

## **Blue Triton/Nestle Gives up Controversial Permit Seeks back door increase to withdrawal**

Blue Triton Brands Inc., formerly Nestle Waters North America, sent a letter to EGLE on September 28 announcing that they “will not be utilizing the water withdrawal capacity authorized by the permit” for its White Pine Springs well north of Eart (#1701 for 400 gpm). Despite the company’s reduction of pumping in an attempt to avoid a pending review of its operations by the Ingham County Circuit Court, Michigan Citizens for Water Conservation and the many other organizations and citizens who have contested the legality of the White Pine Spring well for the last five years is not willing to stipulate that the case in Circuit Court regarding the contested case is moot. Blue Triton’s notification of its intent to reduce pumping to 288 gpm—416,000 gallons per day, does not resolve the legal issues over the well’s operation by Nestle in the past, and Blue Triton in the future. There are too many unresolved issues.



Headwaters of Chippewa Creek – July 2021

“It seems that Blue Triton has abandoned the 400-gpm permit to duck the more rigorous comprehensive review of impacts required by Part 327 and the Safe Drinking Water Act for a bottled water well that exceeds 200,000 gallons per day,” Ross Hammersley, environmental attorney for MCWC in the pending legal action, said. “But whether Nestle or now Blue Triton can avoid these requirements is one of the critical questions before the circuit court.

What does all of this mean? While MCWC is pleased that the company has set aside the 400-gpm permit, which we’ve said all along was improperly approved, significant impairment of the two blue-water trout streams and habitat has already occurred. It is not in the best interests of Blue Triton, affected landowners, or the public to pump at 400 gpm or even 200 gpm. After all, Nestle lost a similar 8-year court battle in Mecosta County, where the final amended order reduced pumping from 400 gpm to an average 125 gpm in summer months and 218 gpm the rest of the year to prevent further damage and restore the stream, a lake and adjacent wetlands. Given Michigan’s unique glacial geology and annual rainfall patterns, large-volume water wells near headwater creeks and wetlands

are not sustainable. The company’s request to continue pumping at its proposed reduced rate cannot be permitted unless there is a full monitoring plan to measure the effects on flows, levels, and impacts, before and during pumping, to Twin and Chippewa Creeks.

MCWC’s analysis and riparian landowners and other members of MCWC who fish and know these creeks have already documented substantial drying up or alteration of the creeks to the point that they are unrecognizable. As a result, if Blue Triton wants to chart a different course and become a good corporate citizen in Michigan, MCWC urges the company to undertake the following actions:

- (1) implement a true monitoring plan, based on scientific data gathering on site rather than computer models, under the supervision of a neutral hydrogeologist and under the direction of the community impacted as well as state agencies charged with protecting the waters of the state;
- (2) reduce rather than increase its pumping rate until the monitoring plan is in place and a baseline of data is established, and the effects and impacts at existing levels of pumping, including the proposed level of 288 gpm, are determined;

(3) pending implementation of the above and the determinations from a proper monitoring plan, reduce pumping to 100 gpm or an agreed amount that will minimize impacts until the plan and determinations are made;

(4) meet with MCWC and EGLE so that all affected stakeholders can work directly to resolve these issues. If this cannot be done, then MCWC, representing the integrity of our water and water laws, does not and cannot agree that the pending circuit court case is moot or that Blue Triton's pumping, past or proposed at 288 gpm, is lawful;

(5) hold any permit for the 288 gpm in abeyance until the plan is in place and the determinations are made, and provide public notice, a period of public comment and participation as required by Part 327 and the SWDA.

EGLE has prematurely approved Blue Triton's request to pump at the increased 288 gpm, This was done without notice to the public, and without public comment or input. Moreover, EGLE appears to have abandoned its demand for a monitoring plan that would have verified whether current or the proposed 288 gpm would cause harm or leave adequate water in the streams and wetlands. The monitoring plan should not be abandoned, but should be a condition on any agreement by EGLE, who is responsible for protecting our lakes and streams. EGLE must continue to demand monitoring, provide for public participation, and agree to MCWC's participation in such a plan.

