



## **“SLSA Moves Forward in an Era of New Pollution Threats”**

New intensive resource extraction and processing development is rarely discussed in terms of potential air and water pollution that may be generated. Financial impacts, jobs and economic expansion command the airwaves, consume politicians and businesses and thereby leave the public woefully misinformed. Most of the new ventures in mining and processing of metals, generation of power and creation of infrastructure also produce huge amounts of waste that pollute our watershed and eventually Lake Superior itself. The lake is like a big bathtub. We cannot continue to fill it with polluted water and expect to remove clean water. It takes 190 years for an average drop of water to flow through the lake.



photo by Todd Roming

The board of SLSA is embarking on a renewed effort to educate our members and the general public on repeated errors and inaccuracies in the reporting of economic benefits from those reporting on these new ventures and expansions, particularly in mining and power generation and consumption. We cannot continue to allow the selective and erroneous uses of scientific and technical data to go unchallenged in the media and other forms of public discourse. Very few media outlets, units of government and businesses are not heavily influenced by financial support from those that would benefit directly from permits that do not protect our water, air and natural habitat. We have been fighting these battles for years and want to expand the opportunity to contribute to our membership. We will be developing better ways to focus attention on specific issues and more effectively educate the public and advocate for the reduction or prevention of pollution rather than recklessly permitting it. Watch for more information on our website and facebook page. Contact us if you would like to become more involved.

## **It took 20 years but Coast Guard has set ballast water regulations!**

It's a watered down (pun unintended) version of the stringent rules initially intended by this federal agency three years ago. The rule limits numbers of living organisms in particular volumes of water. Ships would have to install equipment to meet standards developed by the International Maritime Organization, an arm of the United Nations.

Predictably, more research is planned to determine whether ocean ships entering the Great Lakes must later ratchet up their treatment operations. Meantime, under the new directives, the crew will expose the ballast water to ultra violet light, use chemicals "or other treatments" before dumping the ballast fluid. At its base in Traverse City, Michigan the high ranking officer clarified the long anticipated, much needed law.

"Once fully implemented, this ballast water discharge standard will significantly reduce the risk of an introduction of aquatic nuisance species into the Great Lakes," said Rear Adm. Michael Parks, commander of the Coast Guard's Cleveland district. "Under existing rules, shippers must exchange ballast at sea or flush the tanks with salt water if empty. But the Coast Guard acknowledged some organisms could survive in puddles of water and mud. For the first time, the new policy requires onboard treatment of ballast water to kill as many fish, mussels and even tiny microbes as possible."

SLSA is in full agreement with Great Lakes United spokesperson Jennifer Nalbome who said, "It's a major milestone and a starting point, but it's not nearly as strong as it should be." Environmental groups contend the limits should be 100 or even 1,000 times tougher, but industry groups say no existing technology can do that. The EPA, however, has proposed its own ballast water discharge policy which is based on international limits. The time frame and details of the EPA's action were not stated.

## Wind farms coming to Lake Superior?

If you are among those who would rather not have this happen, you can be assured that you will not see the big blades twirling off shore in the immediate future. But the chances for this eventually have increased following Minnesota's decision to join four other states—New York, Michigan, Illinois and Pennsylvania—in speeding up the process to tap this “carbon free” energy source.

Wisconsin, Ohio and Indiana have the option of entering into the agreement with the U.S. Department of Energy, the EPA, NOAA and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service at some future date. The Obama Administration announced the agreement in Traverse City, Michigan on March 30th. The concept had been under consideration for an extended period but the announcement was delayed in response to public opposition, which is almost certain to continue, and to cost factors.

Private companies proposed erecting 200 turbines in Lakes Ontario and Erie but the specter of the 450 foot high structures was apparently more than the public could accept and the plans were abandoned....at least for now.

The government, however, is convinced the potential for substantial energy rewards is great with the off shore turbines generating as much as 700 gigawatts. That translates into a supply of electrical service to 300,000 homes from each of the gigawatts! The combined Great Lake states output, promoters say, would amount to one-fifth of the total wind power in the entire nation.

Public disapproval is seen as a major obstacle to be overcome and there are daunting technical difficulties, especially those dealing with the harsh winters that would build up ice around the turbines.

Ultimately, the public will have to decide whether the reduction in coal fired generating plants outweighs the negatives of wind farms, not to mention the shrinking sources of oil and political uncertainties that could hasten these modern day windmills appearing along our shores.

## Startling statistics on the status of Minnesota's waters!

Four years have passed since Minnesota voters passed the Clean Water, Land and Legacy Amendment. It generates funding dedicated to testing for water pollution and to be used in cleaning up our lakes and rivers. This is what has been found to date: Of the 20% tested more than half were too polluted to be safe for humans, fish or other wildlife. There's no indication that picture will improve when the remaining eighty percent are checked.

It isn't that residents of this state don't care. Figures from MEP, the Minnesota Environmental Partnership (of which SLSA is a member) reveal that 79% “are concerned about runoff from mines threaten to pollute the Boundary Waters and Lake Superior. 80% express concern about runoff of chemicals, sewage and pesticides from farms that pollute rivers, streams and inland lakes.

79% would like to see a fee increase to fight invasive species and prevent further damage to the state's waters while 67% of the voters of Minnesota believe environmental laws should be tougher or better enforced.

Money set aside in the Amendment has been looked upon jealously by proponents of other causes that prompted MEP to warn “ We must make sure the Amendment's ‘Clean Water dollars’ are not wasted or raided for other purposes and are targeted to projects where they will do the most good.”

