

FACETS of Freshwater



June – July 2014

Red-necked Grebe
By Dominique Braud

Weather Facts and Photo from *MN Weatherguide Environment Calendar*
Monthly Normals: June Temp. Max: 78.8 F Min: 58.8 F Precip: 4.25 in.
July Temp Max: 83.4 F Min: 64.1 F Precip: 4.04 in.

 FRESHWATER SOCIETY

In This Issue

MN Water Legislation 2014.....	2
From the <i>Something to Look Forward to</i> Department.....	3
A Local Blog You Need to Checkout.....	3
Upcoming Events.....	3
Two Chances to Hear a Great Lecture.....	4
Septic System Classes Help Protect Minnesota's Waters	4
Celebrate Your Lake.....	4
Join the Society – Get the Weatherguide	4

Pat Sweeney: On The Water Beat



Pat Sweeney

This is the last *Facets of Freshwater* newsletter that I will have a hand in producing. I am retiring at the end of June.

I want to take this opportunity to thank all of the people I have worked with – both the Freshwater Society Board and staff and the many, many people in the state agencies, the U.S. Geological Survey and the University of Minnesota, who have shown patience and courtesy in helping me learn about water.

I came to the Freshwater Society in late 2007 after having spent my entire working career as a newspaper journalist. Researching and writing about issues for the Freshwater Society has been like learning a whole new beat.

Who knew, for example, that aquifers aren't big underground lakes? Who knew that most of the rain that falls on the Earth evaporates, or is transpired by plants, back into the atmosphere?

I didn't know those things. But almost all the people I dealt with in my job knew about aquifers and evapotranspiration and the connections between groundwater and surface waters and lots more. And they helped me learn about those things.

This job has been humbling as I have learned how much I didn't – still don't – know about water. My advice to my colleagues at Freshwater Society and in the organizations we partner with is this: Be humble, don't assume you have all the answers, seek out the experts, talk to people whose views are different than yours.

Pat Sweeney... (continues on page 3)

The Freshwater Society is a non-profit organization dedicated to educating and inspiring people to value, conserve and protect water resources.

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Visit the Freshwater Society web site at www.freshwater.org.

MN Water Legislation 2014

Early this year, as the 2014 MN Legislature was coming into session, it didn't seem that much activity would be focused on enacting new water laws or approving new spending.

That turned out to be wrong. In many different ways, lawmakers set new policy and appropriated new money for groundwater and surface water projects.

Aquatic Invasive Species: Invasive Asian carp lost the "Asian" part of their name. Legislators were persuaded that the name could cast a pejorative light on Asian people. So, as far as the statutes are concerned, it's just invasive carp from now on.

Lawmakers approved state borrowing to provide \$4 million to significantly upgrade the U of MN's Aquatic Invasive Species Research Center.

In the tax bill, legislators appropriated \$4.5 million in the state's fiscal year that begins July 1 to help counties fight invasive aquatic species, both plants and animals. The Legislature signaled its intent to provide \$10 million per year in subsequent years. Counties will share the money in proportion to the number of boat launches and boat-trailer parking places at launches they have.

The legislation defines aquatic invasive species as "nonnative aquatic organisms that invade water beyond their natural and historic range."

Water Policy: Lawmakers voted to re-establish a bipartisan 12-member Legislative Water Commission to advise the rest of the Legislature on water issues. The commission, similar to a legislative panel that was abolished in the 1990s, was recommended by the 2011 Minnesota Water Sustainability Framework report. Members will be appointed by minority and majority caucus leaders in the House and Senate. The legislation authorizes the commission to hire staff and consultants. It directs the commission to "review water policy reports and recommendations of the Environmental Quality Board, the Board of Water and Soil Resources, the Pollution Control Agency, the Department of Natural Resources, Metropolitan Council and other water-related reports."

Consumer Products: The 2014 Legislature also made MN the first state to begin phasing out the sale of



consumer products – mainly antibacterial hand cleaners and other personal care products like tooth pastes and deodorants – that contain the chemical triclosan.

