an established environmental organization which has been fighting similar waste-injection wells in neighboring Mecosta County.

Did The EPA Lack Vital Information?

MCWC board member Jeff Ostahowski described how his group obtained 290 pages of drilling records for old oil, gas, and mineral wells in the area. "A lot of drilling took place here over the years, and records are stored at Clarke Library at Central Michigan University. We obtained copies and forwarded them to the EPA. It's extremely important that all old wells within 2 miles of these waste-wells be identified and tested. If any one of these wells is insufficiently plugged, it can serve as a conduit for wastes to move upward into fresh-water aquifers."

Mr. Ostahowski doubts that the EPA knew about many of these old wells: "I don't think that Michigan Potash Company bothered looking for old wells. Finding, testing, and plugging them will be expensive and time-consuming. They're more than two years behind schedule and appear to be in a hurry."

Mr. Miller believes the well records were key to the EPA's decision to slow things down: "Earlier this year, the Government Accounting Office chastised the EPA for poor management of its Underground Injection Control (UIC) Program. From that, and the Flint debacle, the EPA has learned some lessons. Our own Michigan DEQ is another matter."

MPC Receives Permit To Emit Dusts & Toxic Gas DEQ Operates "Under The Radar"

In July, residents discovered that, four months earlier, Michigan's Dept. of Environmental Quality (DEQ) granted MPC a permit to emit large quantities of hydrogen sulfide gas, which is listed as being "very poisonous, corrosive, flammable, and explosive". That permit also allows the release of unusually high amounts of other gases and various dusts. No public notice was given, nor comments taken.

No Environmental Studies For Sensitive Site

MCWC board member John McLane, a professional surveyor, is surprised that this permitting process is proceeding at all: "I can't believe that the DEQ is already giving out permits! This project sits right smack-dab in the middle of some of the most environmentally sensitive land I've ever seen. They plan to transport tremendous quantities of hot, toxic brine solutions thru a network of pipes over land they've leased. That's 14,000 acres underlain by shallow, unprotected aquifers, and drained by a network of springs, creeks, ponds, lakes, and wetlands on four different watersheds flowing into the nearby Muskegon River. They'll consume untold amounts of fresh water and operate at least three waste-injection wells. It's hard to imagine a worse site for doing any of this! Yet the State of Michigan is issuing permits without an Environmental Impact Statement? This is ludicrous!"

Company Structured To Avoid Liability For Damage

Mr. Ostahowski is concerned that local residents could be left "holding the bag". "This mining company is operating as an LLC, or 'Limited Liability Corporation'. Actually, this

LLC is part of a chain of LLC's. With that type of structure in place, and if serious damage occurs, what's to stop them from just walking away?"

Investment "Boondoggle"?

Mr. Miller wonders why MPC's project even exists: "Over the years, three large companies have tried potash-mining just west of us. They had a much better site, but never made the kind of money they expected. The Michigan Potash Co. site is not only environmentally risky, it has no prospects for either rail or boat access, making transportation prohibitively expensive. **When you factor in a chronically depressed potash market, you begin to wonder what they're really mining here: potash, or investment dollars?"**

Waste-Disposal Could Be Key

MCWC's Ostahowski believes he knows how Michigan Potash could make money in Hersey: "Hazardous waste-injection has become big business in Michigan. Our governor seems to be all for it, and the DEQ is helping make it happen. MPC would have everything in place to do that here. Plus, they'd have the added benefit of some large salt caverns for disposal of wastes which are too thick or gummy to shove into conventional injection wells. Even without potash profits, this could be a cash-cow, up until they have their first accident."

- Doug Miller, Osceola County Water Protectors

MCWC PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENTS

Michigan Citizens for Water Conservation is planning to take to the airwaves. This fall we are expecting to develop several public service announcements for TV airing around the state. These announcements will probably be 30 seconds at the most. If you have an idea for a MCWC public service announcement please write it up and email it to us at MichiganCWaterC@gmail.com.

