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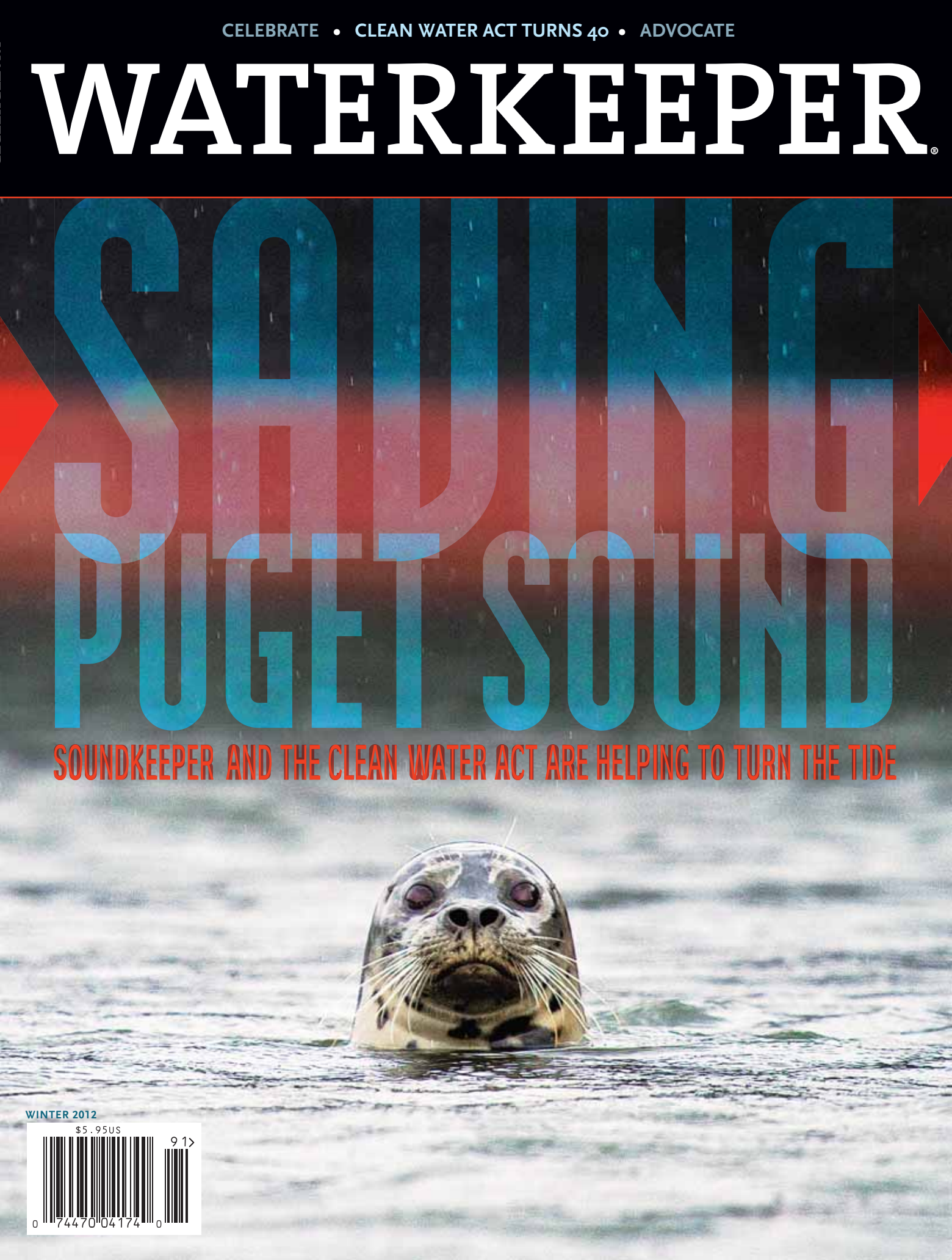

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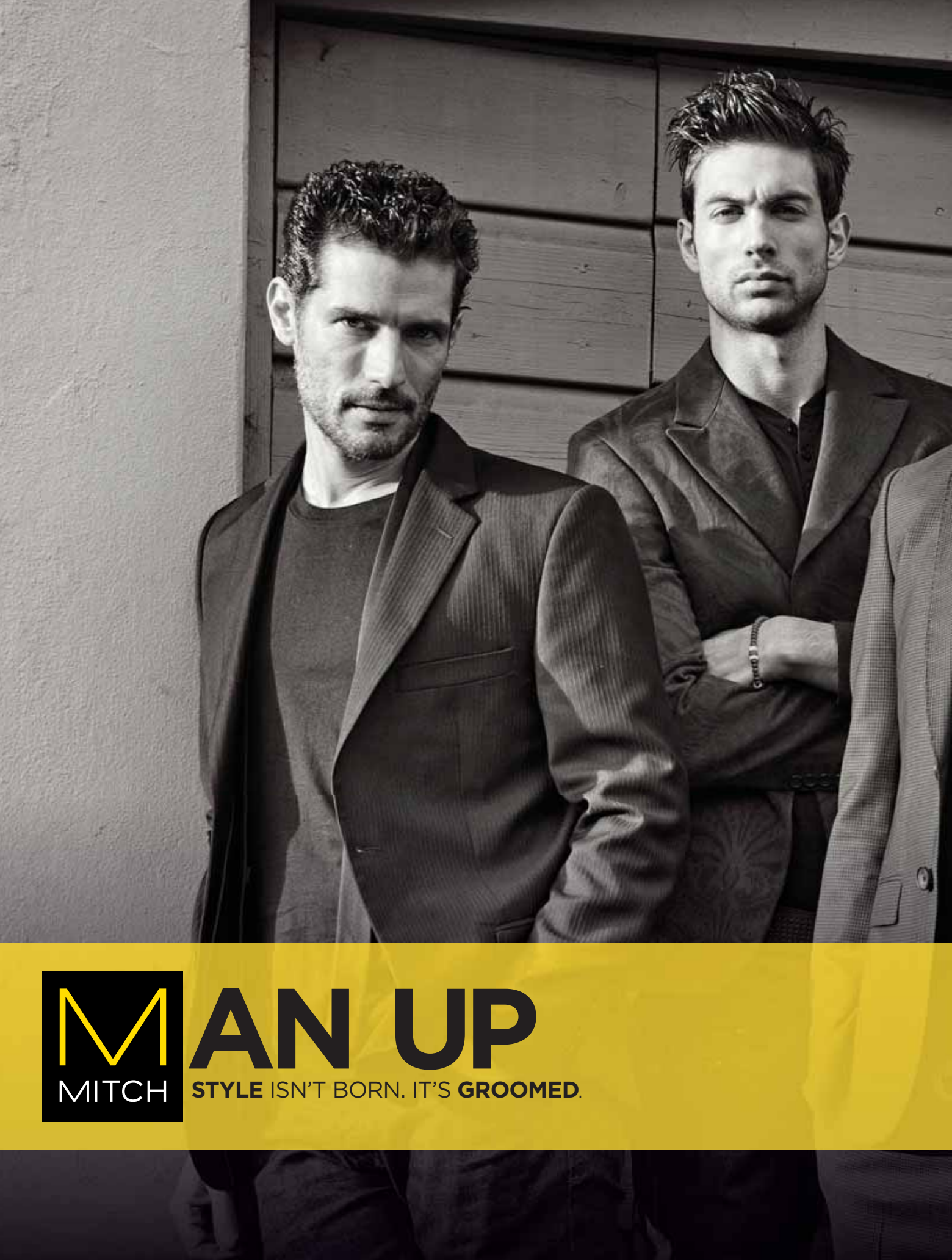