MCWC looks to EGLE to exercise its legal responsibility as trustee or steward of the lakes, streams, and connected groundwaters of the State. They are public and held in public trust for all citizens. And, as stated above, MCWC looks to Blue Triton to chart a different course in Michigan in full compliance with the rule of law and our constitution's mandate that the state protect our water and natural resources from impairment or pollution. MCWC and its members stand ready to cooperate in good faith to achieve these above actions to determine what if any amount Blue Triton can pump from the White Pine well and at the same time maintain adequate water in the creeks and wetlands for riparian owners, the health of the ecosystem, and the use and enjoyment of the public. It is MCWC's hope that Blue Triton officials and investors will work with EGLE and us to establish a new legacy for water protection in Michigan.

Private equity companies will find us not easily fooled by self-serving gestures that are the opposite of what they seem. 288 gallons per minute is not an improvement over 250. We welcome the partial victory of not having to oppose 400 any further but continue the battle for water protection.

We also urge Governor Whitmer and EGLE Director Clark to work with us by insisting that our water laws not be diluted, but are applied to the letter of the law. We ask EGLE to abandon any legal maneuvers that prevent public notice, participation, and compliance with the law's mandate to protect our water resources. Blue Triton has thanked EGLE for its cooperation in seeking approval of the modified 288 gpm. Regrettably, EGLE has not cooperated with the public or MCWC regarding the continued pumping or the rights of adjacent landowners or the two streams. Despite trying to get "on-the-ground" help from EGLE over the last several years to address the White Pine well and its impact, EGLE did not notify MCWC or its members, or the riparian owners on the streams, of Blue Triton's desire to abandon the 400 gpm or its proposed new 416,000 gallons per day removal of water from the groundwater and this headwater creek system.

EGLE did not provide notice until after Blue Triton filed its notice to re-register the permit. There must be public participation, comment, and an individual permit review. We need government accountability in the management of our lakes, streams, and the Great Lakes.

We stand ready now to meet with EGLE and Blue Triton to chart this new course, so that companies like Blue Triton who want to take or use the waters of our State understand that it is a privilege.

—MCWC Board of Directors

## **Water is Essential to Life!**

### **During a Pandemic - it is Unthinkable to shut off a family's Water**

During the pandemic, the state issued a moratorium on water shutoffs. The moratorium officially ended March 31st, while Covid continues to spread. October 2021 saw 4,000 - 5,000 thousand overdue water bills sent out to households in Warren Michigan alone. If residents don't come up with the money, they may face shutoffs, which is the city's policy. Water shutoffs began earlier in the spring in Oak Park and Hazel Park, suburbs in Oakland County, the richest county in the state. We join the call of the Peoples' Water Board to encourage cities throughout Michigan to continue the moratorium on shutoffs. Use federal American Rescue Plan Act 2021 funding to help out families hard hit by Covid. Do not inflict this hardship on residents when federal funding has arrived in cities in the form of the American Rescue Plan Act 2021 (ARPA). For the long term, we need an affordability plan, based on income for all Michigan residents. No one can live without water, especially during the pandemic. It will create terrible hardship for those directly affected and a public health crisis for the community at large.

When tens of thousands of Detroiters experienced water shutoffs in recent years, a false narrative was spun that water insecurity was a problem limited to black and brown people in Detroit, where residents didn't want to pay their bills. The pandemic has blown this falsehood apart. Covid has caused mass unemployment and made it even more difficult to pay the soaring water bills for many in the suburbs, as well as in cities, for the whole diverse population in Michigan.

Last year water companies were required to report on the number of residents who were behind on their water bills to be able to access funds from the Cares Act. For the first time we were able to see that many in the suburbs and cities across Michigan were struggling to pay their water bills. Almost 318,000 homes were reported to be in arrears in Michigan. In Lansing, the state's capital, over 27,000 households were behind on their water bills. In Farmington Hills, over 2,000 were in arrears. And in Warren another 12,000 were in arrears. This problem is clearly not limited to Detroit or to black residents, though they have suffered the worst hardship from the shutoffs. It is a problem facing all of Michigan. It is a problem that must be solved. No amount of shutoffs, late fees, liens against homes, foreclosures or imprisonment will solve this problem. Water is a human right. Let's make this a policy in Michigan.