Flint Water Disaster

Several MCWC board members had the opportunity to appear on a panel with Claire McClinton of the Flint Democracy Defense League in September. She made it very clear that the crisis is not just about tainted water, it is about a failure of democracy. Through the Emergency Manager act, the state of Michigan took over the infrastructure of Flint and basically gave the city away to private corporations. It is the same program that has resulted in massive water shut-offs in Detroit and increasing efforts to privatize both systems.

A coalition of grassroots organizations under the name “Two years too late” is pushing three demands at this time. You can tweet them at **FLINTH20JUSTICE** for further updates. Following is taken from a flier the group is distributing.

“A federal Emergency for Flint... was declared on 16 Jan. 2016. That declaration expired August 14th. [It] did NOT solve the problem.... After President Obama’s visit to Flint in May, the nation was led to believe that the water was safe to drink and donations declined. Many are still sick and suffering with various issues due to the Flint **toxic water**. Experts agree that our water quality still fails the lead and copper rule test!! Furthermore, when the Environmental Protection Agency recently declared Flint water safe with the use of sink filters, the County Medical Society warned that children under 6, pregnant women and those with a compromised immune system should continue using bottled water!!



“Therefore we Demand:

- (1) Declare Flint a FEDERAL DISASTER AREA, which would allow the Army Corps of Engineers to replace the infrastructure. (Ed: To date only 33 homes have had their pipes replaced, after TWO years)
- (2) Make full Medicare available for every Flint resident immediately.
- (3) Abolish Michigan Emergency Law (P.A. 43) to protect DEMOCRACY in Michigan.

“Congress failed to take up the ‘Families of Flint Act’ before recessing early on a 7-week summer break. Meanwhile Flint families do not have the privilege of recessing and taking a break from toxic water.”

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Nestle is doing quite well through all this. They have just announced plans for a \$36 Million expansion at their Ice Mountain plant in Stanwood.

Injection Wells in Mecosta County?

Injection wells are drilled and used as a disposal area for **TOXIC BRINE**, the **waste product** of gas and oil production. Brine is disposed into underground layers of porous rock in the Dundee geological structure. Brine is a salty mixture that can be mildly to severely toxic in nature including chemicals of BTEX, chloride, high salinity, and some brines have radioactive properties. Brine comes from ALL oil and gas wells, with more toxicity from brine “fracked” wells (a horizontal well which uses fresh water to create brine and acidification).

The maximum amounts of toxic brine that can be injected into a well, or the level of toxicity of the brine is not stated in permits. When too much is deposited in an injection well, or when geological structures are weak or other “holes” in the earth are found, the fluid can leak creating a “PIN CUSHION” effect. Toxic waste brine can then be mixed with our groundwater and come to the surface.

The State of Michigan is part of a natural geological “basin” which is conducive to storing liquids. However we do not want an excess of toxic liquids that would make our underground basin a **dumping ground for toxic brine** from our state and from other neighboring states, where injection wells are causing earthquakes and damaging groundwater.

The county of Mecosta has very fresh and clean water located at the headwaters of the Chippewa River Watershed and the Muskegon River Watershed. Much of the groundwater in our county is used by residents who have private wells for drinking, bathing, agriculture, and supporting food sources. A multi-billion dollar company, Nestle, pumps water from the Muskegon Watershed in Mecosta County to sell as bottled water across the world because of the purity of this water.

It is only exercising a basic human right to protect this rich resource of fresh water in our county and in townships. Fresh water is critical for the health of coming generations. Diligent care must be taken to ensure that our groundwater and the Great Lakes Basin (20% of fresh surface water in the world) remain clean and available for people to use in Michigan, instead of being privatized.

For many years our county has used the toxic brine to apply on our roads in all townships in the summer for dust control, and in the winter for ice control. The high salinity of the toxic brine is applied without stopping near creeks, streams, wetlands, etc. Accumulation of this substance over time may damage the fragile ecosystems of our county.