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Volume 8, Number 1, Winter 2012

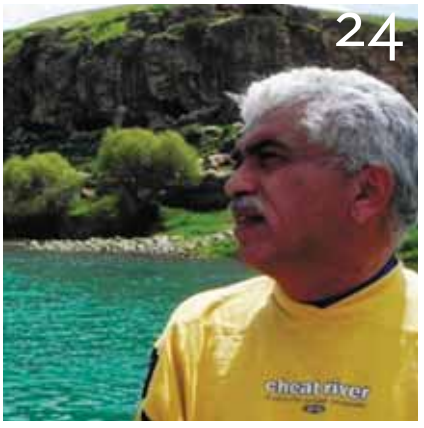

PHOTO: TOM REESE

PUGET SOUNDKEEPER CHRIS WILKE STRUGGLES WITH A PIECE OF DEBRIS DURING A CLEANUP OF THE DUWAMISH RIVER, WHICH EMPTIES INTO PUGET SOUND.

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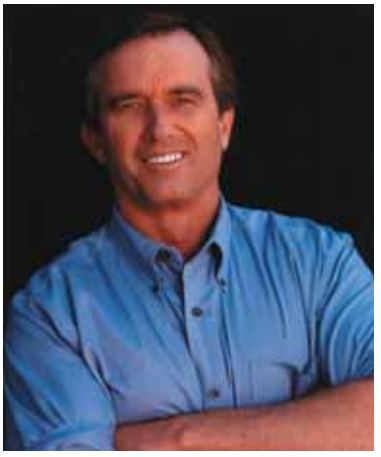


Clean Water Safeguards Headed Down the Drain?

THIRTY-NINE YEARS AGO, CONGRESS SIGNED INTO LAW A HISTORIC PIECE OF LEGISLATION THAT WOULD, FOR MORE THAN THREE DECADES, TURN THE TIDE OF OUR POLLUTED WATERWAYS AND HOLD BIG POLLUTERS ACCOUNTABLE FOR THEIR ACTIONS.

When the Clean Water Act was enacted, the Cuyahoga River was so polluted that it literally caught fire, the majestic Hudson River's fishery was gone, and Lake Erie was declared all but dead. This bold legislation put forward by visionaries in Congress returned control of our nation's waterways to the citizens of the United States as part of the public trust. However, today the concept of the public trust, the commons, is being quickly eroded by corporate polluters and their cronies in Congress who are determined to return to the era of using out nation's waterways as open sewers, toxic dumps, and landfills.

Despite the fact that the Clean Water Act has been responsible for providing millions of Americans with opportunities to swim, drink, and fish in clean water, every branch of our federal government - the legislative, executive, and judicial - have taken aim at the Act. The courts have worked to narrow the definition of "waters of the United States," the Bush Administration used its power to narrow that definition even further, and Congress made efforts to chip away at the Act. Even the states have joined the party, cutting clean-water enforcement budgets every time they face a fiscal challenge. Now, however, our Congress is launching the most aggressive, nefarious attacks on our right to clean water in the nation's history.

As the Clean Water Act moves into its 40th year, it faces a crisis not of its own doing, but one engineered by members of Congress who put the interests of the public aside to do the bidding of the corporate polluters who fill their campaign coffers. If their efforts succeed, they will cripple contemporary American democracy and undermine the most extraordinary body of environmental law in the world. We cannot allow that to happen.

For the past several months, a myriad of bills before the U.S. House of Representatives either have been laden with extraneous amendments and anti-environmental "riders" that seek to dismantle our environmental protections piecemeal or, in the case of one of these bills, the cynically named "Clean Water Cooperative Federalism Act of 2011 (H.R. 2018J," seeks to take a sledgehammer to the very foundation of the Clean Water Act, which has become a global model for water protection.

Seeking to strip the federal government's authority to regulate water quality standards and weaken the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's power to enforce the law when states fail to protect waterways, this approach will start a race to the bottom, as shortsighted and self-interested state politicians dismantle their clean water laws in payback to their supporters, including the nation's worst polluters.

These bills, amendments, and budget riders propose to gut the Clean Water Act and jeopardize the environmental health of our waterways and the lifeblood of our communities across the country, all without public debate. We must take action. This Congress must face the same public backlash that the 104th Congress faced when it took aggressive action to despoil the waters we use for swimming, drinking, and fishing.

