

Michigan Politics

By George Weeks



'Water Wonderland' Wonders About Water

Drought-stricken California just had its driest one-year period since 1924 and is all the more prone to wildfires. Georgia has been battling drought for five years.

Up in the Great Lakes, Michigan, the worried "Water Wonderland" state, wonders where the water is going and what to do about ever-expanding invasive aquatic species in the lakes that have 20% of the world's fresh water.

Lake Superior is headed toward a record low level. Lakes Michigan and Huron, which get up to a third of their water from Superior, were about 20 inches below normal last fall and expected to be again this autumn - bad for recreation and shipping.

It was fitting that lawmakers from these three states last week announced creation of the bipartisan Congressional Water Caucus.

As they seek to recruit members, they have two early priorities: Creation by the legislative and executive branches of an 18-member federal water commission, and more federal funding to search of aquifers yet to be identified.

"It is believed that there are many more aquifers to be discovered," said Representative Bart Stupak (D-Menominee), who co-chairs the caucus along with Republican John Linder of Georgia and three members from California, Republican George Radanovich and Democrats Grace Napolitano and Jim Costa.

Stupak, in a phone interview, said it costs up to \$300,000 to find an aquifer, but for each of the two latest fiscal years, the federal budget allotted the "paltry amount" of \$800,000 for annual searches.

He also said that in addition to seeking additional sources of water, the caucus will discuss such ideas as this one pushed by western lawmakers: Making dams six feet higher would go a long way to making reservoirs large

Island Regatta Will Take Place Sunday

The annual Mackinac Island 4th of July Regatta, which is sponsored by The Pink Pony, will be held this year Sunday, July 1. The race is considered a "competitive family fun race" and is open to all boats with no entry charge.

The event will begin at 2 p.m. off the east breakwall of the Mackinac Island Harbor. The race route spans about 10 miles around the Island. A post-race awards ceremony and reception will be held at The Pink Pony.

For further information and registration, contact Mackinac Island Yacht Club Chairman David Rowe at (810) 487-0787.

enough to meet current needs.

Plight of the Great Lakes is getting increasing national media attention. Last week, CNN had vivid video of big Asian carp in the Illinois River leaping into open boats, including one in which the network's correspondent was clobbered.

Some of the coverage has been overboard, as when CBS hyped an evening news segment by asking: "Why is America's largest lake disappearing?" and gravely pondering whether Superior is becoming "inferior."

Nonetheless, there's a global water crisis, and we are part of it. Stupak, who in the mid 1990s helped thwart a Canadian company's plans to sell water from the Great Lakes to China, said: "The challenge is a real threat to our livelihood and security. Wars will probably be fought."

Wars? This is not just idle rhetoric by a Michigan politician who legitimately trumpets Great Lakes and water issues among his signature priorities. Consider this from former Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev, now chairman of Green Cross International, in a Project Syndicate (www.projectsyndicate.org) column published by the *Detroit Free Press*:

"Given the unprecedented scale of the threat, business as usual is not an option. The Cold war came to a peaceful end, thanks to realism, foresight, and strength of will. These three qualities should be put to work if our planet is to be spared major water wars."

He suggests the amount of water available per person could possibly be halved by mid-century in the Middle East and Africa. Gorby contends the right to water "is explicitly enshrined" in United Nations human rights treaties.

There's little danger that the United States, under either party, would agree to a UN mandate to tap Great Lakes water. But it's good that there are bipartisan stirrings on Capitol Hill to take a broad look at crucial importance of sustainable water management

for the economy and the environment, as well as the human condition. ¤

Booming Northern Voice

Northern Michigan has had some powerful congressmen, including Victor Knox (R-Sault Ste. Marie) in the mid-1900s, and Robert Griffin (R-Traverse City) later in the century, before he became a prominent senator.

Its most powerful voice, literally, was that of 1966-93 Representative Guy Vander Jagt (R-Cadillac), who upon his death last week prompted Republican State Chairman Mike Duncan Friday to declare: "Few Republicans then or since could match his skill behind the podium, and his enthusiasm for spreading the Republican message. (He) electrified audiences with his wit, his eloquence, and his enthusiasm."

Said Duncan: "When the Great Communicator, Ronald Reagan, was chosen as the Republican presidential nominee in 1980, he knew there was only one person he wanted to deliver the keynote address to the Republican National Convention" - Vander Jagt.

As noted by Representative Dave Camp (R-Midland), Vander Jagt had an extraordinary run of nearly 20 years running the Republican House campaign committee. Among his legislative accomplishments was as a sponsor of legislation creating the Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore.

Representative Pete Hoekstra (R-Holland), who upset Vander Jagt in a 1992 primary stunner, said he "will be fondly remembered."

My fondest memory, walking down a Mecosta County high school hallway toward an auditorium where he was about to speak: I heard this booming voice coming from a janitor's closet. It was Guy, the onetime radio announcer, warming up his vocal chords.

George Weeks retired last year after 22 years as political columnist for The Detroit News. His weekly Michigan Politics column is syndicated by Superior Features.

Dr. Aaron Fraser on Duty at Island Medical Center

Dr. Aaron Fraser has been interested in medicine since he was a junior high student.

"A bunch of my family got sick and I couldn't help them out," he said. "Ever since then, I've kind of devoted myself to furthering myself into medicine."

His journey into medicine has taken him from his hometown of Grosse Pointe to Albion College for pre-med, Michigan State University for medical school, and now Mackinac Island for a two-week period from June 24 to July 8, where he'll be participating in the medical center's resident physician rotation program.

Dr. Fraser has one more year left on a family residency at Sparrow Hospital in Lansing. He then plans on joining the Air Force for five years before beginning a fellowship in sports medicine.

"My whole family was in the military at one point in time," he said. "My brother-in-law is an F-16 fighter pilot in the Air Force. It just felt like the right thing to do."

The only time Dr. Fraser has visited the Island prior to his current residency was as a young child. He will be joined by his wife and son Friday, June 29.



Dr. Aaron Fraser will be spending a two-week residency as part of the physician rotation program at the Mackinac Island Medical Center. He arrived June 24 and will depart July 8.

"I'm going to have fun when my family gets here," he said. "This is definitely a family oriented environment, so being a bachelor for a week, I'm just taking in the sights and exercising and running and biking and doing all the stuff I don't get to do when my family is around."

During his stay at the Mackinac Island Medical Center, Dr. Fraser hopes to polish his clinical skills and not rely so much on modern medicine.

Ste. Anne's To Host Bible School

Ste. Anne's Church will again be offering a Bible school in July.

The school, which will begin Monday, July 9 and end Thursday, July 12, will last approximately two hours each day. For more information, contact the church at 847-3479.



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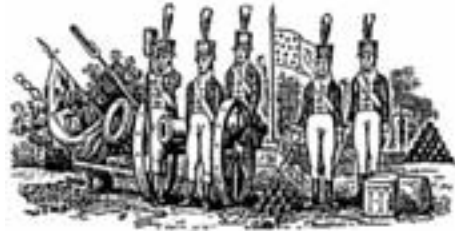
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