

FACETS of Freshwater



Mille Lacs Sunrise
By Tom Samuelson

March 2014

Weather Facts and Photo from *MN Weatherguide Environment Calendar*

Monthly Normals: Temp. Max: 41.3 F Min: 24.3 F Precip: 1.89 in. rain / 10.2 in. snow



UPCOMING EVENTS

April 24 - Ice OUT/Loon IN
Lafayette Club, Minnetonka Beach

May 1-2 - State of Water Conference
Craguns, Brainerd

Sept. 18 - Moos Speaker Series
Measuring Groundwater Declines by
Satellite, St. Paul Student Center, U of M

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Lurching Forward on Groundwater



Steve Woods

It lurched.

There are several classic movie scenes that come to mind where something big and seemingly immovable... moves. Think of the tree creatures in Tolkein's *Lord of the Rings* trilogy picking up their roots and lumbering to battle, of Bogart and Hepburn heaving the *African Queen* out of the muck to go after the World War I-era German boat, or *Erin Brokovich* putting her shoulder into the massive Pacific Gas and Electric Company (and governments) to address chromium contamination of the groundwater supply for Hinkley, CA.

Things do move. But sometimes we have to look hard to see it. Few people have time to track this sort of glacial movement-even if it is part of their day job. That's why we're highlighting groundwater policy in this issue. The DNR released a report to the Legislature in January discussing a few things they've done and some law changes that would help. It is a short 16-page read documenting the lurch forward. It's a hopeful start, that will be impressive if it eventually results in durable changes to state policy and agency procedures.

Groundwater is one of the three priority issues (the other two are agricultural runoff and connecting with citizens) the Freshwater Society Board has had in its sights for several years now. You can read the Society's [review of the DNR report](#) penned by our Pat Sweeney. Or if you have the time and the interest, read the [full report](#). It details most of those law changes the DNR says would help. But, there is much the DNR can do without those law changes.

Lurching Forward on Groundwater (continues on page 3)



African Queen

FRESHWATER SOCIETY

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.

Paul Huttner Hosts Our **Funraiser**



Join us for 4th Annual Ice OUT/Loon IN on Thursday, April 24, from 5:30-9:00 p.m. at the Lafayette Club in Minnetonka Beach. Paul Huttner, MPR's Chief Meteorologist, will be the emcee once again for a night of fun and good deeds on behalf of the Freshwater Society. A Silent Auction and Raffle will kick off the event from 5:30 p.m. until 7:00 p.m., when the Auction will close and guests will enjoy Lafayette Club's delicious appetizers, drinks, the Rhubarb Vaselino band, plus a Live Auction. There will be a brief program and awards will be presented for an individual and an organization "Clean Water Champions for 2014."

Tickets are \$75 each and \$60 for members (pre-sales only) and tables of 6 (\$450), 8 (\$600) or 10 (\$750) are available for reservations.

Click [here](#) to register. Volunteers are needed for the night of the event and will receive a free ticket, so if you would like to volunteer or have any questions, please contact Diane Lynch, Development Director, at 952-314-8134 or dlynch@freshwater.org.



Music by Rhubarb Vaselino

Savory Offerings at Silent Auction from Chef Beth Dooley



Chef Beth Dooley

What a treat it was for 12 lucky silent auction winners who bid on *Dinner with Chef Beth Dooley*, one of the items offered at the 2013 Ice OUT/Loon IN. Hosted by Blyth Brookman, former Chair and Board Member, Freshwater Society and Joan Nephew, retiring Freshwater Society Executive Director, Chef Dooley donated her time and talents to prepare a one-of-a-kind, five-course dinner with locally-sourced organic cheeses, fruits, vegetables and meats. The food was paired with wine from a nearby winery and Freshwater Society supporter, Parley Lake Winery.

Chef Dooley has authored several books, is a restaurant critic for *Mpls. St. Paul Magazine*, writes for the Taste section of the *StarTribune* and appears regularly on KARE-11. She has authored several books, including *The Northern Heartland Kitchen* and co-authored *Savoring the Seasons of the Northern Heartland* with restaurateur, Chef Lucia Watson. Her latest book is *Minnesota's Bounty: The Farmers Market Cookbook*. In addition to all of this, Chef Dooley is very proud of her work with Wilderness Inquiry (WI) where she is the Communications Director. There, she leads a yearly adventure trip, A Taste of The Apostle Islands, which is described on the WI website as "Experience the Bayfield Peninsula with Beth Dooley while you explore the Apostle Islands on this foodie locovore feast."