There are alternatives that can be substituted for oil and gas to reduce our use of this commodity that is harmful to our environment when it is mined, transported, and burned. Water is a precious resource that we must preserve because WATER=LIFE for the human race and all living things.

Thus, a shift in focus is needed in our energy sources to preserve the fresh water in our state, country and world.

Local communities should be informed about the permits and the process that oil companies use to allow "injection wells" in our neighborhoods and townships. They must have a voice in deciding where they want them or if they do at all.

There should be stringent regulations in place at both the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) and at the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to control the waste products of the oil and gas industry so that there is NO CHANCE of contamination with the groundwater and aquifers of water in Michigan.

The future of our water should not be in the hands of a Texas oil company seeking profit for itself.

A determined "plan of action" for reducing our use of oil products and using alternative energy must be a focus of this community, the county, the state of Michigan, and our nation for the health of our planet.

- Jeff Ostahowski, Mecosta County Water Protectors, MCWC Vice President

BECOME AN MCWC ELECTRONIC MINUTEMAN/WOMAN

Because we are likely to continue to be faced with the need to rapidly demonstrate interest and/or request public hearings on things like injection well permits; MCWC is developing a **Rapid Response Group**. The Rapid Response Group is like electronic Minutemen in our Revolutionary Water Wars to try to prevent the senseless contamination of our water resources. A MCWC Electronic Minuteman is a volunteer who will sit down and write an e mail to a government official when it is needed to assist in pressuring the government to do the right thing.

If you would like to become an MCWC Electronic Minuteman please contact **Karen Turnbull at P.O. Box 1, Mecosta, MI 49332** with your name and email address. We need as many Paula and Paul Reveres as possible.

Rapid Response can make a tremendous difference in the outcomes of many important things. Contact us also by e-mail at MichiganCWaterC@gmail.com

Ground Water Contamination and the MDEQ.

MCWC is working using the Freedom of Information Act to determine the extent of ground water contamination in Michigan. We have only received a small portion of the information we have requested from the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality. We expect to be able to make an extensive report on ground water contamination in Michigan in our late fall newsletter.

Two disturbing facts we have learned so far:

1) The DEQ has no mapping of the transfer or flow lines from operating oil and gas wells to Class II injection wells. This indicates a total avocation of regulatory responsibility by the DEQ to the oil and gas industry to monitor and regulate themselves.

2) The DEQ has not denied a Class II toxic brine injection well application for permit during the Snyder Administration. The MCWC feels this fact removes the DEQ from the role of gatekeeper on injection wells. This fact leaves one to ponder whether the DEQ has any gate at all or if so, it is just welded wide open.

“We were water beings from the beginning. The river was our Grandmother and supplied everything we needed to survive. We are singing for water and for the protectors of Earth’s waters. We sing for water. Long-legged birds stand at the edges of lakes and rivers to watch for fish, their nests hidden in the rushes. A doe crosses land and stands guard as her little one drinks. All our brother and sister animals follow their worn paths to needed waters. Trees and plants subsist with the rain, snow, and groundwater in a place where living Earth supported large herds of bison for thousands of years.”

Linda Hogan, *Yes Magazine*, October 4, 2016, in support of the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe

Standing Rock Stands for All of Us

MCWC is planning to send a small donation to the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe in North Dakota as it gets ready for a long winter encampment to protect the waters of its territory from the Dakota Access Pipeline. We encourage our members to learn more about this action and consider adding individual donations to the cause. They are drawing a line for all of us, standing for water and our children’s future. It’s all connected. A number of Michigan tribes such as the Saginaw Chippewa and those working to shut down Line 5 in Michigan have delegations planning to spend the winter in North Dakota. We wish to support them. Send contributions to:

Standing Rock Sioux Tribe
Attention: Donations
PO Box D Building #1 North
Standing Rock Avenue
Fort Yates, ND 58538

