

River Currents

Summer 2014

A quarterly publication of

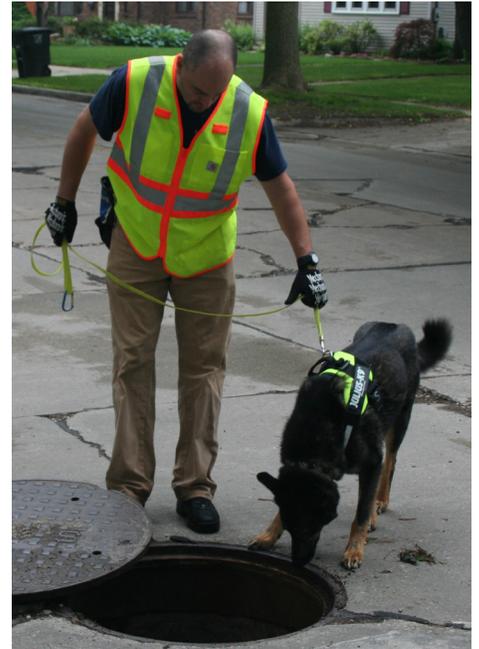


Sable the Sewage Sniffing Dog is Back in Town!

In mid-June, Milwaukee Riverkeeper, Environmental Canine Services, UWM School of Freshwater Sciences, MMSD, and the United States Geological Survey (USGS) investigated six storm sewer systems that previously tested positive for human fecal contamination at their outfall discharge into the Kinnickinnic and Menomonee Rivers.

In many cases, sewage and stormwater pipes lie alongside one another and can crack or separate as they age. In these situations, sewage can leak from the sanitary pipes, contaminate groundwater and surrounding soils, and eventually find its way into the storm sewers. At other times, contamination occurs via illegal or mistaken cross connections between sanitary and storm sewer systems.

Storm sewer systems resemble tree branches in that they generally consist of several smaller branches which converge at various stages to eventually form one main trunk which then empties into a ditch, stream, or river at a large opening called an outfall. The group worked their way "up" each storm sewer network from the outfall, popping manhole covers along the way as Sable, our trusty and "furry" detector, smelled for human sewage, barking if he detected any sign. Sandra McClellan's lab at UWM School of Freshwater Sciences collected water samples at a subset of these investigation points that were analyzed for human bacteria strains using a DNA test in order to verify Sable's findings. Colleagues from the USGS joined us to test a water



Sable sniffing our sewers for sewage!

Continued on page 5

Join Us for a Screening of DamNation



Oriental Theatre
August 25, 7:00pm

DamNation is a movie produced by Patagonia that explores the sea change in our national attitude from pride in big dams as engineering wonders to the growing awareness that our own future is bound to the life and health of our rivers. Where obsolete dams come down, rivers bound back to life, giving wild fish the right to return to primeval spawning grounds, after decades without access.

Milwaukee Riverkeeper is bringing this movie to Milwaukee as part of our fight to remove Estabrook Dam. Milwaukee County built Estabrook Dam in 1937 to elevate water levels in the Lincoln Park area after a prior project to blast bedrock from the bed of the river - to

minimize severe flooding in the area - led to drastically reduced water levels. Unfortunately, the Estabrook Dam has suffered a long decline in the past several decades, and Milwaukee County has not addressed several outstanding maintenance and repair requirements per State Dam Safety regulations. The Dam has been open since 2009 when an inspection by WDNR found it unsafe to impound water.

Removing the dam would yield the greatest positive impacts on river ecology, water quality and fish and aquatic life. Recent studies of the Dam have shown that it increases flooding upstream, will lead to increased flood insurance costs for upstream residents

Continued on page 7

Events

Visit milwaukeekeeper.org/events.htm or call (414) 287-0207 for more events, updates, and registration!

DamNation Screening

Monday, August 25th - Oriental Theatre - 7:00pm

Join us for this showing of DamNation to learn more about dam removal and our efforts to have the Estabrook Dam removed.

Let's Paddle

Tuesday, August 26th - Explore the Menomonee River - 5:30pm to 8:30pm

Tuesday, September 30th - Explore the Port of Milwaukee and KK River - 5:30pm to 8:30pm

Milwaukee Riverkeeper and Milwaukee Kayak Company are hosting a series of guided paddles exploring our urban rivers in Milwaukee!