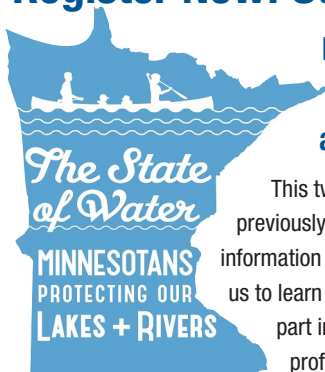
Items of Interest

Links to original reports on water availability, water pollution and water policy are archived on the [Reports and Research](#) page of the Freshwater web site.

There is some intriguing research there by agencies and organizations as diverse as the U.S. Geological Survey, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and the Pew Environment Group. You can look up a report that puts Minnesota water use into a national perspective, and you can read about Chesapeake Bay pollution caused by giant chicken farms.

Browse through the web page. You will find something that interests you.

Register Now! State of Water Conference May 1-2



Interested in Lake and River Conservation?

Join us at the State of Water Conference May 1-2 at Craguns Conference Center, Brainerd, MN

This two day event follows in the tradition of the Lakes and Rivers Conference previously organized by Minnesota Waters and features workshops and information sessions on everything from lake restoration to local ordinances. Join us to learn more about protecting and improving the water you love and take part in a great opportunity to network with other citizens and water resource professionals. [Click here](#) for conference details or to [register](#).

Freshwater Society's Efforts on Conservation Compliance

The Freshwater Society can take some satisfaction from supporting the conservation compliance requirement included in the Farm Bill that Congress passed and President Obama signed into law in early February.

When we first heard about the bill's "conservation compliance" provision from the Izaak Walton League in 2011, many people were not familiar with the issue.

The provision requires farmers seeking federally subsidized crop insurance to follow certain minimum conservation practices. These practices were once part of the farm bill, but were dropped by Congress in 1996. Those conservation provisions – Sod Buster and Swamp Buster – remained a requirement for farmers getting direct crop subsidies. But everyone who followed the Farm Bill knew those direct subsidies were virtually certain to be dramatically reduced. That made it all the more important to get conservation compliance back into the crop insurance part of the bill.

Brad Redlin, then the director of the Izaak Walton League's national agriculture program, had worked with Freshwater Society on other issues and convinced us of the importance of conservation compliance. He invited us to join him and other environmental groups in working for it. It did not appear at the time – or even as recently as a year ago – that there was a very good chance it would be included in the bill.

Read a really good series of blog posts by the [National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition](#) providing an overview of the legislation, plus summaries of individual components of the bill. Here's the [posting on conservation compliance](#) and on another important provision of the bill that denies crop insurance for land converted from native prairie to cropland.

Freshwater Society's effort was small compared to the big national organizations with Washington lobbying teams, but here is what we did:

- In August 2011, the Society joined the Izaak Walton league and other sponsors in hosting a daylong conference on the Farm Bill with special emphasis on conservation compliance.
- We covered the national debate over conservation compliance more than a dozen times in our blog.
- In October 2011, Gene Merriam, Freshwater Society's former president, wrote a [Facets column](#) about the issue.
- In the spring of 2012, Joan Nephew, then Freshwater Society's executive director, sent an email to Minnesota's Congressional delegation, supporting conservation compliance and providing a link to Gene's column.
- In late 2012, Gene wrote a letter, on behalf of Freshwater Society, to Minnesota's delegation, supporting conservation compliance.
- Gene wrote another [Facets newsletter column](#) about the issue and about his letter to Congress in December 2012. In that column, he urged the readers to write their own letters. "Even if you have never written a letter to lawmaker before, I urge you to send a note or an email to your Senators and Representatives," he wrote.

There are many things not to like about the Farm Bill. It cuts overall spending on conservation and reduces the size of the Conservation Reserve Program by 2 million acres, but conservation compliance is one of the good things in the legislation. We don't know what, if any, weight Freshwater Society's efforts added to the national conservation lobbying, but we were a voice on the right side of the issue.



Pat Sweeney,
Freshwater Society
Research and
Communications
Director

Lurching Forward on Groundwater *(con't from page 1)*

If you live near the Straight River, Bonanza Valley, or north and east metropolitan areas it definitely is worth taking a little more time to look at the Groundwater Management Area (GMA) discussions affecting your water supply. [See Map](#). Nobody knows what will come out of these site-specific policy discussion—we've talked with DNR at length and they'll be the first to tell you they really don't know. If you are a water supplier or irrigator, tracking the discussion is a good idea. If you are a small-volume consumer of groundwater, you may just want to ask your municipal water provider what they think and monitor this slowly developing story.