Or you may donate on-line to:

<https://www.crowdrise.com/official-support-for-standing-rock-sioux-tribe-against-dapl/fundraiser/standing-rock-sioux-tribe>



Protecting Michigan's Water: My Story

My first experience with MCWC was in 2000 as we began our fight against Nestle. I live on Diamond Lake, northeast of where Ice Mountain extracts 200 gallons per minute from the Mecosta county aquifer. I attended the uncomfortable EPA Hearing of the permit that was already a "done deal". My part in the million-dollar fight to reduce the flow was minimal compared to many, as my time was squeezed with a full time career and raising two sons.

My family was fortunate to buy a little cottage on the east side of Beaver Island in the mid 90's. We spent our summers with our boys taking the ferry from Charlevoix to the island and enjoying our time on our old sailboat, kayaks, and a pretty spiffy inflatable boat. In 2010 our oldest son, Steven, got his first professional job in Santa Barbara, California. Our visits to see him have included exploring beaches and quaint towns along the Pacific Ocean coastline. I remember a special day that Steven and I spent at Refugio Beach. I have beautiful photos of "sun on waves" to fix that day in my memory.

I will always remember my visceral reaction on Tuesday, May 19, 2015 when an oil spill occurred at Refugio Beach just north of Santa Barbara. This is very near the site where an oil spill in 1970 started the first Earth Day. Spilling into the ocean was 100,000 gallons of heavy crude oil by Houston-based Plains All American Pipeline Company. The oil contaminated 40 miles of coastline with a pipeline that had eroded to 1/16th of an inch when it broke. The pipeline was 24" in diameter, carrying 1300 barrels per hour and was installed in 1987 (28 years old). I saw photos of the crude oil gathered by local residents in 5 gallon buckets before any emergency crews arrived. I saw photos of pelicans and the endangered Western Snowy Plover covered with oil.

It was at this moment that I thought about our little cottage on Beaver Island that is 35 miles from the Straits of Mackinac. Most of you know about the Enbridge Pipeline 5 that travels 645 miles from Superior, Wisconsin to Sarnia, Ontario. It is mostly Canadian oil, going through a Canadian pipeline, and 70% of crude oil going to a Canadian refinery and 30% to Marathon refinery, Detroit. Estimates are varied with how much of the oil product is actually consumed by people in Michigan (4%, 8%, and Enbridge says 30%). Pipeline 5 had a life expectancy of 50 years when it was built 63 years ago. University of Michigan scientists have created scenarios of where an oil spill at the Straits would go, which includes the northeast side of Beaver Island. I certainly don't want to see what happened at Refugio beach happen at our little cottage on the island. When I arrived home to Diamond Lake in October, I received word of an injection well permit that will inject up to 5000 barrels of toxic brine about 4 miles north of our Mecosta County home. My research continued on the negative effects that the oil and gas industry has on OUR water. Local folks formed the group, Mecosta County Water Protectors (MCWP), to prepare for the EPA Hearing and researched injection wells. Our goal was to delay AND reverse the EPA decision for the permit of the Fork Township injection well that lies near wetlands and streams that feed into the Chippewa River Watershed. Thus far, ALL injection well permits in Michigan have been allowed, with the exception of one in Monroe County that had "karst" rock formations.

Michigan Citizens of Water Conservation has strongly supported the research on injection wells and has encouraged us to "get the word out" on the injection well permits that are coming out, that add to the already 1400 injection Class 2 wells in Michigan. The issue of injection wells and disposing of "fracked" toxic waste brine is of great concern.

Getting involved with "protecting our water" can be mentally and emotionally challenging. But more than that – it is deep intuitive knowledge that WATER=LIFE and the quality of our water determines the quality of our lives. Please remember this quote by Margaret Mead, "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed people can change the world. Indeed it is the only thing that ever has."