One Way you can Help:

The Peoples' Water Board, a coalition of which we are a part, is looking for stories from those who have had difficulty paying their water bills in Oakland or Macomb counties. Perhaps the stories will shed light on the real horrors of those who have had to endure a shutoff or a lien against their property or even the threat of losing their access to water, their home or the breakup of their family. If you are from one of these two counties and want to participate in a study in collaboration with People's Water Board and the University of California - Santa Barbara call or text (313)753-9283 to schedule an interview. Eligible participants receive a \$50 Amazon gift card.

----Diane Weckerle

**Water Is a Human Right**

## Line 5, Line 3, and Climate Change

Just when it seemed like change was immanent and the pipelines would finally be shut down to save not only our water but our very climate, the powers that be in Washington faltered and let the greed heads of the moment have their way. The oil still flows and we are still in grave danger. We applaud our Governor and our Attorney General for sticking with it and continuing to insist that laws be enforced and Line 5 be shut down. We applaud all those water protectors who have put themselves in harms way to try to stop Line 3 from destroying their homelands. We applaud the persistent groups that make up the Oil & Water Don't Mix Coalition for continuing to assert the legal mandates that should shut down Line 5, continuing to educate the public on the issues, continuing to protest on behalf of our waters and our climate. MCWC is one of these groups.



photo by Valerie Jean Blakely

Although the Canadian government has chosen to bat on the side of Enbridge, the progressives in Canada are on the side of sanity and are working to put pressure on their government to change its policy. Council of Canadians chapters, Wellington Water Watchers, First Nations, are well aware of the danger the line represents to the Great Lakes region.

Meanwhile Enbridge engages in legal maneuvers to stall the shut down ordered by Governor Whitmer. It's a playbook that is familiar to MCWC from its dealings with Nestle and EGLE. This is the fourth year that MCWC members have gotten in their kayaks and canoes to call attention to this criminal behavior from Enbridge by joining the tribes and other water protectors in the Straits of Mackinac. Some of us are getting too old to get the canoe in the water. But fortunately there is a generation of younger water warriors ready to help and carry on with us. They carry the canoe for us and we paddle out once more, hoping this is the last year we need to do this.

—Peggy Case & Jeanne Peters, canoe activists

***SHUT DOWN LINE 5! NO TUNNEL!***

### **Benton Harbor Residents & Water Rights Activists Demand an End to the Poisoning of the City's Water**

Seven years have passed since the tragedy that led to the poisoning of Flint's families. Now, residents of Benton Harbor, another majority black Michigan city, have been drinking water contaminated with lead for the last three years. It has taken activism from the residents, water rights activists and environmental lawyers demanding the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) step in to get the state to take serious steps to address this crisis. The 9,700 residents of this city require clean affordable water, clear warnings not to drink the tap water and urgent measures to resolve the problem.

Back in the summer of 2018 Benton Harbor's water was found to contain elevated levels of lead. Samples ranged from 0-60 parts per billion (ppb). The level at which the state must take action is 15 parts per billion (ppb). Samples of Benton Harbor's water were then taken once every three years, so it is unclear when the lead rose to more dangerous levels. Tests are now being conducted twice a year. Despite the elevated levels of lead, no official warning was given to residents to tell them to stop drinking the water. Residents were not provided with clean water.

Benton Harbor's water at that time had no corrosion control, in violation of state and federal law. The state's intervention was to send in filters, require lead pipes to be replaced within 5 years and order the city to begin corrosion control. EGLE then approved a permit to use an untested corrosion control formula. Adjustments were made in the formula, but sampling found the treatments to be ineffective and the lead levels continued to rise over the next three years. The latest test results from January - June 2021 were found to be 0-889 ppb, up to sixty times the level requiring action.

The Benton Harbor Community Water Council (BHCWC) has demanded clean water for residents and clear messaging from the state and city advising residents to stop drinking city water. The grass roots organization has been telling residents for three years to stop drinking the water because of the elevated lead levels. All the while, the state was saying the water was safe to drink and the city was telling residents to boil the water, which only concentrates the lead. BHCWC, led by Reverend Pinckney, and activists statewide, have been holding public educational meetings, purchasing water, distributing it and fighting for the problem to be solved.