## Why you should have a rain garden

There's a lot we could learn from a southeastern Wisconsin group about how to deal with the rise in rain and snow totals during the impact of climate change. It's called the Root-Pike Watershed Initiative Network—more easily referred to as Root-Pike WIN—and it can now claim involvement with 20 rain gardens in the Milwaukee area alone. All told, 90 of them have been funded under its outreach and education mission.

It found that a 300 - square foot rain garden can infiltrate 12,000 gallons of water every year—water that might otherwise seep into one's basement. Its executive director, Susan Greenfield, points out that, in the process of filtering all that water, it also traps and filters soil, fertilizers and



pollutants. Important also is the deposit of the fluid in the ground water to aid in recharging the aquifers. A third benefit is their esthetic appeal, a welcome contrast from the monotony of well-manicured short grass traditional lawns—and rain gardens require only low maintenance efforts.

If you would like more information <http://www.freshwaterfuture.org> or <http://www.cakes.org>

### **Points to ponder regarding copper/nickel mining**

√ Little if any of these metals will be used for America's national security. They will be sold on the global market and most likely used to build up the military and infrastructure of unfriendly nations.

√ Foreign corporations own these mines. They will not protect our water, air and land. Profits are their goal.

√ Issuing permits and monitoring pollution does not protect public health.

√ Mining districts have the highest rates of autism and lung disease in the United States.

√ Most pollution is preventable but there is little political will to demand the best production before permits are granted. Companies pay to pollute.

√ Environmental groups have the right to protect Lake Superior, the BWCA, the North Shore, Voyageurs National Park and Isle Royale from all sources of pollution. Copper/nickel mining and production are the greatest potential source of toxins and acid rain components in Northeast Minnesota.

### **Endangered bird may be lured back to western Lake Superior**

The diminutive piping plover, once common on our end of the lake, has not been nesting along the Duluth/Superior waterfront...not since the ring billed gulls created a population explosion concentrated on little Interstate Island between the two cities.

Sue O'Halloran of the National Estuarine Research Reserve program told us work will begin this spring on Wisconsin Point to make it an attractive nesting environment for the shorebird. Less than eight inches long, it bears resemblance to the ubiquitous killdeer and prefers to build a very shallow nest in the sand, preferably within a field of tufted grass.

This exposed location makes the hatchlings easy pickings for marauding gulls. The technique to be tried for nest protection will be placement of a mesh canopy on the beach in keeping with research that found gulls hesitate flying under such a cover.

The plover has been nesting, though sparsely, in the Bayfield area and on Lake Michigan. While definitely worth the effort to return the plover, the project leaders are under no illusion that it will become a successful venture, at least not initially.



### **The next battleground in fighting the spread of invasive species.**

From the moment the first invasive aquatic life was discovered in the Great Lakes fears of eventual infestation of inland waters were expressed by aquatic biologists. Wisconsin Sea Grant provided the funding in 2007 to initiate exploration of the state's streams and rivers whether the hotdog-size round goby had ventured into inland waters. Suspicions were soon confirmed

by UW-Madison ecologist Jake Vander Zanden and graduate student Matt Kornis. That's the bad news!

The good news, at least temporarily so, is that native species like to eat gobys and the numbers of the exotics have not shown a population explosion...so far.

The researchers checked out 75 streams along Wisconsin's Lake Michigan coastline and found the critters in 26 of them. The population was described as small in 80% of the streams but "superabundant" in the rest. The team was surprised to find, however, that the foreign fish "have yet to devastate the ecosystem the way they have in the Great Lakes."

They are known to feed on the young of walleyes, bass and perch and will ingest their eggs when available. The sport fish have not reduced goby numbers sufficiently to keep them under control in the big lakes.

Vander Zanden predicts that gobies will not confine themselves to streams and rivers that drain into the Great Lakes. He said, "We're worried about them making their way into inland lakes all around the state...and that they will have big impacts in these systems."

What about Minnesota's goby status? They are thriving in the Duluth-Superior harbor. Doug Jensen, Aquatic Environment Invasive Species program coordinator, told us our feeder streams of Lake Superior have been tested and no gobies found. He attributes that fact, in part, to awareness of anglers of the ban forbidding the transport of the non-native fish as bait or on their boats to any other lake or stream.

Biologists, he said, held out hope that the goby would eliminate or control the profusion of zebra mussels in the port but this has been only moderately successful. The goby, using a special set of teeth, can grind up the smaller ones okay but can't open its mouth wide enough to take in the big ones.



Unlike most of the other invasive species in the Great Lakes, the goby is a fresh water fish (from streams feeding the Black Sea of Russia) and doesn't have to convert from a salt water environment.

It's certain that all of the Great Lake states are seriously concerned about the appearance of gobies and other invasive species in their ecosystems.

Our thanks to [Sea Grant's Aquatic Sciences Chronicle](#) for the above information on Wisconsin's goby problem.

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### **Board member receives stewardship award.**

A news release in early April, we were pleased to see, stated the following:"The Randy Marshall Environmental Stewardship Award was given to Willard Munger in recognition



of exemplarily stewardship of protecting the St. Louis River through conscientious environmental business practices and continual support of the Alliance's efforts to protect and restore the river. Will and Sally Munger (also a board member) have owned the Willard Munger Inn since 1999 after taking over from Will's father, the late Rep. Willard Munger Sr."

SLSA vice-president Glenn Maxham received a similar award from the St. Louis River Action Committee in 2007.

SLSA board member Willard Munger, Junior receives the Randy Marshall environmental award from Gail Gilliland on behalf of the St. Louis River Alliance. Photo by Michael K. Anderson

Please send us your change of address when applicable.

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