- Karen Turnbull, MCWP and MCWC Secretary

Meet The Board...

Glenna Maneke is a retired middle school teacher. “I started supporting MCWC when it began, because the usurping of our water impacted my extended family and the area where I grew up. I have served as treasurer since 2010. I perceive the poisoning of our aquifers with toxic chemicals as a much greater danger than our original mission. “

Jeff Ostahowski was first staff assistant for Congressman Dale Kildee, D-Flint and Governmental Relations for General Motors and UAW. “Like Native Americans we all should plan for seven generations. ‘We don't inherit the world, we borrow it from our grandchildren.’ I am an inventor, and author and environmentalist.”

John McClane has had a life-long love of the environment. “I had the privilege of working outdoors in land surveying this past 50 years and became a strong advocate for upholding property rights, without the risk of being devalued by the hydrocarbon industry. Our priority, I believe as I have held for decades, is to reduce the carbon footprint. “

Diane Weckerle, RN Med, has demonstrated against nuclear power plants, marched against the Detroit Incinerator, and, worked as a public health nurse in Detroit with lead-poisoned children. “While working on the state board of the Committee to Ban Fracking, I became aware that the toxic waste facility, US Ecology, planned to expand the storage and processing of waste in Detroit by tenfold. I am concerned that lead, frack waste and the proliferation of toxic chemicals in dumps or Class II Injection wells, is threatening the community's water supply.



Wendy Nystrom is an award winning children's author, community activist. She has lived in many places and held many positions. Her educational background is urban planning. She wants to leave the earth a better place for the future. “Water is life. Protecting it and preventing contamination of Michigan's water is a priority.”

Doug Miller is a retired automotive engineer, sod-farmer, aerospace engineer, and civil engineer. “I've been a life-long environmentalist and, out of necessity, a sporadic activist. Having the misfortune of living in an area which seems to be a magnet for ill-conceived industrial ventures, I am presently involved in resisting the establishment of a

second potash mine in a very sensitive location which threatens our water resources from both above and below.”

Jeanne Peters is a retired Social Security worker, a grandmother, and dedicated volunteer in several areas. “The protests at the Ice Mountain plant were an introduction to the work of MCWC. It seemed wrong that Nestle was taking water that belonged to the people of Michigan for free and selling it elsewhere for profit.”

Peggy Case is a life-long activist, community organizer and a retired elementary school teacher. “ I see MCWC as a model of grassroots organizing, free of corporate and government influence and able to educate and advocate for water. Climate change and privatization of the water commons are the two threats to living things which concern me most at this time.”

Karen Turnbull is a retired speech/language pathologist who taught children the power of language skills. She is a past union activist and a current environmental activist. "Clean water is key to our health, and I want my grandchildren to enjoy a healthy life!" She loves to kayak on lakes, rivers, and Lake Michigan.

Pam Gilbert is a retired educator, organic/biodynamic farmer, and beekeeper. She is also a Fork Township Trustee who was first to raise the alarm on the injection well permit requests in Mecosta County. "Clean water is essential to every aspect of our lives. Particularly in rural communities dependent on well water, we cannot allow anyone to poison or threaten our aquifers."

Will Detroit become the next Flint?

In 1974, Dynecol, an industrial waste processing plant, quietly set up operations at 6520 Georgia Street, in Detroit, across the street from Cooper Elementary. Almost forty years later, in 2012, the largest hazardous waste company in North America, US Ecology, bought out the plant, which by then was taking in truckloads of radioactive frack waste from Pennsylvania.