Water rights activists from Wayne State University's Environmental Law Center, National Resources Defense Council, Detroit Peoples' Water Board, Michigan Welfare Rights and many other organizations joined forces with the local activists to hold the public meetings in Benton Harbor and spread the word far and wide. On September 9th they sent a petition to the EPA demanding immediate intervention. They demanded that the state remove all leaded pipes within one year, not five, which was the state's plan, do a comprehensive study to find an effective corrosion control and provide the community with water that is safe to drink until six months after the leaded pipes are removed and the right corrosion control is in place.



photo by Valerie Jean Blakely

Benton Harbor is an environmental justice community. Poverty rate is 45%. Eighty five percent of the residents are Black and 5% are Hispanic. And 71% of the homes in the city were built before lead paint was banned in 1978. So those who live in the older homes have multiple pathways of exposure to lead, beyond the water the family uses for drinking, cooking and bathing. The house may have peeling paint, especially if it is a rental unit. Or when repairs are made and the paint is dry sanded, lead dust fills the air and lands on the floor where toddlers play. Black, brown and immigrant residents are more likely to live near and bear the toxic burden of industrial pollution and have less access to health care.

Lead is particularly harmful to children whose brains are still developing. Exposure to lead can cause serious and permanent harm. While the effects are often not seen immediately, lead can damage a child's nervous system - making it more difficult for a child to learn, concentrate, behave, hear or grow. An environmental justice community is at even greater risk for harm. And they are in great need for the next generation of children to grow up strong to be able to take on and solve the community's problems.

Once the EPA received the petition on September 9th the spotlight was on this crisis and the state began taking more serious measures. After three years of telling residents the water was safe to drink, finally, in the beginning of October, the state began trucking in cases of water which were dispersed to long lines of cars on the first day with the promise of more vowing to replace the leaded water pipes and service lines within 18 months along with some federal financing, and finally, a comprehensive study of corrosion control was begun which will take another 18 months to resolve.

While the Lead and Copper Rule is in place to mitigate these disasters, there is no provision requiring that residents be provided with clean water immediately. This public health measure, which did not take place in Benton Harbor or Flint, could prevent the poisoning of the affected population, while the problem is being

solved. Elevated lead levels in water is a crisis which demands an urgent response as well as long-term solutions.

Michigan has international bottled water companies which are allowed to pump massive amounts of clean spring water for free and make a huge profit. Yet our own residents have been drinking lead poisoned water and made to pay unaffordable prices for this water. While Nestle has sold its bottled water operations to One Rock and Metropolis, the company has not given up its efforts to extract maximum amount of water for profit. Policies which allow industry to take an unsustainable amount of clean, spring water for free while residents are made to pay exorbitant prices for contaminated water must change. The Lead and Copper rule must be strengthened and enforced to ensure communities are drinking clean water. And a water affordability plan throughout the state is urgently needed to ensure the human right to clean affordable water is met.

—Diane Weckerle, Public Health Nurse

## Update On Potash Mine Contested Case

### ***EGLE's Administrative Law Judge Rejects MCWC's Final Issue***

Last March, EGLE's ALJ Pulter ruled against MCWC's challenge of permits granted to Michigan Potash Company on all but a single issue. It came as no surprise when, on 8/26/21, he rejected that final one as well. At issue was an air permit allowing the company to emit quantities of deadly hydrogen-sulfide (H<sub>2</sub>S) gas in quantities which could be extremely hazardous to neighboring residents. Now, since the original permit has expired, EGLE is in the final stage of issuing a new, supposedly improved version. A virtual public hearing was held on October 7th, with public comments accepted for ten days following. We have not yet seen EGLE's responses to those questions/comments. It appears that the new permit, as drafted, will still allow the company to emit unsafe levels of H<sub>2</sub>S.



Wetland near proposed mine site

We've been extremely frustrated that throughout the challenge process MCWC has been denied the ability to bring forward any of the serious environmental threats posed by this mining project. Valuable time and money have been wasted quibbling over little more than legal procedural details.

### ***Where Do We Go From Here?***

At some point the only remaining recourse may be to bring these matters before the courts, to independently and thoroughly review the serious environmental issues which EGLE so readily dismisses. A decision whether to go to court must be made if, and when the company manages to raise the approximately 1 billion dollars in investment capital and financing it says it will need to go forward. The prospects of that happening any time soon appear dim due to a number of factors, including:

- \* Worldwide glut of potash / Low potash prices
- \* Extremely small company size and lack of mining experience
- \* Lack of rail access
- \* The company has performed no environmental testing, studies, or assessment of their site.
- \* The venture appears to have little appeal, likely because it has already been attempted and ultimately abandoned by several large, well capitalized and experienced companies, operating on a much better site.

