



WAUKESHA COUNTY  
ENVIRONMENTAL ACTION LEAGUE  
*Protecting Waukesha County's nature*

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### ■ **President's Note**

By: Steve Schmuki

It continues to be a great honor and privilege to be President of WEAL. As we move further into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, I become more convinced than ever that the largest and most important issues we will face, not just as a community, a country or a people but as a species, involve protecting our natural resources, the very basis of life on earth. Of course, this is daunting. But WEAL your local all-volunteer environmental advocacy group continues to do amazing work.

Today as I write this, WEAL continues to be involved in numerous efforts to protect our air, water, and lands from continued encroachment and degradation. I invite you to peruse the following information about what WEAL has done recently and what it is planning to do as we move deeper into the century. Please continue to support our efforts. Please let us know what you think. Visit our website at [www.weal.org](http://www.weal.org) or come to a board meeting. Remember, we are fighting for the resources we all need and share and nothing more. We can always use additional help.

### **Healthy resources**

### **equal healthy life.**

#### ■ **2010 Water Team Highlights**

By: Laurie Longtine

According to the Johnson Foundation of Racine, as many as 36 states expect water shortages by 2013. It is difficult to overstate the importance that this issue will have on our economy and our way of life.

Demand for Great Lakes water will continue to grow, both here in the Great Lakes states, as elsewhere in the U.S. and around the world. WEAL, of course, was active in supporting the passage of the Great Lakes Compact. Now we find that we have the first applicant for Great Lakes water here in our backyard: the City of Waukesha. We reviewed several drafts of the application and attended countless meetings to express our views.

In principal, our preference would be for the City of Waukesha to live with the available water within its boundaries. We acknowledge that this would require a vision and political will far beyond the capabilities of most communities, but we continue to work with the Compact Implementation Coalition, an organization of conservation groups, to ensure that the first application from outside the Great Lakes basin meets or exceeds the hard-fought standards of the Great Lakes Compact. We support the Wisconsin DNR's review of the application using its own rigorous standards, as well as those set forth in the Compact and following the

precedent of Wisconsin law. Another option the City is pursuing is to install and operate well fields with huge capacity municipal wells in areas adjacent to the Vernon Marsh. If the City were to pump down the aquifer below the marsh, the marsh could be seriously impaired and the City would be right back to its original problem. In a "nutshell" we have four major concerns with the application and its review.

- 1.** The application requests twice the amount of water that the City is currently using. While some of this would be for drought situations, the City has significantly expanded its water service area to incorporate areas as far away as Muskego and the Town of Genesee. We have concerns about the development that would be associated with this scenario as well as the fact that the City has indicated an interest in selling bottled water.
- 2.** The application states that the treated wastewater would be discharged to Underwood Creek near the Milwaukee County border. We believe that this discharge location would not be in the best interest of Underwood Creek and the Milwaukee River Keepers agree. No other alternative sites were adequately explored. This decision was made simply to save costs.
- 3.** The DNR has stated that it will review the application before administrative rules are written (administrative rules would detail how the Great Lakes Compact would be implemented in the

State). We believe that a less than rigorous review of the application could result in a “low bar” for future water diversion applications.

4. Finally, much of the negotiation and development of the application has occurred behind the scenes and the process is being driven by hordes of engineers, PR flacks,



lobbyists, and politicians, few of whom live in the City or proposed service area, but all of whom have some financial interest in the outcome proposed.

Questions about the enormous costs of this unprecedented public works project have not been answered adequately and we are concerned that the public’s input has been limited and will be ignored.

Waukesha Mayor Jeff Scrima has expressed reservations about the application as well, and the DNR continues to question whether the City has fully explored all of the options it claims to have vetted. In an 11-page letter to the City of Waukesha dated December 2, 2010, the DNR details the many steps Waukesha must adhere to, additional studies it must undertake, and missing information it must provide to bring the application up to par and therefore ready for ‘prime time’ which includes DNR approval before beginning a formal process of requesting approvals from the other seven Great Lakes states. Rest assured, the Water Team will continue to monitor the situation and voice our concerns as the City moves

its application forward. In addition, the Water Team (and others on the WEAL board) have been involved in the following:

- Planned Water Events on World Water Day March 23, 2010.
- Provided a resource table about Friends of Vernon Marsh at Water Expo in March 2010.
- Helped conduct a bus tour in Fall 2010 for Senior Water Advocates throughout Waukesha to point out the areas of water relevant locations.
- Attended Water Law Seminar at Marquette.
- Attended a meeting regarding Environmental Justice and Great Lakes Diversion issues. ■ Began planning for Water-Wise 2011.