Last year, US Ecology North or USE-N (distinguished from its other Detroit plant, US Ecology South or USE-S) notified the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) it wanted a permit to increase the amount of hazardous waste that they stockpile on site. The MDEQ has told the community repeatedly that the expansion of hazardous waste in Detroit is not only legal, according to Michigan law, but safe. Yet no health impact or environmental assessment has ever been conducted in the neighborhood in the 42 years since it has been in existence. The DEQ intends to grant the permit despite: community outrage at two meetings the MDEQ was forced to organize last fall; the largest letter writing campaign of protest to MDEQ in history, according to officials; resolutions passed unanimously by the Detroit City Council and the Hamtramck City Council and a statement by the Wayne County Executive against

the expansion and the processing or storage of TENORM at the facility; and the formation of a coalition of community groups called the Coalition to Oppose the Expansion of US Ecology which has organized a relentless campaign to inform residents of SE Michigan of this threat to public health and the Lake Erie watershed.

The Coalition has staged a march through Eastern Market, held two protests at the MDEQ office in Detroit, raised a banner against the polluting of Detroit and its water supply at the Labor Day march in Detroit, several protests and finally over the freeway in early October, spoken out at meetings of activists fighting to defend access to clean water, and distributed thousands of information fliers.

We do know that:

- 1) USE-N has a permit in place with the Great Lakes Water Authority to dump 300,000 gallons of liquid waste every day into the public sewers. These same sewers back up untreated waste into residents homes when it rains.
- 2) USE-N has violated the Safe Drinking Water Act scores of times in the last few years and MDEQ officials have told us they think the violations are "insignificant." Yet every violation of mercury or arsenic into our water system can cause harm to human health, the Detroit River and our water shed. When these violations occur, all USE-N is required to do is to bring in another water sample and prove it is "in compliance." Not even a slap or a fine is required from the Great Lakes Water Authority.
- 3) In 2014 and 2015, USE-N has been out of compliance with laws which cover transportation, treatment, storage and disposal, of hazardous waste five out of 8 quarters, according to EPA's Toxic Release Inventory.

Meanwhile, a community of residents, sickened by industrial toxins, remains stuck between a host of polluters, while the MDEQ allows more and more pollutants to be dumped into the air and water. The health and home values of the residents have plummeted. Yet they have not been offered a cent to relocate out, in contrast to industry which is being lavishly funded to move into the area.

An Environmental Justice complaint has been filed with Region 5 of the EPA. We plan to support the demands of the resident for a community health assessment and for relocation to a healthier environment.

The MDEQ still plans to approve the expansion of toxic waste stored at the facility, but the approval has been delayed over a year by community protests and city concerns. The Host Community Agreement must be in place between the City of Detroit and US Ecology before the permit can be approved and it is still being negotiated and fought over.

The coalition continues the battle against the expansion, against radioactive waste coming to Detroit for processing or storage, and against toxins being dumped into public sewers. Alongside protests, we are working on the education and legal fronts and continuing to learn about and fight for the needs of the residents.

-Diane Weckerle, RN, M.Ed, Co-Chair of Coalition to Oppose Expansion of US Ecology

Detroit Water Shut-offs Continue

Attention has been focused in the last year on the Flint Water Crisis. However, the crisis in Detroit has not gone away by any means. Shut-offs continue and the right to water is still denied to many thousands of Detroit residents.

As the *Detroit News* recently reported, the original contract to do the shut-offs was signed in 2013 for \$5.6 million and resulted in the shut off of 70,000 homes. That contract has been renewed four times since and is now worth \$12.7 million. The contract calls for shut-offs to amount to 540 per week, average, during non-winter months.

What does this mean for the people of Detroit? It means water is shut off before winter so none is available during winter. It means that the city has not yet implemented the

Water Affordability Plan proposed by the people which would deal with the backlog of un-payable bills AND provide water to everyone. This is unacceptable. We stand with the Detroit People's Water Board in demanding action on this Plan. Water is a human right. Let us not forget Detroit in that equation.



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 screens and projectors and are able to do slide shows and power point presentations, panel discussions, speaker presentations, community conversations 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 Karen Turnbull at MichiganCWaterC@gmail.com.

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 _____ \$50

Lifetime Individual _____ \$250

Lifetime Family _____ \$500

Other _____



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

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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!