**Openness vs Secrecy:**

"...I have continually been impressed by the professionalism and the deep expertise of the Michigan Potash & Salt Co. team, and the priority the company places on open communication, transparency, diligence, and engagement with the local community where it is seeking to advance this project." --Chuck Lippstreu, President of The Michigan Agribusiness Association (Lansing-based lobbying group), testifying on MPC's behalf at an EGLE public hearing on 10/7/2021

**What is Michigan Potash Company's definition of "open communication & transparency"?** For more than 3 years, the Osceola County Planning Commission has repeatedly requested that Michigan Potash appear and answer questions regarding their plans and projected impacts on the area. After ignoring the commission for more than 2 years, the company announced that they would appear if questions were submitted first in writing, but over a year later, the company has yet to respond.

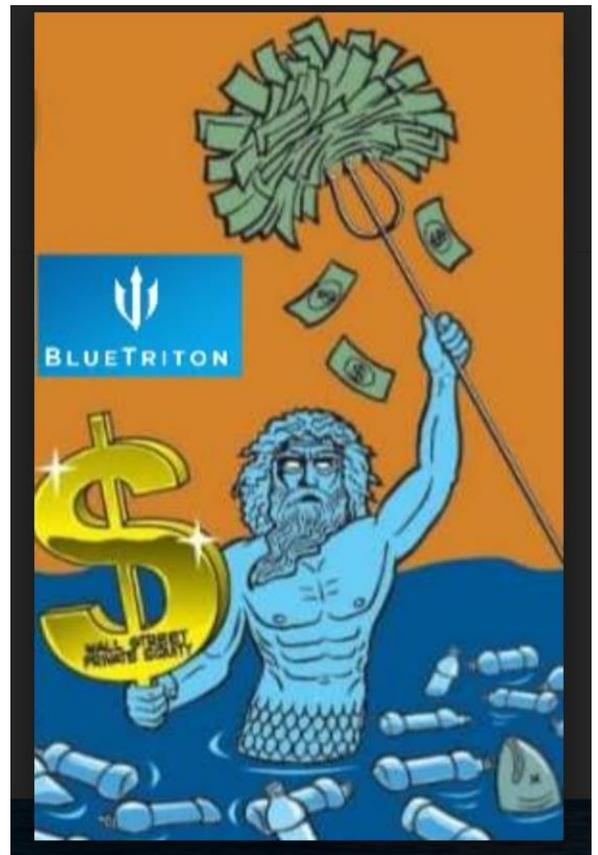
This rural county has never dealt with development on the scale of a billion-dollar potash mine, and its impacts on the county, economically, environmentally, and on its infrastructure and residents will be monumental. ***That any company would deny a local Planning Commission the information it requires to do its job should raise some bright red flags!***

----- landowner adjacent to mine site

**MCWC Positions**

Let us be perfectly clear. We have spent 21 years and lots of money in legal battles that contest the permitting process for particular wells operated by Nestle, now Blue Triton brands. We prevailed in the Mecosta case and will eventually prevail in Evert. But we are confronting more than the damage done to two particular ecosystems. We stand for clean, public water for all, the public trust doctrine as the guiding principle in law and government operations, and the total elimination of privatized water operations and infrastructure. Water is a human right and an ecosystem necessity and must not be sold for private profit. If it is extracted for profit then there must be strict laws in place guiding the process to protect the environment. Just compensation in the form of royalties for natural resource extraction must be given to the state to be used to support public water infrastructure and distribution of water. No more little toxic single use plastic bottles. No water should be shut off and a reasonable affordability plan must be in place state-wide. Water delivered in emergency situations, like Detroit, Flint and Benton Harbor, should come in bulk containers provided by the state and sourced from clean public systems. No more potash mines that require 3 million gallons of fresh water per day and release unlimited quantities of hydrogen sulfide. There should be no deals that profit private corporations when the State fails to live up to its constitutional responsibilities. No oil pipelines on, in, or under the Great Lakes. No injection of toxic waste in wells under our aquifers.