#### → Networking/Water Conservation

- ■ Continued to serve in groups such as Sierra Club, Milwaukee RiverKeepers, Waukesha Water Coalition, that provide environmentally sound support on water issues.



- ■ Continued to meet with various city and county officials on water conservation issues and attend meetings to promote conservation and sustainability.

- ■ Continued involvement with Friends of Vernon Marsh group to preserve the area.

#### → Support environmentally sound water legislation

#### and regulation.

If you’d like to become involved in any or several of these issues, please contact WEAL by website, [www.WEAL.org](http://www.WEAL.org) or by phone at 262-253-2185 and you will be put in touch with someone from the Water Team.

“When the well’s dry, we know the worth of water”.

Rowland Howard

#### Transportation Team Update

By: Al Stasiewski

In 2010, WEAL’s Transportation Team focused on a number of key initiatives.

#### → West Waukesha Bypass:

Team members attended a number of hearings and meetings in 2010 and several already in 2011. The team developed a position statement to drive activities in 2010 and into 2011. The area of greatest concern is south of Madison Street, with parts of Retzer Nature Center, the Drumlin Trail, farm fields, neighborhoods, 300 year-old trees, pristine wetlands and primary environmental corridors at risk. If Wisconsin government was really looking for a decent-sized fix to the state budget shortfall, it could cancel the state’s \$38 - \$45 million-dollar contribution to the Waukesha Bypass.

(And let’s be honest: the ‘bypass’ will bypass nothing, and really is only an expensive development corridor which will bring increased traffic and city-type building through a pristine wetland and rural setting.) Al



This 4-lane mega highway is just a grossly expensive, divisive, destructive and unnecessary gash through our neighborhoods and the Pebble Creek Environmental Corridor. Join WEAL in the fight to protect our neighborhoods and rural way of life. Call Allen at 414-507-8358 to join WEAL's Invasive Road Eradication Project.

➔ **Waukesha Bike Alliance (WBA) Partnership:** In December, several WEAL Board members met with the founders of the WBA to collaborate, leverage and share experience, knowledge, contact information, etc. Bicycling is a viable means of transportation as well as an enjoyable recreation activity, and its promotion will support WEAL's advocacy of a sustainable, multi-modal transportation solution. The Transportation Team set a goal of improving the bike path through the City of Waukesha, connecting the Glacial Drumlin Trail to the New Berlin Trail. WEAL plans to work with the WBA to create this new trail connection and improve bicycle travel through the city. The Transportation Team will continue efforts to foster an alliance with the WBA.

➔ **Hwy J Lawsuit:** The Transportation Team

monitored our lawsuit against WIS DOT, the Federal Highway Administration, and the Army Corps of Engineers, working with our partner, the Highway J Citizens group. In September 2009, Federal District Court Judge Lynn Adelman ruled in our favor on all but one of 10 procedural and substantive issues. The defendants immediately asked him to set aside his ruling. Not surprisingly, in March 2010, the Judge upheld his ruling. Judge Adelman conducted settlement negotiations in January 2011 and the parties reached a tentative agreement. However, that agreement has since unraveled. WEAL and Highway J Citizens Group anticipate asking Judge Adelman what he will require the defendants to do to comply with his decision, unless the defendants appeal to the 7<sup>th</sup> District Court of Appeals in Chicago. Efforts will continue to ensure that this critical legal decision results in positive changes to DOT practices and protects Waukesha's natural resources and quality of life.

➔ **Railroad crossing signs:** The team brainstormed the idea of placing signs at railroad crossings asking drivers to turn off their car engines while waiting for trains to pass. Examples of this signage in other parts of the country show it to be an effective tool for saving fuel and decreasing pollution. The team determined to table the idea for a future time due to the more pressing issues at hand.

➔ **Highway Clean-ups:** The team coordinated three successful highway cleanups in 2010 for our assigned stretch of Highway N between ZZ and 59. Highway clean-ups are planned for May 7, July 30, and October 23 of 2011. Please join us on one or more of these Saturday mornings. You can do your good deed for the day on a lightly traveled country road while enjoying lovely vistas of Scuppernong Prairie.

