

RIVER CURRENTS

A Quarterly Publication of Milwaukee Riverkeeper

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GREAT LAKES FACE MAJOR BUDGET CUTS

In our last newsletter, we updated members on President Trump's proposal to revise this year's FY17 Federal budget to reduce the **Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI)** from \$300 million per year to **\$0 dollars**. In addition, there were proposals to take money from the GLRI and Great Lakes Area of Concern program to help pay for design and engineering of the proposed boarder wall with Mexico. The GLRI also includes about **40% of the funds required to keep the Asian Carp** at bay, with additional funds coming from other Federal agencies also facing budget cuts. The President proposed to cut **EPA's budget by about 20% or \$2 billion dollars**, which would require firing of 1 in 5 EPA employees. The budget proposal also cut large amounts from other important agencies like NOAA, Sea Grant, and US Coast Guard. Cuts were also proposed to the **Clean Water and Safe Drinking Water State Revolving Loan Fund Program**, which helps states and local governments fund infrastructure costs.

Thankfully, in late April, Congress passed an omnibus fiscal year 2017 appropriations bill to fund the federal government **through September 30 of this year**. This will allow for

current 2016 funding levels to remain for GLRI at \$300 million and will provide a little over \$2.2 billion for State Revolving Loan Fund programs for water infrastructure improvements.

In addition, this appropriations bill had minimal reductions to the EPA budget and other existing programs.

Recently, the appropriations committee passed a budget bill to fund GLRI at the **\$300 million level for the federal fiscal year 2018-2019**, but this has a long way to go to be approved. We are still concerned that the **severe funding cuts** to other key federal agencies, like the EPA, **are not off the table**.

The GLRI and Great Lakes Legacy Act have been a huge boon to Wisconsin—funding **416 projects at \$331 Million since 2010**. In the Milwaukee area, we have been able to clean up decades of legacy contamination, such as the **removal of 70% of the PCB load** from the Milwaukee River

(Lincoln Park) and the **removal of 17,000 cubic yards of contaminated sediment** from the KK River. More than **10 dams and hundreds of fish passage barriers** have been removed from Campbellsport to Grafton to improve

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WELCOME!



Jennifer Bolger Breceda | Executive Director

It's summer in Milwaukee and we are in the middle of our field season at Milwaukee Riverkeeper. That means that we are busy conducting water quality monitoring of our three rivers and harbor to collect scientific data to better understand the state of our waters, patrolling the waterways looking for pollution sources, working on physical river restoration projects in collaboration with our community partners, hosting lots of events that connect people to the river's edge and working to educate and inform people about issues impacting the rivers. Right now, the most critical issues impacting our watersheds center on all of the troubling changes happening at the federal and state legislative levels.

While local communities and households are focused on sound water management practices that include incentives for water conservation, sustainable water use plans, water-neutral growth ordinances, and thoughtful management of natural resources based on science and fact, the President and Wisconsin have a different vision. The President presented a budget that attacks funding, programs and agencies that have created successful environmental improve-

ments over the last several decades. His budget zeroed out the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) program, a bipartisan conservation program, and while the Congressional appropriations committee has restored that funding (see GLRI article inside for more information on how this program has helped here in Milwaukee), it demonstrates his approach to science and conservation. Additionally, pursuant to a Presidential Executive Order, the Waters of the U.S. Rule, which better clarified which waters are subject to Clean Water Act regulation, is in the process of being rescinded and rolled back, leaving many streams and wetlands at risk and vulnerable to development, and pollution. Milwaukee Riverkeeper, along with many of our partners and stakeholders, worked for over a year to support passage of this rule.

Bills in Wisconsin like "Death by a Thousand Straws," (see Riverkeeper Watch for details about this law) that was passed out of the Assembly and is now on the Governor's desk waiting for passage or veto, flies in the face of Wisconsin's legacy environmental ethic. A new law, akin to President Trump's Executive Order that requires for any new law to be passed, two others must be rescinded, has just surfaced in Wisconsin. This bill (AB 42) would prohibit an agency from implementing a rule that has a compliance cost of \$10 million over any two year period of time without taking into account savings and benefits due to increased public health, natural resource protection, or quality of life. Furthermore, the economic analysis can be

made by the entity that benefits from not following the rule.

Under attack through all of these bills, Executive Orders and initiatives are the land, air and water that we rely on for jobs, food, security, recreation and the health of our families. Putting these assets and necessities at risk is contrary to our Wisconsin legacy.