Waterkeeper Alliance and our partners will work every day to remind Americans, and the world, that we have indeed come a long way from 1969, when the Cuyahoga River was burning. But we still have a long way to go to protect all of our waterways. Congress' 1972 goal was to have eliminated all discharges of pollutants into the nation's navigable waters by 1985. Almost two decades later, in 2002, the EPA mournfully acknowledged that water quality in many parts of the country was in steady decline.

Waterkeeper Alliance is officially launching its Clean Water Act (CWA) 40 Campaign to celebrate, activate, and advocate for the Clean Water Act during the 40th anniversary of this landmark legislation. Throughout 2012, Waterkeeper Alliance will be working with partners to engage communities across the nation to stand up for their basic right to swimmable, drinkable, and fishable water. We will not stand for any attacks on our communities that undermine the clean water protections that our streams, rivers, lakes and estuaries have been afforded over the past 40 years.

WATERKEEPER ALLIANCE LAUNCHES SPLASH EVENT SERIES

On October 1st, the inaugural event in Waterkeeper Alliance's SPLASH Series of 2011 took place in Hackensack, New Jersey, as about 75 paddlers launched kayaks and canoes into the Hackensack River. The Hackensack River Paddle was a non-competitive four-mile paddle from River Barge Park in Carlstadt, to Laurel Hill County Park in Secaucus.

Robert F. Kennedy, Jr., the president of Waterkeeper Alliance, was there to kick off the series, which is designed to raise money and awareness for clean water. "Today," he said, "we're trying to reconnect people to the Hackensack River and the Meadowlands."

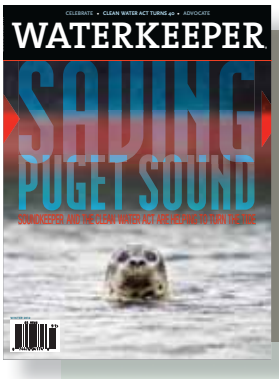
Kennedy praised the work of Hackensack Riverkeeper Bill Sheehan, who was an advocate for the river long before he took the organization's helm in 1997. "Bill was the first guy to stand up and say this is one of the most important resources in North America," Kennedy said of the 45-mile river, which runs through northern New Jersey, and the Meadowlands, which is at the river's mouth.

"The river is still not there," Sheehan said, "but it's getting better. There's still plenty of work to be done to get this river in shape." More than 60 species of marine life use the river as well as 265 species of birds, according to Sheehan.

"As the ecosystem becomes healthier, this is a great thing," Sheehan said. "We're working to make the river healthy enough so people can enjoy it."

He pointed out that the Clean Water Act will be 40 years old in 2012. "When the legislation passed in 1972," Sheehan said, "it was a promise to the American people that the nation's waterways would be drinkable, swimmable and fishable. We're committed to keeping that promise."

Each of the events scheduled for the 2011-2012 Splash series is designed to suit the interests of the local community, and features post-event festivities the whole community can enjoy. A broad range of water-based activities—swimming, paddling, boating and fishing—is being offered, and supporters are encouraged to participate either as individuals or in a team. SPLASH events will take place in Charleston, S.C., Santa Monica, Calif., Miami, FL., and Washington, D.C.



ON THE COVER:

A harbor seal in Puget Sound, one of a group that favors Elliott Bay where they have their pups annually in sight of downtown Seattle.

Photographer: Tom Reese

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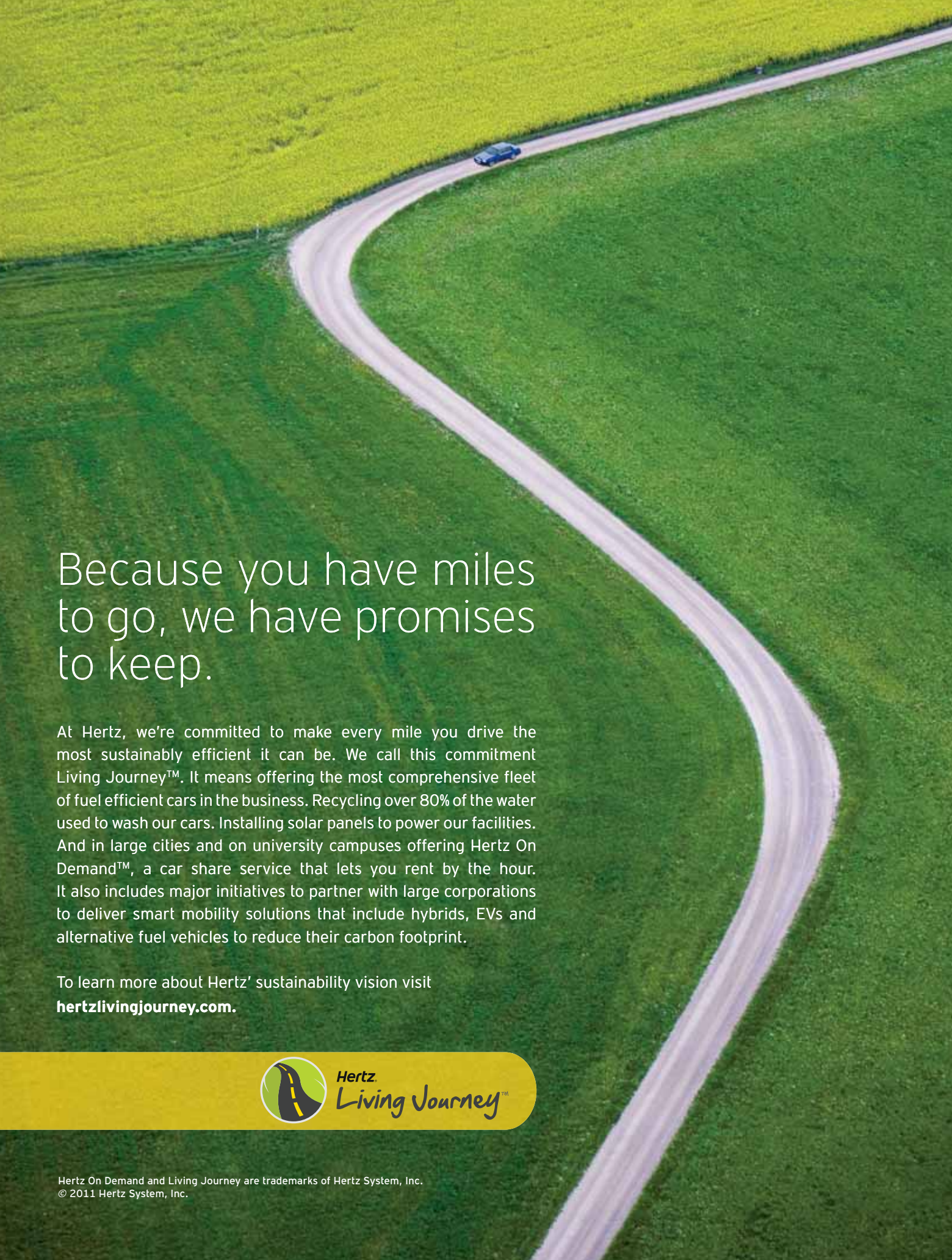