—MCWC Board of Directors



"Wall Street Private Equity"

## Gary A. Swier

Gary A. Swier passed away on May 16, 2021 while living in the Royal View Retirement Community in Mecosta. He was 77. He and his wife Terry, founding president of MCWC, had moved there as they recovered from COVID-19 and dealt with other health issues.

Gary worked for General Motors as a cost accountant, living in Grand Rapids, Spain, New York, and Davison, Michigan with his family, Terry and sons Chis and Paul. When he retired, he and Terry were able to settle at Horsehead Lake in Mecosta. He became an active member and leader of various local organizations, including the Horsehead Lake Association, and served on county and township boards. When Nestle was discovered pumping water at Sanctuary Springs to the detriment of the Deadstream and several small lakes, Gary joined roughly 2000 citizens to form MCWC and oppose them.



Gary and Terry Swier

Terry became president and spokesperson and Gary stood right beside her through the earliest years of MCWC and for the many years of water work thereafter. He became very well versed in water conservation issues, quietly and thoroughly digesting information and providing behind the scenes input to the movement.

He also helped set up innumerable garage sales and Texas Hold 'Em fundraisers, criss-crossed the Great Lakes region for meetings, hearings, and protests. He is remembered for his tireless pursuit of cans and bottles to be turned in for the refunds. Gary was always there to make things happen to keep MCWC going and pay the bills.

At one of the first hearings regarding the proposed Perrier project in Mecosta County, Gary stood at the podium and talked directly to the representatives of the DEQ seated onstage. Gary said, "I looked online today. You work for the Governor. The Governor works for me. Which means you work for me. Let's work together then."

Those words resonate with us to this day as we honor the legacy Gary left us of true service to what matters most, his family and his homeland. His five grandchildren, Maddie, Amelia, Jacob, Allma, and Ila, along with MCWC members over the years, were well gifted by the presence of Gary Swier among us.

## Thanksgiving Gratitudes

MCWC is an all volunteer, grassroots organization that has existed and produced some important successes for 21 years due to the hard work and dedication of several thousand volunteers and donors. You are MCWC and the water conservation and water justice movements are grateful for your work. We cannot name you all, but would like to highlight some who were part of the early years and are still with us, some who have made significant contributions in recent years and some new active young people.

**Rhonda Huff & Maryann Borden** are original members of MCWC and longtime riparian owners on Chippewa and Twin Creeks in Osceola County. They have worked actively over all these years to fight Nestle in Mecosta at Sanctuary Springs and then document and publicize Nestle's excessive withdrawals and damage in Evert on the two creeks that run through their properties.

**Glenna Maneke** served for many years as treasurer of MCWC and still advises those who have taken on that role after she retired from it. She was active in the early years fundraising to pay our huge legal debts. Known as the one who made all those pasties with her Aunt, Rosanne Sapp, she has participated in many other efforts to keep MCWC above water. She still takes care of some necessary administrative tasks from her home in Mecosta while attempting to retire and tend her gardens.

**Chris Swier** has served as treasurer for the past several years since Glenna retired. He has also been in it from the beginning, working along with his parents, Gary and Terry Swier, to lead MCWC through the original lawsuit with Nestle. Chis is a dedicated organic farmer who nevertheless took on the treasurer job, with limited technical access, when the need presented itself. He has also served on the board for a number of years and only recently has had to retire from it to care for his family and farm.

**John McLane** served on our board for many years, advising us on many issues, particularly related to Nestle withdrawals and the damage done to the ecosystem, and the issue of hydraulic fracking and the waste injection wells that accompany it. Technology issues forced his retirement from the board after COVID-19 forced us away from in-person meetings. But John continues to document conditions on the two creeks, conducts tours of the sites, stays on top of new injection well permitting, and keeps us informed about industry trends that threaten water.

**Luke Evans** from Traverse City currently manages our website, posting new material as it is generated by the board and sending out our infrequent action alerts. He will be working along with Shannon Abbott to transition the website to the new one being created through a generous communications grant from Fresh Water Future.

**Yousef Emara** came to us as a high school student in Ann Arbor several years ago, working on a project to document Nestle operations. He produced his own website on Nestle and gathered thousands of petition signatures to present to state government opposing the permit given to Nestle to pump 400 gpm in Evart. He is in college now and has continued to work with this and other water issues, consulting with the board, personally touring the sites in Evart, and completing a documentary which will be released soon. He has worked to educate his peers and remains a valuable young volunteer in our organization.