There are ways you can help. Learn more about what is being planned; speak up for your waterways and your community; become an advocate. Talk to your neighbors, friends and families about why we should care about our waterways and environment and get involved. Contact your U.S. Congressmen and women, as well as your state and local representatives, too, and tell them to oppose the unprecedented cuts to science, environmental conservation and programs that protect our land, air and water. If you don't know who your representatives are, visit our website to find out. In addition, we are in the middle of our summer appeal and your generous support will go a long way to help us better serve as the voice of the rivers in Milwaukee. It takes a lot to protect our river basin and we cannot do it without community support.

To healthy rivers,

Jennifer Bolger Breceda
Executive Director

P.S. Please consider giving as generously as you can to achieve swimmable, fishable rivers for future generations!

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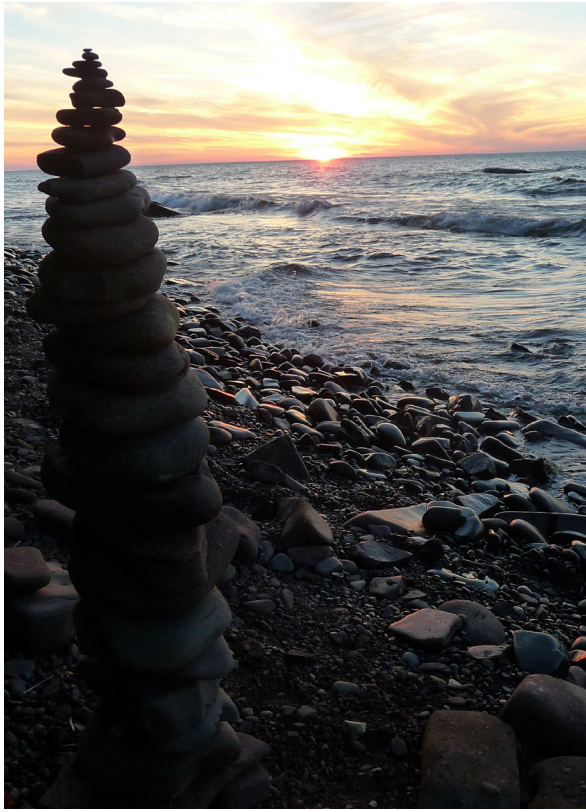
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GREAT LAKES CONT.



fisheries. The GLRI has also funded many other **local restoration projects** ranging from Rotary Park and the Milwaukee River Greenway along the Milwaukee River to Three Bridges Park along the Menomonee River. These cuts **threaten our continued progress** to improve water quality and create healthier communities.

We are actively advocating with many partners to maintain these programs through telling stories to media, direct advocacy to our

Federal legislators, and by educating our members. **We need your support** and your voice

The GLRI and Great Lakes Legacy Act have been a huge boon to Wisconsin funding 416 projects at \$331 Million since 2010.

to show Congress that, not only is there **bipartisan support** for these programs, but more importantly, that these programs **work to restore and improve our watersheds and communities,**

protecting our Great Lakes, our quality of life, and our economy.

RIVERKEEPER WATCH



RIVERKEEPER WATCH

YELLOW PAINT DUMPING

Over the last few months, there have been several instances of yellow paint being dumped into local waterways—into Lincoln Creek, the Milwaukee River near the confluence of Lincoln Creek, and into a detention basin that drains to the lower Menomonee River (a car also drove into that basin, too). If anyone has information about illegal dumping, please let us know or call 1-800-TIP-WDNR.

JET FUEL SPILL AT MITCHELL AIRPORT

On May 1st, jet fuel was released from Mitchell Airport into Wilson Park Creek. The source was a bad underground fuel valve at an unused gate. The problem was fixed promptly, and the airport has said the quantity of fuel spilled was likely a small quantity. However, even a small amount of fuel is likely to impact water quality and aquatic life. Airport contractors cleaned up as much product as possible with absorbent sheets and placed booms in the Creek to minimize the spread of fuel downstream.

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RIVERKEEPER WATCH (CONT.)

MORE PCBs FOUND ALONG MILWAUKEE RIVER

The WDNR confirmed that PCB contaminated sediments were found both in the sediments and floodplain of the Milwaukee River downstream from Estabrook Dam. In the last few years, the WDNR removed a large accumulation of contaminated sediments from the Milwaukee River and Lincoln Creek upstream of the Dam, removing about 70% of the known contaminants in the Milwaukee River. We will be looking at clean-up options after more data is available, and will keep the community informed.



In the short term, it's advised to minimize contact with sediments, to wash hands after contact, and to try to keep mud from being tracked into your homes. Additional PCB sampling and planning is underway along the lower Menomonee and Milwaukee Rivers, downstream of the former We Energies Gasification Plant (near 25th Street).

UPDATES ON STATE LEGISLATION

There has been a flurry of activity on the Federal level, and

THANK YOU for helping rivers SWIMMABLE and future generations.