Cookout For A Cause

Friday, September 5th - 5:00pm to 7:00 pm

Join Milwaukee Riverkeeper at Outpost in Wauwatosa for a cookout! 100% of donations for food go directly to Milwaukee Riverkeeper. Grab your friends and come join us for dinner along the Menomonee River!

Salus Schlitz Park Corporate Challenge

Thursday, September 18th - 6:15pm

The 4th Annual Corporate Challenge welcomes all fitness levels and abilities to Wisconsin's only corporate run/walk designed to promote employee health and wellness through competition and camaraderie. All event proceeds benefit Milwaukee Riverkeeper.

2014 Arts and Rivers Contest

Friday, September 19th - Submission Deadline

Milwaukee Riverkeeper is proud to announce its 2014 Arts and Rivers Contest. Guidelines and submission details available on our website. Finalists will be featured at our River Regale.

2014 River Regale

Wednesday, October 15th - Discovery World - 6:00pm

This special event will celebrate our wondrous rivers. The event will showcase our Arts & Rivers Contest, a historic panel exhibit entitled Milwaukee's Rivers: Then & Now, and speaker Robert F. Kennedy Jr., who will deliver an address regarding "Our Environmental Destiny".

Thank You Members!

April 2014 - June 2014

We are thankful to have wonderful supporters who believe in our mission and take action towards clean drinking water and fishable, swimmable rivers!

Alan Bartelme

Todd Frier

Robert Retko

Jamie Berlin

Scott Hess

Avigail Rubin

Jennifer Carstens

Steven Janowski

Alice & Robert Schilleman

Jessica Celella

Paula & Thomas Jung

Craig Trewartha

Lisa & Edmund Fernandez

Angie Klemm

Natalie Fleury

Elizabeth Price & Gerald Weber

Board of Directors

Mustafa Emir

President
Clark Dietz, Inc.

Eric Vogel

Vice President
Vogel Design Group, Inc.

Demaris Kenwood

Secretary
Whitefish Bay Middle School

Lilith Fowler

Treasurer
Community Activist

Brian Adams

Mariner

Howard Caplan

Nurses & Medical Staffing, Inc.

Chris Daood

Marquette University

Susan LeVine

UWM, Retired

Francisco Martorell

MPS, Retired

Anne Vogel

Art Historian

David Wolfson

Foundation for Anesthesia
Education & Research

Staff

Jennifer Bolger Breceda, J.D.

Executive Director

Cheryl Nenn, M.S.

Riverkeeper

Joe Rath, M.A.

Water Quality Specialist

Christina Taddy, M.P.A.

Development & Operations
Manager

Milwaukee Riverkeeper

1845 N. Farwell Avenue
Suite 100
Milwaukee, WI 53202
414-287-0207
milwaukeekeeper.org

Did You Serve the River Today?

A message from Jennifer Bolger Breceda, Executive Director

On May 20th of this year, I was fortunate enough to assume the role of Executive Director of this great organization. For those of you who know me, this is very likely the perfect job for me and what most of my friends and family have said in response to hearing the news that after 15 years, I would be making a “jump-shift” change to leave the practice of law and run Milwaukee Riverkeeper. For those of you who don’t know me, I am a Milwaukee native and have always been passionate about the environment, community, and advocacy for those who need a stronger voice. Milwaukee is fortunate to have three rivers in addition to our Great Lake. I love Wisconsin (including cold, snowy winters) and I believe that we can, and have an obligation to, renew and protect our amazing natural resources which, of course, include our wonderful rivers.

Prior to taking this position, I was a lawyer at several law firms in Milwaukee, most recently at von Briesen & Roper, and during this time, I practiced mostly environmental law and general litigation. I also served on several nonprofit boards including the Urban Ecology Center, Women’s Council of United Way, and Wisconsin State Bar Environmental Law Section Board, among others, where I gained invaluable experience and training for the work of Milwaukee Riverkeeper.

I was also on the Board of Directors at Milwaukee Riverkeeper and was constantly inspired by all the work Milwaukee Riverkeeper does to improve our rivers, waters and community. While Milwaukee Riverkeeper’s work and mission are not new to me, I find that every day I learn new things about our projects, rivers, wildlife habitat, and water quality, and I am amazed by the staff’s dedication to our mission.

