

Congress and Legislature Are Stirring Great Lakes Waters

There were welcome strides made in Lansing and Washington last week on Great Lakes legislation. Whether they cross the finish line is a great question in both capitals.

State House Democrats fanned across the state for 10 press conferences to hype a "Great Waters, Great Michigan" package of bills they dubbed as "a bold plan that will protect...Michigan's most precious natural resource from being diverted and sold to other states and nations."

Apart from those to require conservation measures for biggest water users, the most important bill would ratify the 2005 Great Lakes Basin Water Resources Compact, which would ban diversions outside the basin. Being within the basin, Michigan should be a leader. But, alas, only Minnesota had ratified as of this writing.

The northern pointman for the Democratic blitz was Representative Gary McDowell of Rudyard, only one of two state legislators who represent portions of both peninsulas. (The other is Senator Jason

Allen (R-Traverse City), author of a Senate-passed bill to help fund water quality improvements for inland lakes.)

McDowell authored one of the most controversial – and needed, in my view – bills. It would remove the bottled water exception from the state's definition of "diversion" unless the facility has a permit. He said it is paramount to "hold accountable companies that want to sell one of our most precious natural resource for profit. Our water is not for sale."

It is, of course, sold and shipped out of the basin in beer and other products that use substantial water. But it makes sense to toughen standards, and avoid a legal precedent of sanctioning water itself as a sole product rather than a diversion.

Governor Jennifer Granholm told me last year she recognized that the latest law on groundwater withdrawals needs fixing. It remains to be seen if she'll really fight to give the law "teeth," as called for Friday by Traverse City attorney Jim Olson, representing Michigan Citizens for Water Conservation in its court battles (including a lawsuit

Michigan Politics

By
George Weeks



pending before the Michigan Supreme Court).

But Granholm, in a public TV interview at Central Michigan University last week, welcomed the House Democratic package. Its prospects are good in that Democratic-ruled chamber, but not the GOP-controlled Senate.

On Capitol Hill, where Democrats lead both chambers, Senators Carl Levin and Debbie Stabenow touted Senate Appropriations Committee approval of the Energy and Water Appropriations bill that has more than \$53 million for navigation projects in Michigan, including dredging, which got short shrift this season.

The bill includes many proj-

ects for northern Michigan, including some big ones: Grand Marais, \$1,500,000; Manistee, \$1,196,000; and Petoskey, \$3,198,000. However, our senators caution that allocation "is left to the discretion" of the Army Corps of Engineers.

There's also \$21,999,000 for the Soo Locks. But, as U.S. Rep. Bart Stupak (D-Menominee) observed earlier this year, the Corps has "back peddled, hemmed, hawed" on the issue of building a new lock at Sault Ste. Marie that was first authorized way back in 1986.

The Senate bill includes a provision sought by Levin and Stabenow to direct operation and make permanent the Asian carp barrier at the Chicago Sanitary and Ship Canal, and to construct a second barrier. So far, the feds haven't been moving as fast as the carp.

There are all kinds of proposals by politicians to deal with invasive species, pollution, diversion, and other threats to the Great Lakes. And all kinds of hemming and hawing.

Lottery Czar to Congress?

Gary Peters, who resigns August 10 as Michigan's highly

successful lottery commissioner, was a Democratic state senator, an early contender for the 2002 gubernatorial nomination won by now-Governor Jennifer Granholm, and lost by a mere 5,200 votes in 2002 to now-Attorney General Mike Cox.

But his Democratic credentials did not deter Central Michigan University from selecting him as its incoming and third Griffin Endowed Chair in American Government, named after former Republican Senator Robert Griffin and his wife, Marjorie, of Traverse City. The first two chairs were Republicans.

Peters on August 20 begins what is scheduled to be three \$65,000 yearly stints in the position, which involves conducting a weekly seminar for students and conducting assorted forums. But he's eyeing a congressional race and may not serve out the full stint.

He told me last week he's "looking very seriously" at, and will soon decide on, challenging Representative Joe Knollenberg (R-Bloomfield Hills), one of the prime targets of the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee, with whom Peters recently met.

It appears Peters is being heavily recruited by unions and Hill Dems, and will run.

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.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Ling Horn Deserves Credit for Lilac Day Idea

To the Editor:

It is my wish that everyone visiting Mackinac Island this year on Lilac Day had a beautiful Lilac Day and that businesses thrived for those people in business. For years, June was a very quiet month on the Island until Lilac Day was conceived, not by Stella King, but by Evangilene Horn, "Ling" as she was known by the Islanders. She lived her whole life on Mackinac Island and conceived the idea when she was a very young girl, long before she married Ty. For years she tried to interest the businessmen downtown in her idea, but to no avail. She thought because she was so young, and not in business, no one would listen to her. Ling had been employed for some years in the summer months by Tom Shama at his linen store on Main Street, so she was well aware of what was going on downtown.

Finally, one day, after she was married with five children and still hearing the complaints of the business people, she took the bull by the horns, gathered some of the young women together, including Stella, and proceeded with her plans for a Lilac Day celebration.

Our family lived in the Mission, next door to the Horn family. I remember well a conversation with Ling just two days before the Lilac Day parade. Two of her youngsters had come down with measles.

"I have to turn this over to someone, and I think Stella will have more time to devote to it. The other gals all have young families, like me," Ling said.

I remember I was disappointed because I wanted her to receive credit for her idea and hard work, and, of course, she didn't.

Her exact words were, "I'm sorry, but I have a young family to raise, and now this. I don't have a choice."

So the first Lilac Day cele-

bration came off smoothly; we even had two bands. The tourists that day were few, but the several hundred people who showed up enjoyed the parade.

One might ask why I am so informed. It's because we had a float, if you could call it that, consisting of my brother, Don, dressed in loincloth, moccasins, and a western Indian chief's head dress, dragging three blond-haired little Indians on a blanket, and a deer hide fastened to a couple of poles. We won the very first Lilac Day first prize.

As the end of the parade passed Astor Street, I ran up to my little shop and opened the door, just in case someone would find their way up there. No one used Astor Street in those days.

Some minutes later, a little boy came running back to my tiny kitchen. He was very excited. "Little Bob, you won first prize," he said.

"What is first prize?" I asked. He said it was a new Schwinn bike and it was really neat. I jokingly said, "If it's red, I'll take it." The boy told me it was red. He asked if I wanted

him to get it for me. I told him to bring it up.

A few minutes later, he was struggling to get the bike through the screen door. So in he came, all smiles, excited that I had won. It was a beautiful girl's bike with shiny silver fenders, and lilac in color. It was a little beauty. I would have rather had a boy's bike, but a girl's bike was less apt to be stolen. No big tough guys would be caught dead riding a girl's bike unless he found one in front of the Palm Cafe at 2 a.m.

I offered the boy \$5, but he refused, saying, "Naw, I don't want anything."

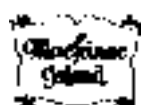
"Are you sure?" I asked, waving the bill in his face.

"Naw, my dad gives me money when I need it," he explained.

I asked him his name, and who is dad was. He told me his name was Steven, and his dad was Francis Doud.

I always remember that curly hair and that happy little face as he presented me with the bike. He was as happy as I was that I had won.

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