Our **22nd Annual Spring River Cleanup** was a huge success! We can't thank all of the amazing volunteers who donated their time enough. **In one day, 4,000 volunteers removed 100,000 pounds of trash from 55 locations.** We topped the day off celebrating with Rock the Green at their 6th Annual Earth Day event, complete with Trapper Shoep and a peddle power stage! This year, we grew our Annual Spring River Cleanup to more than 4,000 people and we have no plans of slowing down. In fact, we're continuing to build on our 22 years of success by launching Milwaukee's first ever **Adopt-A-River Program**. The program allows individuals, companies, organizations, or community groups to adopt sections of waterways in the **Milwaukee River Basin**. Adopters commit to cleaning their adopted section of the river two times per year! Adopting a section of one of our three rivers ultimately leads to a **cleaner, healthier watershed and a cleaner and healthier community!** It's also a great way to create healthier habitat for wildlife and aquatic animals, build teamwork, give back to your community, fulfill volunteer hours, explore the watershed you live in, and build fieldwork into your educational curriculum. Visit www.milwaukeekeeper.org/adopt-a-river to learn more!

A Special Thank You to all of our amazing Business Members!

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1 DAY



55 LOCATIONS



4,000 VOLUNTEERS



100,000 POUNDS OF TRASH



RIVERKEEPER WATCH (CONT.)

we have joined many local, regional, state, and federal partners in ensuring we have a strong voice on proposed policy being pushed in Congress that is harmful to rivers. Milwaukee Riverkeeper testified during EPA's public hearing on Trump's proposed Executive Order 13777, which seeks to "reduce, replace, or modify" environmental regulations. This order would target important safeguards, create backsliding through weakening of our environmental protections, and dilute the good and important progress that has been made toward a cleaner environment. This approach assumes that cutting regulations would reduce costs without fully



considering the economic and societal benefits our environmental laws bring to all Americans, like clean water and healthy communities. We also signed onto letters from Healing Our Waters and Waterkeeper Alliance on this proposed legislation.

At the end of April, Trump signed another Executive Order allowing offshore energy development that includes directives to the Department of Commerce to review all national marine sanctuary design-

ANNUAL SPRING RIVER CLEANUP SITE CAPTION - SUSIE SEIDELMAN



What do you enjoy about being a Site Captain?

It's so cool to see, in three hours, what a huge difference you can make for the river. That's awesome. You don't have a lot of opportunities like that in life, so you have to grab them.

What's your favorite thing to do with the river?

I really like walking on the river trails because it's such an incredible thing to live in the middle of a city, and within five minutes, to be able to still hear the city, but feel like you've been transported into this beautiful, natural place.

What motivates you to keep cleaning Milwaukee's rivers?

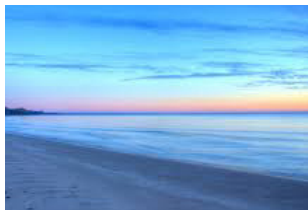
When you get people involved with cleaning up the river, they see what a huge difference they can make. We start to feel invested in it, and in its health. We can change that perception from one of, "There's nothing I can do about this," to one of, "Oh yeah, I can totally help. This is something I can do for everybody."

RIVERKEEPER WATCH (CONT.)

nations and expansions under the Antiquities Act dating back to 2007 (as well as reviewing all National Monument designations). This Executive Order, also directed the Secretary of Commerce, prohibits expanded or new national marine sanctuaries designations without a full accounting of the energy and mineral potential within the area and the impacts on development of those resources. We signed onto several letters opposing this order, which threatens designation of our proposed National Marine Sanctuary in Lake Michigan north of Port Washington.

On the bright side, the Senate failed to pass a bill that would have allowed for methane to be released from oil drilling operations on federal lands (this was prohibited by the Obama Administration), which was a big win for clean air, clean water, and the climate.

The Leading on Lead bill recently passed the Assembly, but only with amendments that would limit its impact.



The intent of this bill is to allow local communities to provide greater financial assistance to homeowners replacing lead pipes in their homes and provide communities with more flexibility in addressing the

7 REASONS TO BECOME A MILWAUKEE RIVERKEEPER AESTHETICS MONITOR

Milwaukee Riverkeeper assists the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Agency in monitoring the aesthetics, or healthy appearance, of the Milwaukee River Estuary Area of Concern (AOC), which is considered a "hot spot" of pollution in the Great Lakes. Aesthetics monitoring volunteers visit 9 designated sites and fill out a simple survey at each site. So why should you become a Milwaukee Riverkeeper Aesthetics Monitor?



1. Discover new parts of Milwaukee

As an aesthetics monitor you will visit nine monitor stations throughout the City of the Milwaukee. We guarantee that you will see something new!



2. Get involved in no time

Aesthetics monitors visit each of the nine monitoring stations once between April-October. A monitoring session only takes 10 minutes to complete. That's only a 90-minute time commitment.