In the office I inherited, there is a wooden plaque, propped up in an old, rusted out Radio Flyer wagon that was pulled from the rivers during one of our annual river cleanups that says: “Did you serve the river today?” Every morning I see and read that sign before sitting down at my desk to begin my day and it is a wonderful mantra and reminder of my purpose for the day – what a great client to work for!

At Milwaukee Riverkeeper, we use several tools to serve our rivers and achieve our mission of clean drinking water and swimmable, fishable rivers. These include monitoring and patrolling the rivers and waters, education, river cleanups and habitat restoration, facilitating paddling and recreation activities, and advocacy. These parallel the same policy goals listed in the Clean Water Act, which makes sense since



the CWA is one of our primary advocacy tools. We also rely on our members and citizens to implement our mission and are grateful to have a large and active volunteer base.

We have done a lot to improve our rivers and to better understand what is needed to achieve swimmable, fishable waters, but we still have major challenges ahead. According to the EPA, nationally, almost half of our rivers and streams, one-third of our lakes and ponds, and two-thirds of our bays and estuaries are “impaired waters,” and, in many cases, not clean enough for fishing and swimming. In Milwaukee, we also have too many “impaired waters.” These are your assets and they need our service. So, I now I ask you: Did you serve the river today? We appreciate service in any form including donating time, skills, and financial support, and I hope, on occasion, you will hear this mantra too, and help us in any way you can.

With appreciation,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jennifer Bolger Breceda'.

Jennifer Bolger Breceda, JD
Executive Director



Our Rivers Thank You

The 19th Annual Spring Cleanup was a huge success! A big thank you to the 3,500 volunteers who braved the windy, cool weather on Saturday, April 26th to help remove tons of trash from our waterways. Volunteers picked up over 7,500 bags of trash along the Kinnickinnic, Menomonee, and Milwaukee Rivers, as well as many shopping carts and car tires! Thank you to all the volunteers for making this event one of the largest volunteer efforts in the state!



Thank You Sponsors

The 2014 Spring Cleanup would not have been possible without the support of our generous sponsors. Together, we are making our water cleaner, our riverbanks free of trash and debris, and our community aware of the beautiful rivers and streams that surround us. Thank you!



Forest County Potawatomi
FOUNDATION



Susan Winecki &
Richard Bergholz

Robert W. Baird & Co.

Natural Resource Technology



Share it. Wear it.
inktothepople.com

Erehwon
Guadalupe/St. Patrick Lazos
de Esperanza
Herbert H. Kohl Charities
Kapco Inc.
Kuhl Family Charitable Fund

Mandel Group
Mercury Marine
Reinhart Boerner Van Deuren
von Briesen & Roper
David & Diane Wolfson
UWM Foundation



KEEP
GREATER
MILWAUKEE
BEAUTIFUL

Keep Finding and Fixing Sewage Contamination in Milwaukee, Says EPA

Milwaukee Riverkeeper has been working with the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee School of Freshwater Sciences' Professor Sandra McClellan and her lab since 2008 to identify and monitor sources of sanitary-sewage contamination in the storm sewer systems within targeted areas of the Menomonee and Kinnickinnic River watersheds. Given the enormity of both the watersheds and the problem, we are really just getting started on this important work. So it is good news that the EPA Great Lakes Area of Concern Program has issued a new \$468,000 grant that will extend the collaboration through 2014 and 2015.

Milwaukee Riverkeeper and University lab staff will continue to collect one dry-weather and three wet-weather samples from stormwater outfalls at bacteria "hot spots" in both watersheds. Samples are tested for *E. coli*, enterococcus and using DNA analysis, a human-specific strain of bacteroides. The grant will also allow testing of surface waters to better understand the flow of human bacteria from local rivers. The purpose is to find and eliminate the sources of sewage contamination to local rivers, which, along with associated viruses and pathogens, are threatening public health and keeping local waterways from meeting the "fishable and swimmable" goals of the Clean Water Act.

Sewage contamination from three area rivers – the Menomonee, Kinnickinnic, and Milwaukee – is a major cause of Lake Michigan beach closings in Milwaukee. Bacteria loads in local streams greatly exceed what would be expected simply from stormwater runoff. These loads have increased over the past two decades while other water quality

measures have improved, which indicates that bacteria is not only coming from runoff but also from leaking and failing sewage infrastructure.