Last year Gov. Mark Dayton directed state agencies not to buy triclosan-containing products, except in certain circumstances. Human wastes that contain triclosan can pass through sewage treatment plants and form cancer-causing dioxins in rivers and lakes. As part of a legislative compromise, the ban on the sale of consumer products containing triclosan will be delayed until Jan. 1, 2017.

Clean Water Fund: The Legislature approved several appropriations from the Clean Water Fund aimed at reversing all or part of the big decline in White Bear Lake.

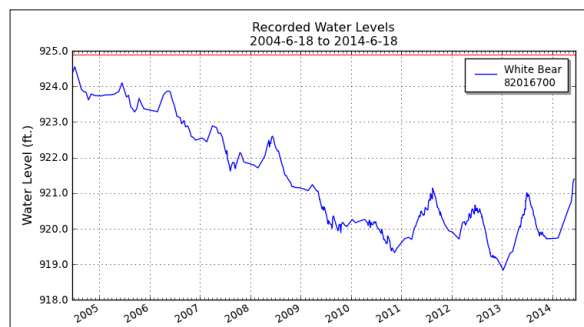
Late this summer or fall, the Metropolitan Council is scheduled to release a big study of the lake and the significant drop in its water level. To begin work on that study's recommendations, the Legislature approved a \$400,000 appropriation to the Council to begin planning and designing "long-term solutions to address regional water supply and sustainability issues" around the lake.

The appropriation includes money earmarked for study of ways to collect and treat stormwater "to enhance surface waters and groundwater recharge," as well as money to promote conservation and water reuse by industry. Much of the \$400,000 is to be spent on planning that ultimately may suggest using Mississippi River water as an additional source to replace some of the groundwater that cities around White Bear Lake now pump or may pump in the future.

Go to our blog at www.freshwater.org to read more.



Jumping Invasive Carp



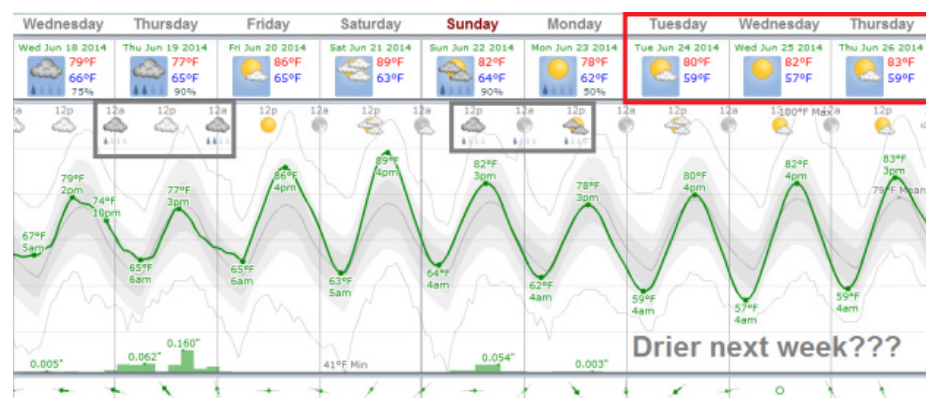
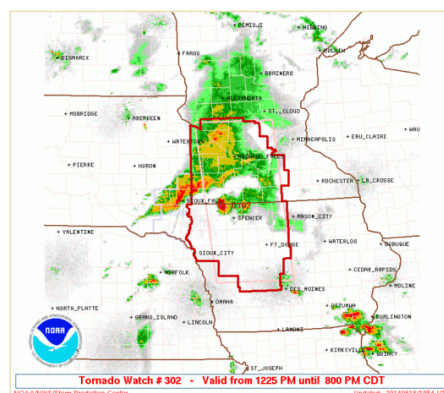
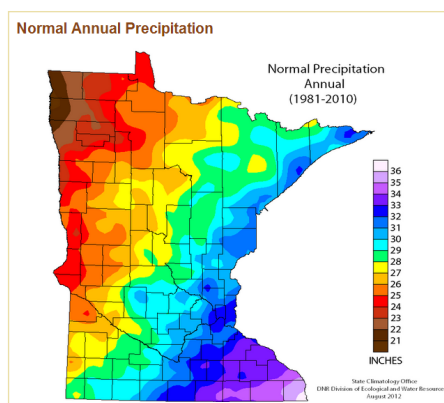
White Bear Lake Water Levels 2004–2014 (Courtesy MN DNR)

A Local Blog You Need to Checkout Out

If you are interested in MN's weather, droughts and floods, historic meteorology events, climate change or simply looking for the forecast, you'll want to bookmark this blog – then read it daily.