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Photo: Rick Dove

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PHOTO BY NELSON BROOKE, BLACK WARRIOR RIVERKEEPER.

AFTER A BIG RAIN, KAYAKERS ENJOY SURFING A RAPID KNOWN AS 5-0 ON THE BLACK WARRIOR RIVER'S MULBERRY FORK.

Black Warrior River Named One of America's Most Endangered

Pollution caused by coal mining near Alabama's Black Warrior River has landed the river on the list of America's Most Endangered Rivers – which is compiled each year by the conservation group American Rivers.

The Black Warrior River and its tributaries are a major source of drinking water for Birmingham and surrounding communities. The headwaters of the Black Warrior River include the federally designated Wild and Scenic Sipsey Fork, which, along with the river's Mulberry and Locust Forks, is rated among the top two percent of United States streams by the National Park Service. The river, known for fishing, boating, commercial navigation, recreation and wildlife, also runs through the Warrior Coal Field where most of Alabama's coal reserves are found.

For many years, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) has allowed the majority of the Black Warrior River watershed's approximately 95 active coal mines to operate under a general permit known as Nationwide Permit (NWP) 21. NWP 21 does not take local wetland and stream conditions into account, study the possible impacts of the mines or provide for public input. This situation contrasts with the process in other Appalachian states, where the Corps last year suspended the use of NWP 21 to require more careful consideration of a mine's impacts on water resources and the environment.

"The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has wisely closed this dangerous mining loophole across the Appalachian coal mining region – except for Alabama," said Gerrit Jobsis, American Rivers' Southeast Regional Director. "It's time to give Alabama's people, water and wildlife the protection they deserve."

Eva Dillard, staff attorney for Black Warrior Riverkeeper, agrees: "Under NWP 21, the Corps has allowed numerous mines to operate in our watershed with no consideration of their cumulative impacts on water quality or the environment. With NWP 21 up for possible renewal in 2012, now is the time to tell the Corps to end the use of this rubber stamp in Alabama."

"Our wetlands and headwater tributary streams are critical conveyors of clean water, controllers of runoff and flooding, and providers of fish and wildlife habitat," said Black Warrior Riverkeeper Nelson Brooke. "Their loss under NWP 21 hurts the river, local communities, fishermen and sportsmen, and ultimately the state."

Black Warrior Riverkeeper and American Rivers are calling on the Corps to discontinue the use of NWP 21 and to include Alabama in all protective guidance and regulations that apply to Appalachian region mining. Ending the use of NWP 21 in Alabama would force the Corps to consider the cumulative impact of mines on the Black Warrior River and allow local people to voice their concerns.

The two groups also called on the Alabama Department of Environmental Management and Alabama Surface Mining Commission to strengthen coal mining permits and enforcement efforts. Additionally, these agencies should collaborate with the Corps to address the cumulative effects of mining on the river.

"The Black Warrior River and its tributaries are a major source of drinking water for Birmingham and surrounding communities."

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SweetWater Brews a Beer in Honor of Waterkeepers

SweetWater Brewing announced a new limited brew recently – Waterkeeper Hefeweizen Ale. The beer, a wheat ale, is part of SweetWater's campaign to help watersheds across the Southeast.

Beginning almost a decade ago, SweetWater Brewing, a brewery in Atlanta, Georgia, began working with Upper Chattahoochee Riverkeeper to help them in their mission of protecting the Chattahoochee River, which provides clean water for millions of people in the Southeastern U.S. (including the SweetWater brewery).

What began as donating cases of SweetWater for fundraisers and post river clean-ups turned into the Save the Hooch Campaign, which has raised over $250,000 to date for Upper Chattahoochee Riverkeeper's mission.

The success of the campaign led SweetWater to other communities and their local Waterkeepers throughout the Southeast. SweetWater now has a Save the French Broad campaign for the French Broad River in North Carolina and Tennessee, a Save the Neuse for the Neuse River in North Carolina, a Save the Black Warrior for Alabama's Black Warrior River,and a Save the Gulf Coast along the Alabama and Florida Gulf Coast.

Waterkeeper Ale's distinctive ceramic bottle features a hand-drawn image of the Chattahoochee River and the story of how SweetWater got involved with Waterkeeper Alliance across the Southeast.

"We were looking for a way to jump to the next level in our mission to increase awareness of the work of Waterkeepers here in the Southeastern U. S. and across the world," explained SweetWater's co-founder Freddy Bensch. "Our Waterkeeper Ale not only raises awareness in the fight to protect our rivers, streams and coastlines, it magnifies the need for clean water, because without clean water we wouldn't be able to brew all this tasty beer!"

Waterkeeper Ale previewed at the Upper Chattahoochee Riverkeeper's annual River Revival in May. "The funds raised through our collaboration with Sweetwater help us fuel and maintain our patrol boat and monitor water quality in the Chattahoochee and her lakes," said Sally Bethea, UCR's founding director and Riverkeeper. "Since SweetWater's new Waterkeeper Hefeweizen Ale is made from Chattahoochee River water, nothing could be more important than ensuring our water supply is clean and plentiful!"