Lots of people were involved in making the lurch. New DNR management familiar with sustainable use concepts throughout their careers (Steve Hirsch, Jason Moeckel, Julie Ekman) have benefited from additional years of data and have begun overhauling parts of the decision-making apparatus. Several legislative champions have emerged (Reps. Wagenius, Fischer, and Hansen and Sen. Scalze). Met Council voices (Sandy Rummel, Ali El Hassan) have started discussion about tomorrow's limits for all of us to contemplate today. Pushes from the University of MN (Water Sustainability Framework), a US Geological Survey study, irrigation users frustrated with dry wells, and a citizen lawsuit over declining water levels in White Bear Lake have clearly been factors in the cracking sound heard when the lurch occurred.

We'd also like to think our little [groundwater report](#) a year ago helped leverage this effort along too. Thank you to our members for their financial and technical assistance for making this happen and allowing us to keep imparting a little momentum to a very large effort.

Regards,

STEVE WOODS

Steve Woods
Executive Director

Download the free Minnesota
Weatherguide
mobile app in an
[Apple](#) or [android](#)
version!



Stories from Master Water Stewards

Welcome 2014 Stewards



On January 21, the second group of Master Water Stewards began their certification process, beginning a 50-hour series of classes to learn how to keep water cleaner. In its first year, the program certified 19 Stewards, who installed 14 projects in the southern third of the Minnehaha Creek Watershed District. This year's class of Stewards has 32 participants from the middle third of the Watershed District, evidence of the high level of interest the program has generated among residents who care about the health of their water.

The Master Water Stewards program is a partnership between the Freshwater Society and the Minnehaha Creek Watershed District, funded by a Clean Water Fund grant. Now in the second year of the three-year pilot phase, the Master Water Stewards program trains and certifies community leaders to help neighbors and small local businesses install landscaping and other

water conservation practices. Water that soaks into the ground means less water, and less pollution running into area lakes and rivers.

Leslie Yetka, Education Manager at the Minnehaha Creek Watershed District, notes, "If this program is successful what we'll have is, really, an army of community activists, who are all focused on water."



Signs marking a Master Water Steward project in the Minnehaha Creek Watershed District.

As you travel through neighborhoods in the Minnehaha Creek Watershed District, keep an eye out for the signs that mark a Master Water Steward project. Clean water starts here. To learn more about the Master Water Stewards program, visit our [website](#), or contact Peggy Knapp, Director of Programs at the Freshwater Society.

To learn more about the Master Water Stewards program, contact [Peggy Knapp](#) at the Freshwater Society.

A Partnership of  MINNEHAHA CREEK WATERSHED DISTRICT

 FRESHWATER SOCIETY

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Q and A with Board Member Julie Blackburn



Julie Blackburn

A childhood spent partly at a resort on Gull Lake, fascination with fish and critters of all kinds, bachelor's and master's degrees in environmental science and ecology, and fifteen years of helping lead local and state efforts protect and restore watersheds and natural resources.

Those are elements of Julie Blackburn's story. Julie is one of the newest members of the Freshwater Society Board. We asked Julie to talk about her background, her connections to water and her goals for the Society.

Q. What's your story? Where did you grow up and go to school? What have you done in your professional life?

A. My family moved from the Chicago area to owning a resort on Gull Lake just north of Brainerd when I was 6. We eventually sold the resort and moved to Pequot Lakes where I graduated from high school. I went to SCSU and have a BA in Cultural Anthropology and Environmental Science and went to the State University of New York College of Environmental Science and Forestry/Syracuse for a MA in Systems Ecology. Since then I have worked as a watershed district administrator for two watersheds, was assistant director of programs and policy for the Board of Water and Soil Resources, and now I work for a private consulting firm. Read more of her [Q and A interview](#).

Environmental Timeline

A few years ago, Steve Woods created a simple timeline of Minnesota's major water policy events for a class he was teaching. He looked at his first draft and knew the class would be asleep within minutes. So he added a few more things for context like presidents, governors, movies, and "Minnesota things" like the IDS Tower going up and the Twins winning the World Series.

This year, the rest of the Freshwater Society staff saw it and added a few more years and items for your inspection. This may be a work in progress for years to come so, please [send us](#) your suggestions for additions.

[View the timeline.](#)

Join the Society – Get the Weatherguide!

Become a new member of the Freshwater Society and you'll receive the new, *2014 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!](#)