### ■ **Waste Related Activities in 2010 and What's Ahead for 2011**

By Charlene Lemoine

In 2010 WEAL focused on a variety of waste related issues. The most disturbing was a resurgence of incinerator proposals. With high tech sounding names like gasification, pyrolysis and plasma arc, these incinerators will be experimental in using municipal solid waste (MSW) as a feedstock. Additionally, all gasification facilities will use a two-step process that will heat MSW at high temperatures to create a synthetic gas (syngas) that will then be incinerated to generate electricity.



### **Additional Waste Related Issues in 2010**

- Electronic Waste Law WEAL supported took effect
- Change to bi-weekly recycling collections in the

city of Waukesha  
(WEAL guest opinion in the  
*Waukesha Freeman*)

■ Comments submitted to the DNR on a 16.3 million cubic yard expansion at Emerald Park Landfill in Muskego

■ WEAL joined environmental groups across the state opposing legislation giving "renewable energy" status to gasification. The legislation passed.

■ Comments were submitted to the DNR supporting standards for Class A Compost.

■ Several of WEAL's Board of Directors participated in the Waukesha County's "Reduce Your Waste Stream Team Challenge." Teams throughout Waukesha County collectively reduced waste by 49% and increased recycling by 66%.

### **Waste Issues WEAL will be working on in 2011**

■ Joint presentation with Waukesha County Recycling on "Pay As You Throw" (PAYT) garbage collections for the City of Waukesha's Board of Public Works.

■ Opposing a proposed pyrolysis gasification incinerator proposed by the Oneida Nation on tribal lands in Brown County the tribal lands of the Oneida Nation in Brown County.



■ WEAL will continue to monitor a plasma gasification project proposed by Alliance Federated Energy for an undisclosed location in Milwaukee County that will be close to Waukesha

County's northeast border. The company has labeled the proposed project as "the ultimate in recycling."

■ WEAL will monitor and prepare comments when opportunities arise regarding Veolia's Emerald Park Landfill in Muskego and Waste Management's Orchard Ridge Landfill in Menomonee Falls.

■ WEAL plans to continue supporting waste reduction, recycling, reuse and composting activities to achieve a goal of getting as close to Zero Waste as possible.

■ More information is available on [www.WEAL.org](http://www.WEAL.org)

### **Achieve a goal of getting close to**

#### **■ We're So Excited...**

By Kathryn Harrington

We've just launched our newly remodeled website, and we have added slick new features. Now you can keep up to date on our latest issues by checking our blog and following us on Facebook and Twitter. Our calendar will keep you posted on our upcoming events. We will be able to accept donations and membership renewals through PayPal. Check us out! The address didn't change, it's still [www.WEAL.org](http://www.WEAL.org)

#### **■ Environmentally friendly reminders:**

##### Ten Things You Should Never buy Again:

1. Styrofoam cups
2. Paper towels
3. Bleached coffee filters
4. Bottled water
5. Chemical pesticides and herbicides
6. Conventional household cleaners
7. Toys made with PVC plastic
8. Plastic forks and spoons
9. Farm raised salmon
10. Teak and mahogany

To find out why, visit [www.GreenAmerica.org](http://www.GreenAmerica.org)

Click on unshopping

#### **■ Five Frightening Facts About Bottled Water**

**1. Bottled water is not safer than tap water.** Plastic bottles leach harmful chemicals into bottled water that may cause cancer, birth defects, and developmental problems in children and babies.

**2. Bottled water is not healthier than tap water.** Unlike tap water, bottled water safety is not monitored by the federal government, so you cannot be sure it is safe. The federal government requires far more rigorous and frequent safety testing of municipal drinking water than bottled water.

**3. Bottled water is trashing the environment.** After millions of barrels of oil are used to produce and ship

plastic water bottles, nearly 90% of them land in the garbage instead of the recycle bin. These bottles will sit in landfills for centuries, their chemicals seeping into the environment.

**4. Bottled water is draining our resources.**

Water companies are emptying the nation's aquifers and underground water sources for their own profit.

America's water belongs to each of us.

**5. Bottled water is much more expensive.**

At \$2 for a 20-ounce container, bottled water costs thousands of times more than tap water. Americans spent almost \$12 billion on bottled water in 2007, mostly because they think it is somehow safer or better than tap water. It's not.

[www.foodandwaterwatch.org/water](http://www.foodandwaterwatch.org/water)

## Take Back The Tap!