Nuking the Nolichucky: Suit Charges Damages

As the Nolichucky River snakes and tumbles out of the Blue Ridge Mountains in North Carolina, it is confronted by more than 100 miles of contamination, all the way to its confluence with the French Broad River in northwestern Tennessee. The French Broad Riverkeeper has claimed that the source of this pollution is Nuclear Fuel Services (NFS) in Erwin, Tennessee, which reprocesses nuclear weapons into nuclear fuel and consistently discharges nuclear waste from this conversion process into the Nolichucky, a drinking-water source for numerous communities along its banks and a major tributary of the French Broad River.

The rural communities along the Nolichucky have long complained about NFS's disregard for safety and environmental standards, and fretted about the health problems thought to be associated with the radioactive waste. Many believe that the river's polluted waters have been a cause of cancer in the area. But an environmental assessment by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission concluded that there was no significant impact from the plant, and this finding was used to justify NFS's unprecedented attempt to secure an additional 40-year license for the plant.

In 2010, however, samples obtained by the French Broad Riverkeeper, and analyzed pro bono by University of North Arizona Biochemistry Professor Michael Ketterer, documented widespread contamination of surface water, ground water, and air deposition throughout the watershed from highly enriched uranium and plutonium. These findings led some of the leading litigation firms in the country, based in Tennessee, South Carolina and New York, to initiate a class-action lawsuit in June against NFS and six other companies, charging gross negligence and seeking compensation for medical and death expenses, as well as other damages, to residents along the Nolichucky.

After years in which the communities' concerns have mounted and been ignored, impacted residents will finally have their day in court.

PHOTO BY FRENCH BROAD RIVERKEEPER.

FRENCH BROAD RIVERKEEPER HARTWELL CARSON TAKING WATER SAMPLES OUT OF THE NOLICHUCKY RIVER. TESTS HAVE ROUTINELY REVEALED WIDESPREAD CONTAMINATION FROM HIGHLY ENRICHED URANIUM AND PLUTONIUM.

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Ultimatum on Cleaning Up the Anacostia

A federal court ruled in July that the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the District of Columbia, and Maryland had failed to set pollution caps adequate to assure cleanup of the trash and assorted debris polluting the Anacostia River. Decrying years of delay and "deliberate indifference" to cleaning up the river, Judge Royce Lamberth of the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia set a one-year deadline for adopting caps adequate to make the river fit for recreational use and aesthetic enjoyment.

The ruling came in a suit brought by Earthjustice on behalf of the Anacostia Riverkeeper and Friends of the Earth. The suit argued that existing caps for sediment pollution in the Anacostia were too weak to clean up the trash that often mars the river's appearance.

"This is a big win for people who dream of a clear and beautiful Anacostia River," said Earthjustice attorney Jennifer Chavez. "The Court ruled that pollution caps need to make the river clean enough for enjoyment by people who walk along its shores and boat its waters. The EPA, the District, and Maryland will now have to address head on the visible filth that mars the Anacostia for much of the year."

The Court rejected EPA's argument that the pollution caps only needed to be strong enough to protect the growth of submerged vegetation, holding that the Clean Water Act also required protection of the river's recreational and aesthetic values. The Court said that it "will not countenance" the failure by the EPA, the District, and Maryland to provide all the required protections.

"We must improve the river for aquatic and human life," said former Anacostia Riverkeeper Dottie Yunger. "While the Anacostia has recovering wildlife, it remains extremely unsafe for fishing and swimming. This is unacceptable anywhere, but a travesty here in the backyard of the nation's capital."

The sediment pollution caps at issue were adopted in 2007, only after years of litigation by Earthjustice to force their issuance. As the Court noted, "the District and EPA spent 20 years ignoring [their] obligations and fighting attempts to compel them to act."

The sediment caps, called "total maximum daily loads" or "TMDLs," are required to set a daily limit on the amount of sediment allowed in the river. Once these caps are in place, the District and Maryland have to require pollution controls adequate to ensure the caps are met.

More than 5 billion gallons of stormwater and sewage pollution drain into the Anacostia River each year, carrying with it the trash, silt, and chemical residue from the river's 176-square mile watershed. Efforts to clean up this pollution have been slow and half-hearted, Anacostia Riverkeeper and Earthjustice contend.

PHOTO BY PHILIP YUNGER

AFTER A RECENT RAIN STORM AT BLADENSBURG WATERFRONT PARK ON THE ANACOSTIA, SEDIMENT AND TRASH WASHED INTO THE RIVER. PEOPLE KAYAK, ROW, AND FISH OUT OF THE PARK, AND TAKE PONTOON BOAT TRIPS.

"This is a big win for people who dream of a clear and beautiful Anacostia River."

PHOTO BY TIM CONNOR

PHOTO OF MIKE CHAPPELL

A Painful Loss: Mike Chappell,

Gonzaga University Attorney, Dear Companion and Great Waterkeeper

The Waterkeeper Alliance family lost one of its most devoted members on September 11, 2011, when Mike Chappell, director of Gonzaga University's Environmental Law Clinic, suddenly passed away in Spokane, Washington. Mike was 44 years-old and leaves behind a wife and two young children, as well as a community still reeling from his untimely death.

Mike moved to Spokane in 2008 from San Francisco where he had been an attorney at Lawyers for Clean Water, a public-interest firm that specializes in providing assistance to Waterkeepers in California. In Spokane, while making his pitch to Gonzaga to start an environmental-law clinic, Mike worked with Rick Eichstaedt, an attorney for the Center for Justice, and other community leaders on an application to Waterkeeper Alliance to form the Spokane Riverkeeper. The two proposals were accepted within days of each other and quickly led to a potent working relationship between the clinic and the new Spokane Riverkeeeper.

As director of the clinic, Mike represented the Spokane Riverkeeper and Lake Pend Oreille Waterkeeper, while constantly collaborating with other Waterkeepers throughout the region. Mike had a keen legal mind but his remarkable success as a collaborator and negotiator may have owed more to his formidable presence and interpersonal skills. He held strong opinions and convictions but presented them in ways that were disarming because he knew how to connect to people. His decency and charisma made him a popular companion at the annual Waterkeeper Alliance Conference, where he greatly enjoyed being in the mix. There was no one who put more time and effort into the late-night bonding that takes place at the conference.

