



HOLIDAY NEWSLETTER 2015

December 14, 2015

Greetings of the holiday season to all
WATCH members and friends,

I am writing to let you know of our activities and accomplishments of the past year and to tell you about how WATCH has made some changes.

LAKE TO LAKE MULTI-USE TRAIL: After fifteen years of planning and hard work, the Lake to Lake Trail is now a reality! It has been open and in use since July, and the comments have been glowing. There is still time to use it this year. Our mild December weather is perfect for a bike ride from Ferry Beach or from downtown to Fisherman's Island State Park.

FISHERMAN'S ISLAND STATE PARK: The DNR is currently developing an updated management plan for Fisherman's Island State Park. The latest public input session held in October at the Library was well-attended, with most attendees in support of preserving the natural and rustic character of the park. Several members of the WATCH board are participating in these discussions. The DNR management plan was revised to say the "entire State Park was encumbered in 1975". WATCH was pleased with the DNR's thorough and open review of the park. The DNR proposed plan can be viewed on our website.

The proposed "land swap" with St. Mary's (Votorantim) Cement is, according to Operations Manager Randy Pryor, "off the table" for the time being. Don't throw away your "Stop the Swap" yard signs yet, though! We have to stay vigilant and respond to any future attempts to turn the northern end of the park and Bells Bay access road into an open pit quarry. The City of Charlevoix and Charlevoix Township voted to keep the park "intact." We need to keep telling the DNR how important this park is to our communities and that it cannot be traded away for industrial development of any kind.

MARINA DOCK EXPANSION: As you probably have read in the news, the Charlevoix City Council voted down the proposal to expand the city docks on Round Lake. WATCH was intimately involved in limiting the size of the initial project years ago, and we had much input on the latest proposal. We applaud the city council for making a wise decision.

STRAIGHTS LINE 5 PIPELINE: WATCH board members attended several demonstrations and informational meetings regarding the Enbridge Line 5 oil pipeline in the Straits of Mackinaw.

WATCH, along with Friends of the Jordan River, organized a public presentation in August by Dr. Ed Timm at the Charlevoix Public Library entitled "Oil Spill in the Great Lakes? How Safe are the Pipelines?" Over 100 people attended. The event was also sponsored by NMEAC (Northern Michigan Environmental Action Council), FLOW (For Love of Water), Oil & Water Don't Mix, Don't Frack Michigan, Friends of the Boyne River. A summary of Dr. Timm's comments can be seen on the WATCH website.

In November, we participated in a discussion of Line 5 with National Wildlife Federation, FLOW (For Love of Water), and Groundwork Center. The event, held at the Charlevoix Brewing Company, featured a screening of the documentary film, "Oil and Water" from Director Spencer Chumbley of MOTHERBOARD. An oil spill in the Great Lakes would be devastating to our environment and economy. WATCH will continue to be involved in this issue. Watch our website for new developments.

CARE (CONSERVATION AND RENEWABLE ENERGY COMMITTEE): WATCH board member Rick Beemon worked with the City of Charlevoix, Franklin Energy, and Ace Hardware to purchase and pass out 20, four-packs of LED bulbs (the equivalent to 2,000 incandescent bulbs) to Charlevoix Electric Utility customers at no cost. The new bulbs have no Mercury, have a warm soft light, last for 20+ years and are 84% more efficient than incandescent bulbs. Energy efficiency minimizes the need to build more fossil fuel plants.

FIT/BIKE SHARE CHARLEVOIX: The free Bike Share Program is now managed by the City of Charlevoix. You can find locations and activities at the Bike Share Charlevoix Facebook page.

IDLE FREE: We are grateful to local businesses, donors and the City of Charlevoix Electric department for their continued support of the "Turn Off the Key" banners, reminding motorists to turn off their engines while waiting for the Charlevoix Bridge. This cuts emissions and makes shopping and dining in downtown Charlevoix healthier.

SOLAR PROJECT: WATCH continues to explore opportunities to partner with county businesses and non-profits to bring solar and wind projects to Charlevoix County.

WATCH Board of Directors are Bill Henne, President; Jerry Puhl, Vice- President; JoAnne Beemon, Secretary; Iva Puhl, Treasurer; Anne Zukowski, member and Rick Beemon, member. We no longer have paid staff, so our administrative costs are now below ten per cent of donations, and this means that the vast majority of your dollars will be going directly to protecting our beautiful environment.

WATCH has been able to be your local environmental steward for over 32 years because you have stood with us in our campaigns. Thanks to you we now have the Lake to Lake Trail and have been able to stay active in all the above issues.

As we approach a new year with a new WATCH, I want to thank you for your continued support. Please renew your membership with a check payable to WATCH, Inc., PO Box 615, Charlevoix, MI 49720. If you prefer to make a donation by credit card, please visit our website at <http://watchchx.wordpress.com/> . PayPal will process a secure credit card payment.

You may also visit our WATCH Facebook page.

If you have ideas for projects, concerns about environmental issues in our area, or would like to get involved in any of our activities, please contact us at: watchcharlevoix@gmail.com, or you can call any of the directors listed above. Together we can continue to make a difference.

Good wishes and Happy Holidays!

Bill Henne, President