Freshwater Society's good friend and Minnesota Public Radio chief meteorologist Paul Huttner publishes [Updraft](#), a daily blog on MPR's website. Huttner provides a recap of recent weather events, trends, and historical weather facts. He includes many stunning weather photos, color graphics and interviews to help further explain the happenings in our atmosphere. The blog features information from a variety of sources, including NOAA, Weather Underground, Twin Cities and National Weather Services, local television stations, MN State Climatology Working Group, and more.

A recent *Updraft* headline: *Uncle! 2014 is wettest year on record so far.* And if you don't believe it, Paul Huttner provides his meteorological expertise – along with data and graphics – to back that state-ment up. Current weather and climate information, along with Huttner's wit, will bring you back regularly to this [blog](#)!



Pat Sweeney: On The Water Beat (con't from pg 1)

When I was covering the Legislature as a reporter, we sometimes joked that 90 percent of lawmakers gave a bad name to the other 10 percent. By the time I quit covering the Legislature, I had also quit making that kind of joke. I came to believe that most legislators are trying as hard as they can to make good policy – as they see it – for Minnesota.

And that goes for the bureaucrats, too. Since I started working for the Freshwater Society, there have been many times when I went home after spending time with someone from the USGS, MPCA, or DNR and told my wife: I'm proud to be citizen of a country and a state that has those kinds of people working for me.

It has been a privilege to get to do the kind of research and writing that Freshwater Society's founder Dick Gray did: Learning about a complex scientific issue and then writing about it in a way that non-scientists could understand. It's also been a privilege to help recruit the national speakers our Moos lecture series has brought to Minnesota to teach us about the environment and environmental policy in terms we could understand.

So...Thanks for the guidance on those underground lakes. Thanks for your continued support for the Freshwater Society.

Regards,

Pat Sweeney

UPCOMING EVENTS

JUNE 29: 2014 Creek Cleanup, Minnehaha Creek Watershed District, Minnehaha Creek

AUGUST 4-6: Summer Institute for Climate Change and Energy Education, Will Steger Foundation, Audubon Center of the North Woods, Sandstone

SEPTEMBER 11: Clean Water Summit 2014, *Green Infrastructure for Clean Water: Cost and Benefits to Our Communities*, U of MN Water Resources, MN Landscape Arboretum, Chaska

SEPTEMBER 18: Freshwater Society's Moos Family Lecture: Dwindling Groundwater Reserves as Viewed from Space, Jay Famiglietti, U of Mn St. Paul Student Center

SEPTEMBER 28-30: 2014 BWSR Academy, MN Board of Water and Soil Resources, Breezy Point Convention Center, Pequot Lakes

OCTOBER 14-15: Water Resources Conference, U of MN Water Resources, St. Paul River Centre

From the *Something to Look Forward to* Department



As you know, we're fans of good news. Metropolitan Council Environmental Services (MCES) tells us they are releasing a report in July on quality trends in Twin Cities Metro area streams. Stream trends are tough to collect compared to lakes due to the cost, fewer sites, and their rate of change.

MCES gave us permission to share a sneak peak of the good news with you...Of the 20 streams with sufficient data, 12 have improved for phosphorous, 13 for sediment, and 14 for nitrate. Declining conditions were found in three streams for each of the pollutants.

In the words of legendary Yankees sportscaster, Mel Allen, "How about that!"

Two Chances to Hear a Great Lecture



Jay Famiglietti

Strong interest in our Sept. 18 lecture on measuring groundwater changes from orbiting satellites has led us to add a morning talk by our speaker, Jay Famiglietti. He is a University of California Irvine professor who analyzes NASA observations

of changes in the Earth's gravitational pull.

It's fascinating stuff, and Famiglietti says the data show declines in water levels in major aquifers around the world.