From the day that I became the Spokane Riverkeeper in 2010, Mike was my biggest supporter, ally, advisor and friend. There was no one I'd rather have sitting next to me at a hearing or a meeting, or out on the River -- or at the bar.

The loss of Mike has been felt hard in the Waterkeeper family. Seldom does someone with so much passion, intelligence and creativity touch our lives and spark our own passions for clean water and healthy communities. I know that as long as I'm a voice for clean water, Mike will be my conscience. His contribution to our collective efforts is best described by Lake Ontario Waterkeeper Mark Mattson: "He made all our victories sweeter, our losses understandable and our plans for the future ingenious."

– Bart Mihailovich

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PHOTO BY CHRISTINE RICKER

YADKIN RIVERKEEPER DEAN NAUJOKS HAS BEEN ON THE JOB IN THE YADKIN PEE DEE RIVER BASIN SINCE 2008.

Yadkin Riverkeeper Wins Governor's Water Conservationist of the Year Award

Yadkin Riverkeeper, Winston-Salem, N.C., received the Water Conservationist of the Year Award at the 2010 Governor's Conservation Achievement Awards program on August 27 at the Hilton Hotel in Durham, N.C.

Sponsored by the North Carolina Wildlife Federation and the National Wildlife Federation, this award highlights individuals and organizations that have exemplified conservation activism across North Carolina. Yadkin Riverkeeper creates education, advocacy and action programs to protect and improve the Yadkin Pee Dee River Basin.

Much of the organization's work in 2010 focused on fighting Alcoa and other polluters of the river's waters. Yadkin Riverkeeper and Stanley County won an unprecedented legal victory to revoke Alcoa's 50-year relicensing agreement to operate four hydroelectric dams along a 38-mile stretch of the Yadkin River. The organization continues to work with state legislators to investigate Alcoa's long-standing misrepresentations relative to environmental permits and the company's known PCB and cyanide contamination in Badin Lake. During the year, Yadkin Riverkeeper advocated for legislation to provide greater oversight of cleanup efforts, criminal prosecution of anyone who falsifies information when filing for water-quality certification, and the imposition of a franchise or privilege tax on unregulated utilities.

"Thankfully, we have been very successful in building bipartisan support for our efforts to ensure this river will be clean, healthy and vital for many years to come," said Dean Naujoks, the Yadkin Riverkeeper. "We have a lot of work ahead; and we're so glad to have found so many new supporters this past year."

Annually, Yadkin Riverkeeper offers many opportunities for people to learn about the river and experience its beauty. This past April, the Tour de Yadkin attracted a record number of paddlers who took to their kayaks and helped Naujoks complete the 185-mile paddle of North Carolina's second longest river. The month-long journey is paddled annually to showcase the beauty of this national treasure and educate about environmental preservation issues that affect the river.

Georgia Court Rules for Clean Water for the Chattahoochee

In a precedent-setting decision, an Administrative Law Judge ruled in favor of Upper Chattahoochee Riverkeeper, finding that a wastewater discharge permit issued for the Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area would unnecessarily degrade water quality. Upper Chattahoochee Riverkeeper appealed the permit, which was issued by the Georgia Environmental Protection Division (EPD) to Forsyth County. The permit would have allowed six million gallons of treated sewage with high levels of phosphorous and fecal coliform bacteria into the primary drinking water source for more than 3.5 million people.

Judge Kristin Miller, of the Office of State Administrative Hearings, found, after a technical and economic analysis of alternative levels of treatments, that the County can treat its wastewater and discharge significantly less pollution at minimal additional cost. Thus, the permit issued by EPD violated state and federal water-quality laws that prohibit the lowering of water quality unless it is necessary for important social or economic development.

The permit, issued to Forsyth County in August 2010, allowed discharges of fecal coliform bacteria and phosphorous as much as 100 times higher than in other recently issued permits in the watershed. Fecal coliform bacteria indicate the presence of contamination from human or animal waste. As a result, microbiological organisms such as pathogenic bacteria and viruses can cause illnesses in humans. Phosphorous is a nutrient that, when discharged in wastewater into a water body, can cause, among other problems, algal blooms and the reduction of oxygen needed to support fish and aquatic organisms. Increased phosphorous, therefore, would threaten the important trout fishery in the Chattahoochee-the southernmost reproductive trout fishery in the United States. In her decision, Judge Miller called the river "an important economic, recreational, and environmental resource for the state of Georgia and metropolitan Atlanta in particular."

Upper Chattahoochee Riverkeeper was represented by Andy Thompson and Steve O'Day, attorneys with Smith, Gambrell, and Russell, LLP. Thompson described Judge Miller's decision as "thorough, well-reasoned and detailed," and one in which she recognized "that the Fowler/Shakerag permit violated the clear language of the state and federal antidegradation rules."

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PHOTOS BY D. JOSEPH MILLS

PATUXENT RIVERKEEPER FRED TUTMAN (LEFT) EMCEED THE EVENT AND LATER JOINED OTHER WATERKEEPERS AND STAFF AND BOOSTERS FROM THE CHESAPEAKE REGION TO LET LEGISLATORS KNOW THEY MEANT BUSINESS.

Waterkeepers Demand Action From Maryland Legislators

In late May, a flotilla of small craft landed at the City Dock in Annapolis, Maryland's state capitol, bringing with them citizen groups demanding that Maryland state legislators deliver leadership, action and results on the cleanup of the state's major rivers and coasts, and Chesapeake Bay.

Eighteen affiliated Chesapeake Waterkeeper groups, made up of concerned citizens, including farmers, watermen, business owners and families from throughout the Chesapeake Bay region, charged that the state legislature had deferred critical environmental work and failed to address the state's mounting water pollution problems.

"At a time when the need for environmental leadership has never been greater, Marylanders were forced to suffer through a 'do-nothing' state legislature," said Fred Tutman, the Patuxent Riverkeeper. "All of us have a responsibility not to let history repeat itself."