**Ziyad Emara**, younger brother to Yousef, chose as his high school project development of a web-based summary of injection well permit requests which documents the environmental features of the proposed sites so that communities can be made aware of the dangers that might exist for their aquifers. He has worked alongside John McLane to gather information and then post it using google earth technology. Ziyad is still in high school and will likely continue to contribute with activist work using his obvious organizing and technical skills to serve water.

Then there are the members of the current **Board of Directors**, as of November 2021. This is the “staff” of MCWC now, unpaid but not unappreciated.

**Jim Maturen** was almost taken out by Covid-19 at the beginning of the pandemic and came back to continue his relentless work to confront Nestle and state government over the damage done to the ecosystem in Evart. You will see him in several documentaries and news reports speaking to the outrages he has documented along with John McLane. A retired state trooper and leader in the Wild Turkey Hunters Association that brought turkeys back to Michigan, Jim was just declared person of the year by Michigan Outdoors magazine.

**Shannon Abbott**, current Vice President, is our really tech savvy leader serving on the board. Shannon manages website and social media operations and input, hosts zoom meetings, handles media contacts and releases and newsletter printing operations. She also has been a volunteer facilitator with the Water is Life Alliance that MCWC helped form. Based in Grand Rapids, she also works with the Grand Rapids Water Protectors.

**Diane Weckerle**, current Secretary for the board, is based in the Detroit area and has been a leader in the Coalition to oppose the Expansion of US Ecology waste treatment plant as well as our representative on the Detroit People’s Water Board Coalition which has worked so hard to deal with water shut offs and other water injustices in SE Michigan. Diane is a public health nurse using her expertise to advocate for policy that improves the health of citizens.

**Ken Ford** is a forester and environmental steward who resides right next to the potash mine proposed site in Hersey. He has been a part of the group that originally opposed injection wells that inject toxic frack waste into the ground beneath our aquifers. Recently his work has centered on opposing the potential potash mine next to his property and his advocacy and fundraising along with his neighbors have been crucial to MCWC’s ability to continue that opposition.

**John Sapp**, son of Rosanne Sapp, and temporarily returned to Mecosta has just taken over the demanding job of treasurer for MCWC. Though he is relocating to the Detroit area, he will continue as treasurer and member of the Board and contribute to our technology expertise significantly. His youth and experience will be most welcome by those of us on the board who are aging beyond the needs and skills of the times.

**Peggy Case** is the current President of MCWC and resides on a homestead in the Traverse City area and the Platte River watershed. She serves as spokesperson for the organization and is responsible for coordinating overall operations of the board and other volunteers. Though often the public face of MCWC, she is merely attempting to follow in the footsteps of Terry Swier to maintain the integrity and relevance of our work which is carried out by all those listed above and many more.

Our board is currently actively looking for new members. We are particularly in need of younger activists with a grasp of the issues, a willingness to work without pay and a passion for justice and the health of the planet. Do not hesitate to contact us if you want to join the decision-making arm of MCWC and take on some of the work we intend to pursue in the future. It doesn't matter where in the state you are. Though we are still legally based in Mecosta, we are in fact all over the state and currently meet by zoom once a month.

## Volunteer Team Development

MCWC is a unique organization with a special role in the water justice movement. We have no paid staff and no office to support so all the funds we raise can be put to our programs and projects. We occasionally receive a grant from other non-profits. The majority of our funding has come from our own fundraisers over the years and from our generous members and individual donors.

We are all volunteers and it is time to build up our volunteer base as we age and need to expand our reach at the same time. Our members have been generous in funding the work you believe in doing. We now ask that you help us fill some important volunteer spots that allow us to do the actual work you expect from this organization.

What is needed now:

Tech support team - We have just received a Communications Grant from Fresh Water Future to help us upgrade and integrate our communications and website. Looking for additions to that committee with tech savvy, able to navigate websites, social media, virtual events and meetings, etc.

Research and educational materials development - Looking for volunteers to help update some of our existing fliers and pamphlets on issues and create new ones for our outreach program. Graphic design and content research skills are always needed. New content is needed for our website also.