We analyzed data from 2008 to 2013 and found that approximately 150 of the 308 stormwater outfalls that were sampled multiple times had at least one positive test for human-sewage contamination. In 23 of those 150 outfalls, human bacteria were found every time we sampled. Given the large extent of the problem, we are focusing our efforts on outfalls with consistently high results for human bacteria and on pipes that flow in dry weather, a strong indication of constant sewage discharge to area waterways.

The data that we collect is helping Milwaukee and Wauwatosa to prioritize diagnostic testing of failing stormwater sewer systems, using such methods as dye testing and smoke testing, as well as to prioritize repair of the damaged infrastructure. In the past year, six projects have been undertaken to repair some of the worst pipes. The team is also working with the Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District to locate broken pipes and illicit connections that contribute to contamination, as well as for help with surface water testing.

"Total Maximum Daily Load" pollution-reduction plans targeting bacteria in the three rivers are being drafted and will likely be approved next spring. In addition, a new stormwater permit for the Menomonee River watershed – so far, one of only four in the United States – requires all the municipalities it serves to develop a common protocol for targeting sources of human sewage contamination to the stormwater sewer systems.

Sable the Sewage Sniffing Dog, Continued from page 1

meter currently under development, that will one day soon be able to detect human sewage by measuring the absorbance and reflection of light given off by water samples.

How accurate was Sable? I think we can confidently say that he accurately identified human sewage in 6 of the lab-tested samples and missed just one. Two other samples had very low levels of human bacteria, according to lab analysis, and he had a split decision on those.

In the end, we narrowed down several problem areas that are likely contributing human bacteria to the storm sewers and, ultimately, our rivers. Lab analysis shows that high human fecal contamination still exists in at least four of the storm sewer systems we tested, and Wauwatosa is already planning to address one problem area this year. We hope this diagnostic information aids the municipalities to find and fix these sources of bacterial contamination to our local rivers and streams.





RIVERKEEPER WATCH

From the log book of the Milwaukee Riverkeeper

More Fun Fish Updates!

In late June, we toured the Ozaukee County Fish Passage Program's West Branch Ulao Creek Restoration Project. The West Branch project, which is recreating habitat and stream meanders in a creek that was long-ago straightened (probably for agriculture), is a critical next step to restoring ecological function and providing access to high quality in-stream, wetland and floodplain habitat for aquatic species in the Ulao Creek Subwatershed. Milwaukee Riverkeeper is a committed partner in the West Branch project and we hope to engage our volunteers to help with planting and monitoring efforts.

Efforts to create more fishable waters in our region are growing, and Milwaukee Riverkeeper is getting involved when appropriate. Milwaukee Riverkeeper attended a strategy meeting with a variety of public and private stakeholders as well as representatives from Walleyes for Tomorrow to discuss improving walleye populations throughout the Milwaukee River Basin.

On August 7th, we attended a public meeting at the new UWM-School of Freshwater Sciences to hear more about fish management plans that are currently in development and to comment on the Lake Michigan Fisheries Plan. There will also be a meeting relating to efforts to bring back the yellow perch population on October 23rd (location TBA).

DNR staff are working on a holistic fisheries management plan for the Milwaukee River Estuary. We will continue to share more updates about creating fishable waters on our website and in our newsletters.

Responding to Citizen Concerns

Our citizens turn to Milwaukee Riverkeeper to help patrol our waterways. We have followed up on several citizen calls ranging from concerns about alleged pesticides along golf courses and Lake Michigan parks, to an anonymous complaint that a company was allegedly dumping paint into storm sewers that lead to Underwood Creek, to concerns about proposed logging of Parnell Woods in the Northern Kettle Moraine, to trucking of construction debris onto State land on the Milwaukee County Grounds, to concerns about animal waste being dumped on 13th Street on the way to Cargill. We are working with WDNR and municipalities to address these concerns. We have also received several calls about floating debris from the bad spring and

summer rains and have communicated with the Skimmer captain to try to resolve these issues where possible.

Waters of the US

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers have drafted a proposed rule that seeks to clarify which "waters" are protected under the Clean Water Act (CWA). This rule, known as "Waters of the United States" (or WOTUS), is an important rule because it will clarify which waters fall into a category that will require a permit before someone can discharge to, fill or modify those waters, lakes, streams, and wetlands.