The flotilla arrived at City Dock to insist that lawmakers make good on campaign promises to clean up the area's waterways. Concerned Marylanders joined the Waterkeepers at the event, demanding that elected leaders act during the next session. The flotilla was made up of Waterkeepers and their boats, a symbol of the ever-vigilant presence that Waterkeepers provide throughout their individual watersheds.

"With the clock ticking and water quality rapidly declining, the lost economic value, jobs and quality of life present real suffering for people and communities," said Kathy Phillips, Assateague Coastkeeper.

"Waterkeepers and the people of Maryland whom we represent decry our state legislature's failure to live up to promises made by its constituent lawmakers," said Drew Koslow, the Choptank Riverkeeper. "Maryland sets the tone for Chesapeake Bay cleanup, and so Maryland's inaction calls into serious question the credibility and sincerity of our elected officials, particularly because it will now be much more difficult for Maryland to meet the Bay Pollution standards set by EPA for the Bay States."

The protesters were concerned in particular with the Chesapeake Bay, which is in precipitous decline, with increasing dead zones. Few if any of the rivers and creeks draining into the bay have managed to achieve a scorecard grade that rises above a "D" from the University of Maryland Center for Environmental Studies. The Maryland Coastal Bays Program, an EPA National Estuary Program, has not been able to issue a grade above "C+" for the Coastal Bays on the Eastern Shore. The Legislature is tasked with passing laws that curb pollution from sources such as pesticides, agricultural runoff, including arsenic in chicken manure, natural gas fracking, plastic bags, problems associated with overdevelopment, and the increasing problem of stormwater runoff.

One of the most important bodies of water in the United States from the standpoint of economics and diversity of marine life, Chesapeake Bay has a heavy concentration of Waterkeepers, most of whom patrol a tributary that drains into the bay. The local Waterkeeper movement includes people working in Maryland, Delaware, Virginia, West Virginia, Pennsylvania and the District of Columbia, and has emerged as the eyes, ears and voice of waterways and communities that are struggling to turn the tide.

Watershed Center Awarded $2.2 Million for Great Lakes Restoration

The Watershed Center Grand Traverse Bay, the parent organization of Grand Traverse Baykeeper John Nelson, has been awarded three grants totaling $2.2 million in Great Lakes Restoration Initiative funding from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Two of the grants will install stormwater filtration measures to decrease bacterial contamination at local beaches and clean up stormwater pollution in Grand Traverse Bay. The third will help manage sediment on the Boardman River as two large dams are being removed.

"This is big news for The Watershed Center and Grand Traverse Baykeeper," said John Nelson. "These are the largest grants we've ever been awarded!"

More than 95 percent of this funding will be invested in projects in local communities. "These are critically needed funds," said Andy Knott, executive director of the Watershed Center. "Grand Traverse Bay and its 1,000 square-mile watershed are the foundation of our region's economy and our Up North quality of life."

The Suttons Bay project involves working with the Village of Suttons Bay to install three runoff drain systems using green infrastructure techniques. "By managing runoff from the three largest storm drains in Suttons Bay, we hope to drastically decrease public health risks at local beaches associated with runoff," said Sarah U'Ren, program director for the Watershed Center.

The Traverse City project involves working with the City of Traverse City to install a runoff filtering system at East Bay Park to reduce bacterial contamination at the beach.

The Boardman Dams project will manage sediment to protect aquatic habitat during removal of Brown Bridge and Sabin dams. Removing the two dams, part of a larger project that involves removing a third dam and modifying a fourth, will restore 184 acres of wetlands and 32 acres of upland habitat .

All three grant applications cited community collaborations as important factors for these projects. "More than 12,000 citizens crafted the Grand Vision, which includes protecting our magnificent natural resources as a guiding principle," said Knott.

In Montana, No "Rigged" Arrangement with ExxonMobil

There's a new entry on the list of famous upsets: David Slays Goliath; Jack Topples Giant; Red Sox Sweep Yanks. And now: Little Guys Beat Big Oil.

Beginning in 2008, ExxonMobil and officials from Montana and Idaho secretly planned the shipment of over 200 massive truckloads of oil-field processing equipment along some of the country's most scenic roads on their way to Alberta's tar-sands project. Each "Big Rig" assigned to travel these winding, narrow roads would be larger than the Statue of Liberty – 220-feet long, 28-feet high, 26-feet wide, and weighing 330 tons. The planned route included National Scenic Highway 12 along Idaho's Lochsa River and Montana's equally beautiful Highway 200 along the Big Blackfoot River.

The public first became aware of the agreement late last year when crews inexplicably began installing ultra-tall poles at hundreds of power-line crossings along these highways.

At that point Montana's Department of Transportation (MDOT) fast-tracked the issuance of permits for these trucks, based on an environmental assessment produced by Exxon that, not surprisingly, found no environmental risks in the project. Despite MDOT's public-comment website's crashing and being disabled for over a week when it was swamped by the public's enormous uproar, MDOT Director Jim Lynch refused to extend the public review process beyond 30 days. He then announced that approximately 8,000 citizen-protest letters that had been presented in a form suggested by Natural Resources Defense Council would only count as a single protest.

The deck was clearly stacked and final approval seemed inevitable. Still, a number of local environmental groups, including Big Blackfoot Riverkeeper, rallied together and convinced Missoula County, which lies in the middle of the proposed route, to lead a lawsuit against MDOT for its hastened, sloppy review process.

Timing was crucial. The suit was filed on April 11, 2011, as the first mega-load was creeping up Idaho's Lochsa valley, just a few miles from the Montana border on the top of Lolo Pass. A temporary restraining-order halted that load, and on July 19th, what had seemed an impossible dream began to be realized when the court issued a preliminary injunction against MDOT and ExxonMobil, determining that the state had failed to consider seriously the environmental impacts of the project.

Recognizing the long delays and formidable costs it faced in continuing the fight, ExxonMobil announced plans in early August to reconfigure the loads into smaller units that could travel on interstate highways. A further vindication for the plaintiffs came one week later when Montana Governor Brian Schweitzer demanded MDOT Director Lynch's resignation.