3. Generate important data

Aesthetics monitoring involves completing a short two-page survey at each monitoring station. Surveys are submitted to the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources to help them evaluate the aesthetic quality of the rivers and beaches in Milwaukee.



4. Visit all three of Milwaukee's rivers

Milwaukee has three major rivers: the Milwaukee, the Menomonee, and the Kinnickinnic. As an aesthetics monitor you will have the opportunity to visit all three!



5. Tour our beaches

You've probably heard of Bradford Beach, but did you know there is a Bayview Beach? As an aesthetics monitor you will have the chance to check out three of Milwaukee's most beautiful beaches.



6. Socialize

Aesthetics monitoring is a fun activity that can be done with friends. After completing the monitoring, grab a beer and brat with your monitoring partners as a reward for a job well done.



7. Work up a sweat

You can use our monitoring stations as waypoints for your next bike ride. If you are feeling adventurous, visit all nine stations in one day. That's a sixteen-mile bike ride!

To sign up for our aesthetics monitoring program visit our website at <http://milwaukeekeeperiverkeeper.org/become-aesthetics-monitor/>.

ROAD SALT MONITORING VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT - PATRICIA QUINN



What inspired you to start road salt monitoring with Milwaukee Riverkeeper?

Kelly Ostrenga led my Environmental Biology class on an aesthetics monitoring field trip last year. After that day I immediately jumped on the first monitoring opportunity they offered, which happened to be a Winter Watchdog.

Is there anything special or interesting you can share about your station, Zablocki Park Creek?

One day there had been A LOT of rain and the water level was the highest I had seen it. I tossed the collection bucket downstream and it nearly ripped out of my hands due to the fast-moving water.

Is there anything you've learned or gained personally from your road salt monitoring experience?

I never knew how to use the SWIMS database and am so happy to know that the Wisconsin DNR has a place where citizen scientists can enter their observations and utilize that data to make decisions. It feels great to be a part of Milwaukee Riverkeeper's mission to protect and study our rivers and watershed!

ADVOCACY IN ACTION

PAH - BAN PASSES IN CITY OF MILWAUKEE AND VILLAGE OF SHOREWOOD

On February 7, 2017, the Milwaukee Common Council **unanimously passed an ordinance** protecting the health of our children and our waters by banning toxic pavement sealants – the main source of **cancer-causing compounds called PAHs** in our urban waterways. PAHs pose significant risks to human health and fish and other aquatic life living in our lakes and rivers.

A recent study by the U.S. Geological Survey showed that **children who live near high-PAH sealed driveways** or parking lots have a **14-times higher cancer risk than children who grow up in homes where safer alternatives are used**. PAHs also kill small organisms living on the bottoms of rivers and streams and can **cause tumors in fish and other large aquatic animals**.

Shortly after the Milwaukee Common Council passed the ordinance, the Village of Shorewood followed suit. Milwaukee Riverkeeper is glad to see both the **City of Milwaukee and the Village of Shorewood** show true leadership on this issue.

RIVERKEEPER WATCH (CONT.)

lead pipe crisis, which threatens health, especially of children. In Milwaukee, it is estimated that over 70,000 homes have lead laterals that will need to be replaced.



DEATH BY A THOUSAND STRAWS BILL (SB 76)

This bill, which failed last session, passed the State legislature a few weeks ago. It limits the ability of the DNR to address groundwater over pumping in critical areas by granting 'forever' permits for high capacity wells. It also prevents regular reviews by the DNR staff of changing conditions, and makes it hard for local communities to address over pumping problems that lead to lakes, rivers, and drinking water wells drying up. Unfortunately, this bill will threaten our waters statewide and is a clear example of ignoring science and the voice of the people to put industry first, as well as taking sound management of our natural resources away from the DNR.



SIGN UP TO RECEIVE MILWAUKEE RIVERKEEPER ACTION ALERTS

Sign up and stay up to date with all of the important issues that affect our waterways! You'll receive emails from our staff members letting you know the best action to take and when, so together we can make a difference in the protection of our waters. Take action to help Milwaukee Riverkeeper ensure a future where all people can enjoy clean drinking water and fishable, swimmable rivers. Email abby@milwaukeekeeper.org to sign up!

STAY ALERT!

When you see our Take Action Now logo, you know it's time to ACT!



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SAVE THE DATE! Saturday, October 7, 2017

Join us for the inaugural Milwaukee Boat Parade on Saturday, October 7, 2017! Participate by registering a decorated boat, art barge or as a costumed paddler! To learn more and register for the parade visit bit.ly/MilwaukeeBoatParade.

Can't join us on the water?

Find a viewing location here

bit.ly/MilwaukeeBoatParade

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