Fundraising support - Help in organizing in-person events as we come out of the Pandemic. Creation of funding appeals for public engagement.

Grant writing to non-profits and search for other opportunities consistent with our principles. Coordinating product development and sales of things like water bottles, buttons, bumper stickers, etc.

Volunteer Environmental Monitors - To be trained for monitoring the streams and lakes affected by Nestle/Blue Triton pumping operations and participate in data gathering with experts. On the ground monitoring in Osceola and Mecosta Counties and any other locations Blue Triton attempts to develop.



LTE and Opinion piece team - Be available to write letters to the editor or opinion pieces using MCWC developed talking points in response to current affairs. Need volunteers to coordinate these teams.

Monitor Government sites - Need volunteers to keep up with EPA, DNR and EGLE websites and postings and inform us of permit requests, hearings, rulings, etc. of importance to our water work.

Speakers Bureau - Help develop talking points and powerpoint presentations for various issues to be ready for the time we can hold public events. Need speakers to present when we get invitations. Need volunteers to develop those invitations. Need help designing and producing webinars of our own.

These are all volunteer opportunities already being performed to some degree by a core of people who are aging, have been affected by Covid-19 in serious ways, still want to continue this important work, but are definitely in need of help if we are to continue to engage at the level we want to engage.

Contact us at [MichiganCWaterC@gmail.com](mailto:MichiganCWaterC@gmail.com)

## The Chickens and the Bees

I keep both on my homestead. They represent the perfect metaphors for our current dilemmas. They each give something back in exchange for the sustenance they are given. However they carry out their lives in such different ways and create such different cultures that we can see our own choices clearly by watching them. I'm taking my lessons from the bees and my cautions from the chickens.

Chickens are all out for themselves and focused on the present moment always. They fight for every morsel offered them, dig huge caverns in their home to get at the last bug, peck at each other to be the first to be fed, argue over a particular nest box rather than take one of the empty ones to lay an egg, insisting that whoever is already in it needs to get out right now. If an egg breaks they will immediately fight over who gets to eat it. They will literally eat each other at times, stripping feathers off the weaker ones. Some will tear your hand off if you reach for an egg. Some will brood and protect the eggs. They are always hungry and always eating, no matter how fat they get. They will eat an entire garden if given the opportunity. They poop wherever they please.

Bees are totally social beings. Everything an individual bee does is for the good of the whole in its short life. Every bee has a job to do to keep the colony in good health. Drones and queens have specialized jobs that are determined at birth. Mating and egg laying are their roles. The worker bees, which are the vast majority, rotate through all the other jobs in their lifetime. Each gets to do the different kinds of work, the dirty work and the fun stuff. They feed the new bees and the queen, repair the hive, build the comb, store what the foragers bring in, protect the entrance from invaders, produce with their own bodies the substances that sustain them - royal jelly, bee bread, propolis, honey. Their last job is foraging outside the hive for nectar, pollen, and water, not for themselves alone but for the whole hive. They bring it in and pass it off to workers waiting at the entrance to store it for the use of all. When the queen fails in her duty, which is laying eggs, or dies, they make a new one. When the hive gets overcrowded they split it and move half to a new home. They decide on its location by a process of consensus. When there is no more room or it gets too cold, the queen takes a break from laying eggs until conditions are right again. They groom each other and work to rid the hive of pests and disease. They do no harm to other living things in the process of securing what they need to survive. They only sting if attacked, knowing that if they do sting they will die. They do not poop in their own hives.

The metaphors are obvious. Were we to live as the bees do, always caring about the good of the whole, we would not pollute our hives, would not selfishly grab more than we need of anything, would not destroy living systems for our individual gratifications of the moment. We would not harm each other out of greed or ignorance. Each of us would have a job that contributed to building health for ourselves and the planet. The waters of the world would run clean and be plentiful for all as essential to life. The climate would be stable.

-----Peggy Case, beekeeper

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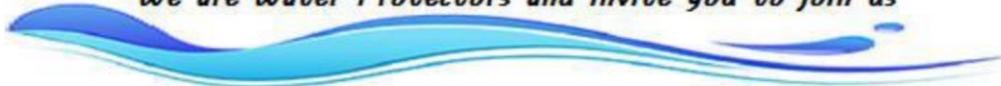
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