Famiglietti's lecture is sponsored by the Freshwater Society and the University of Minnesota College of Biological Sciences with special support from Barr

Engineering and the Capitol Region Watershed District.

Choose a lecture to attend:

- A 10:30 a.m. session at the Gray Freshwater Center in Navarre, 2500 Shadywood Road. His talk there will be similar to his evening lecture, but it will not include a local panel of experts offering perspectives and counterpoints.
- A 7 p.m. lecture in the theater of the Student Center on the University of Minnesota's St. Paul campus. This session will include the panel of local experts.

As usual, the evening session also will be broadcast in streaming video. Both lectures are free, but we urge you to register if you plan on attending the evening lecture.

[Learn more](#) about Famiglietti and register for the evening lecture.

Septic System Classes Help Protect Minnesota's Waters

A properly designed, installed, and maintained septic system removes nitrogen, phosphorus, pathogens, and solids from our wastewater flow, thereby helping protect MN's lakes and rivers as well as human health. Septic systems are machines that do work for us and, like automobiles, they need routine maintenance.

However, many Minnesotans, especially those that have moved from urban areas with sewers to rural properties, don't understand how their system works or the maintenance steps that can be taken to protect their costly investment. A well maintained septic system can last 30 years or more, while a poorly maintained system can fail within a decade.

The University of Minnesota Extension offers *Septic System Homeowner Operation and Maintenance Education (HOME)* classes to help owners protect the environment, human health, and their own septic systems. These 90-minute classes cover the basics of septic system components, the role of those components in system operation, maintenance tips to promote system efficiency and longevity, and discussion about specific product use.

If you are interested in sponsoring a HOME class in your area, contact Doug Malchow at the Rochester Extension Regional Center: **507-280-5575** or malch002@umn.edu.

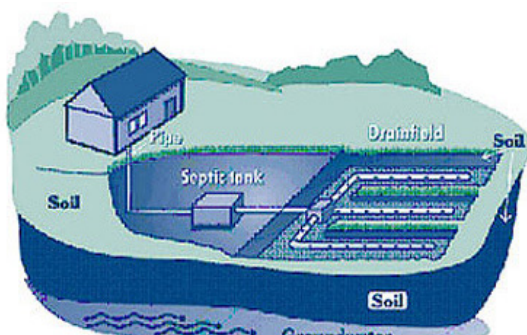


Diagram from U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

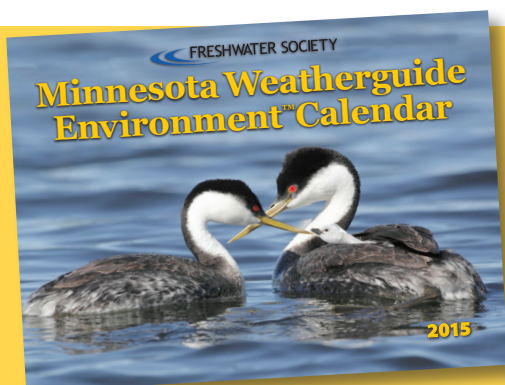


Celebrate Your Lake!

The Freshwater Society is pleased to be partnering with Michelob Golden Light to bring you the Celebrate Your Lake contest – with the winning lake receiving a \$50,000 conservation grant!

Last year's winner, the community around Albert Lea Lake, is already off and running, designing a boat launch for non-motorized watercraft along with a shoreland restoration on a sensitive part of the lake. The Lakes Foundation of Albert Lea was recently featured in the [Albert Lea Tribune](#) and on [KIMT television](#) as the award recipient and is heading up the project.

This year, thirty lakes have been selected to participate in the contest and **voting for your favorite lake will take place on Facebook starting July 7**. Be sure to like the [Michelob Golden](#) Facebook page to stay updated on the contest, including the release of contestant lakes. We will also post new information on the Freshwater Society's "Celebrate Your Lake page" as it becomes available.



Join the Society – Get the Weatherguide!

Become a member or renew your Freshwater Society membership and you'll receive the *2015 Minnesota Weatherguide Environment Calendar*. It's a win-win!

Help us protect freshwater resources and you'll enjoy a plethora of amazing regional photography, Nature Notes, weather history and meteorological information, gardening tips and much more. **Become a member!**