Over the last several decades of litigation under the CWA, the definition of WOTUS has become muddled. The new rules seek to cut through red tape and to clarify exempted farming practices while also ensuring that many of our ephemeral streams and wetlands that are so vital to river health and wildlife are protected. There are many unfounded misconceptions relating to the proposed rule ranging from ads that "puddles will be regulated" to claims that the rule was written in "farmers blood."

In response, the EPA has provided great information on the facts at their "Ditch the Myth" website: www.epa.gov/ditchthemyth. Milwaukee Riverkeeper has signed onto several letters from Waterkeeper Alliance and the Great Waters Coalition to squelch preemptive Congressional efforts to kill this rule. Public comments will be accepted through October 20 and Milwaukee Riverkeeper will be sharing more information in the coming months on how to comment on this important rule.

Waukesha Water Diversion Update

Milwaukee Riverkeeper and our partners from the Compact Implementation Coalition as well as representatives from some regional non-profits (Alliance for the Great Lakes, National Wildlife Federation and NRDC) met with WDNR staff in Madison on July 9th to hear an update on Waukesha's application for a Great Lakes diversion. WDNR asked for and received more information from Waukesha on the application, especially pertaining to the amount of water to be withdrawn as well as concerns about how the water would be returned to Lake Michigan. Regulatory hurdles remain for sending treated wastewater back to the Great Lakes (which is required by the Great Lakes Compact) via a tributary stream, especially one with impaired status.



Cheryl Nenn, Milwaukee Riverkeeper
Photo taken by John Karl of UW Seagrant

Waukesha's preferred route of return is the Root River, although DNR is asking them to revisit other options that include a return to Underwood Creek, a direct return through a pipe to Lake Michigan, or a return via the MMSD conveyance system.

It seems that it will be likely 6 months or more before DNR can finish their reviews and initiate hearings on the technical review and Environmental Impact Statement associated with the project. We will let you know when there is opportunity to comment!

WisDOT Update

Milwaukee Riverkeeper serves on a Citizen Advisory Committee for the proposed I-94 East-West Freeway Corridor study that is proposing options to rehabilitate and/or expand I-94 from 16th Street to 70th Street. We also attended a meeting with the City of Milwaukee along with a new "Coalition for More Responsible Transportation" to hear more about the city's position, which is to rebuild the existing highway with spot improvements. Several alternatives on the table include adding additional lanes in both directions at grade, and even "double decking" the roadway to avoid the National and Jewish cemeteries west of Miller Park.

The expansion alternatives will likely include significant increases in stormwater runoff to local streams. These will exacerbate the major flow increases we are already seeing from the \$1 Billion Zoo Interchange project, currently under construction. The Zoo Interchange project does have some limited funding for restoration projects in the Honey and Underwood Creeks, which we are helping to identify with MMSD and others.

We are closely following these projects to ensure there are protections and improvements to the creeks and the lower Menomonee River that will receive most of this stormwater. There are other WisDOT projects that we are following that are likely to affect local waterways including the Lakefront Gateway Project and I-43 North/South projects.

Menomonee River Fish Passage Update

In 2012-2013 we surveyed the Menomonee River to identify potential fish passage impediments as well as opportunities to restore aquatic habitats. In late 2013, we received a River Planning Grant from WDNR to educate landowners about our findings and look for solutions to problems affecting fish mobility. MMSD also received funding in 2013 to remove and/or retrofit 5 fish passage barriers in Hoyt Park in Wauwatosa. Similarly, Milwaukee Riverkeeper is part of the advisory team for MMSD's concrete removal project on the lower Menomonee River, along with Trout Unlimited. In July, Milwaukee Riverkeeper officially received a grant from Wisconsin Coastal Management Program to fund the design and preliminary engineering for several priority fish passage impediments. We are also planning a stream restoration project that would better connect the Menomonee to floodplain and vegetated wetlands in an effort to provide better spawning habitat. Milwaukee Riverkeeper will also be receiving a Fund for Lake Michigan grant to advance removal of fish passage impediments in the Menomonee watershed, using both paid work crews as well as volunteers.

We have been busy!

The past few months have been full of exciting happenings at Milwaukee Riverkeeper! This past May, we trained our citizen stream monitors and attended the Waterkeeper and River Network Annual Conference in Pittsburgh. In June, we partnered with Lakefront Brewery to hold a rain barrel workshop along the river. In July, we welcomed Deschutes Brewery to Wisconsin with a river cleanup on Lincoln Creek, and held our first guided paddle with Milwaukee Kayak Company. And that is just to name a few! Thanks to everyone that has volunteered or attended an event this summer!



Emmber Lane Access Improved!

The Emmber Lane access point on the Menomonee River (at the northwest corner of the Emmber Lane Bridge at approximately 13th Street) has been retrofitted with a lower floating pier to make it easier for canoe and kayak access. Thanks to Eco-Docks for donating the installation!

There is free parking on the street and limited parking available at the adjacent KGMB parking lot for paddlers. The Emmber Lane access point and adjacent small park was installed in summer of 2010 as a collaborative project between Milwaukee Riverkeeper, Menomonee Valley Partners, the City of Milwaukee, and others.

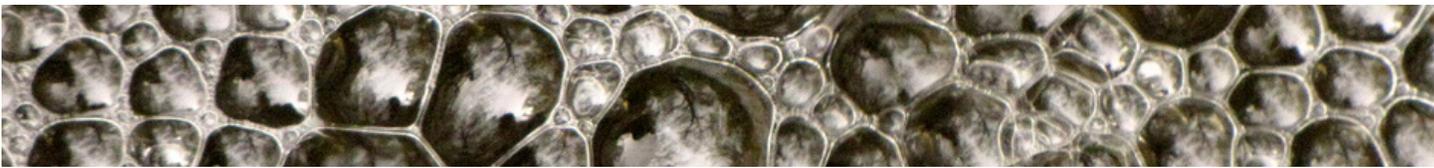


DamNation, Continued from page 1

and could be up to 3 times more expensive to repair than remove. Life expectancy of the Dam with repairs is only up to 20 additional years, assuming the dam is well maintained by the County going forward. Dam removal will help fish pass to upstream spawning habitats and restore the natural and wild aspect of the Milwaukee River for current and future generations. The ecological health created by a free flowing river offers greater long term value than maintaining the present impoundment behind the dam.

Join us for a showing of **DamNation at the Oriental Theatre on Monday, August 25 at 7:00pm** to learn more about dam removal and our efforts to have Estabrook Dam removed.

There will be three public hearings on this issue most likely: one hosted by Milwaukee County for their environmental assessment; one hosted by WDNR on dam operations; and one by BLM who owns some of the property that the dam rests on. We anticipate these hearings will begin in late September or October. Members are also encouraged to contact their Milwaukee County Supervisors prior to the September 18th board meeting, where a preferred alternative for the Dam will be identified and voted on. Please check out our website and facebook for more information in the coming weeks.



2014 Arts and Rivers Contest

Friday, September 19th - Submission Deadline

Milwaukee Riverkeeper is proud to announce its 2014 Arts and Rivers Contest. To celebrate our rivers, we are seeking visual works that convey the beauty and importance of our waterways in an artistically meaningful way. Content of the work must connect in some way to the Kinnickinnic, Menomonee, and/or Milwaukee Rivers.

We encourage both amateur and professional artists to submit works of any visual medium: photography, painting, mixed medium, etc.

The contest is funded by the late Shirley Holzer-Jeffrey, a long-time Milwaukee Riverkeeper board member and accomplished photographer.

Submission due September 19th. Guidelines available on our website www.milwaukeekeeper.org.

2014 River Regale

Wednesday, October 15th - 6:00pm
Discovery World

To support our vital mission, Milwaukee Riverkeeper is hosting a 2014 River Regale at Discovery World on October 15th. This special event will celebrate our wondrous rivers, after all, at a "regale" guests are lavished with entertainment, food and beverages.

The event will showcase the work of 25 local artists in our **Arts and Rivers Contest**, a historic panel exhibit entitled **Milwaukee's Rivers: Then & Now**, and speaker **Robert F. Kennedy Jr.**, who will deliver an address regarding "Our Environmental Destiny".

If you are interested in sponsoring or attending this event please contact Christina Taddy at 414-287-0207 or christina@milwaukeekeeper.org.



RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Member of Waterkeeper Alliance

www.milwaukeekeeper.org
Milwaukee, WI 53202

1845 N. Farwell Avenue, Suite 100

**MILWAUKEE
RIVERKEEPER®**



Nonprofit
Organization
U.S. Postage
PAID
Milwaukee, WI
Permit # 3679