Meanwhile, high up on Lolo Pass, that first mega-load has sat quietly on a siding, the company being unable to secure a permit to move it in either direction. It has become Montanans' 220-foot long monument to the power of the people over Big Oil.

PHOTO BY MORGAN TERENCE

ABOVE: KLAMATH RIVERKEEPER ERICA TERENCE, PICTURED HERE, DOCUMENTS A DEWATERED CREEK THAT HAS BEEN FRAGMENTED INTO ISOLATED POOLS STRANDING JUVENILE SALMON.

PHOTO BY TOM WESELOH

PHOTO BY MORGAN TERENCE

TOP: ENDANGERED COHO SALMON HAVE SOME OF THE MOST SENSITIVE HABITAT NEEDS.
BOTTOM: SCORES OF JUVENILE COHO SALMON ARE SEEN STRANDED IN A SHRINKING POOL IN A DEWATERED TRIBUTARY OF THE SCOTT RIVER.

Judge Stands Up for Salmon

Klamath Riverkeeper and allies won a landmark ruling from a San Francisco Superior Court judge that a program allowing ranchers to divert water from the Shasta and Scott Rivers is illegal. The judge ruled that the program, run by the California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG), failed to adequately consider the harm to protected Coho salmon caused by diverting water for farm irrigation from both rivers to grow hay and water cattle. The two rivers, both tributaries of the Klamath River, often run dry in summer months due to the water diversion. Both support dwindling populations of state and federally protected Coho salmon.

Permits to divert river water were recently required after years of unregulated water diversions and the widespread loss or "incidental take" of endangered salmon.

Klamath Riverkeeper and its partners, which included the Pacific Coast Federation of Fisherman's Associations, the Quartz Valley Indian Reservation and the Sierra Club, challenged the permit program, alleging violations of the California Endangered Species Act and other laws. The Department of Fish and Game will now have to rework any new permit process to adequately account for the needs of the salmon.

"Fish and Game needs to take the court's ruling seriously and modify the permit program so enough water is left in the rivers for the salmon to survive," said Wendy Park, attorney for the public interest law firm Earthjustice, which represented the environmental groups. "We'll be watching the process all the way."

"Though the Department of Fish and Game claimed that the program would do some good things for fish habitat, CDFG undermined their own success from the beginning by ignoring the fact that water diversions are making the rivers go completely dry at some points in the year," said Klamath Riverkeeper Erica Terence. "The simple fact is that fish need water."

"This ruling tells the state and ranchers that band-aid solutions, such as installing fish screens and ladders on diversion ditches and dams or revegetating stream banks, are not an acceptable substitute for leaving water in the river," Terence continued.

In his decision, issued in late April, Judge Ernest Goldsmith found that the Department of Fish and Game's permits were based on an erroneous assumption that ongoing water diversions couldn't be restricted and would harm Coho salmon regardless of whether CDFG permitted the diversions or not.

"Despite DFG's good faith efforts and potential hardship to water users, the Court must uphold the legislature's mandate to preserve listed species and conduct environmental review of all foreseeable consequences," Judge Goldsmith wrote in his decision.

The court further ruled the permit program violated the California Endangered Species Act (CESA) because the Department of Fish and Game didn't quantify how many fish deaths the water diversions would cause, didn't show the sufficiency of mitigation measures to protect and restore Coho, and didn't seek public input on whether the program would further jeopardize the salmon.

"Such a permit program can do a lot of good for the salmon, if properly constructed," said Glenn Spain of the Pacific Coast Federation of Fisherman's Associations, whose members' fishing industry jobs are directly affected by salmon declines in these rivers. "But as the Court has now ruled, it cannot just be a rubber stamp given to the status quo. Business as usual leads only to salmon extinctions and more jobs lost in our industry."

In December of 2009, CDFG scientists reported that two out of three generations of Coho salmon in the Shasta River are "functionally extinct." Coho salmon have a three-year life cycle that results in three distinct generations of Coho in any given year. The only viable generation spawned in fall of 2010, and the resulting juvenile hatched and emerged from the gravels to face their odds this past spring. However, salmon populations are likely to rebound if adequate water is left in the rivers.

PHOTO BY BRIAN PASKO WITH OREGON CHAPTER OF THE SIERRA CLUB.

THE COLUMBIA RIVER GORGE NATIONAL SCENIC AREA. THE AREA'S AIR QUALITY IS HARMED BY POLLUTION FROM THE BOARDMAN COAL PLANT.

Columbia Riverkeeper Prevails in Closing Boardman Coal Plant

Northwest residents can look forward to cleaner air and water after a multi-year campaign and litigation by Columbia Riverkeeper and its conservation partners succeeded in shutting down Oregon's only coal-fired power plant. Under a binding consent decree, Portland General Electric's (PGE) Boardman plant will stop burning coal no later than 2020, reduce harmful sulfur dioxide pollution during the intervening years, and pay $2.5 million into a fund dedicated to environmental restoration and clean energy projects.

"This is a major victory for public health in communities along the Columbia River," said Brett VandenHeuvel, Columbia Riverkeeper's executive director. "Coal-fired power is a significant source of toxic mercury pollution. Children are particularly susceptible to serious neurological damage from eating mercury-contaminated fish. Ending coal-fired power in Oregon is an important step toward reducing toxics in Columbia River fish."

For decades, PGE operated the Boardman plant without any modern pollution controls. Today, the coal plant is Oregon's largest stationary source of haze-causing pollutants. It's also responsible for damaging air quality in the Columbia River Gorge, Hells Canyon and ten other protected areas in Oregon and Washington. Pollution from the plant has also been a major threat to human health. Studies have found that pollution from coal-fired power plants contributes to four of the five leading causes of death in the United States - heart disease, cancer, stroke and chronic lower respiratory diseases.

In 2008, Columbia Riverkeeper, Friends of the Columbia Gorge, Hells Canyon Preservation Council, Northwest Environmental Defense Center and the Sierra Club, with legal representation from the Pacific Environmental Advocacy Center, launched a campaign to clean up the Boardman plant. The July agreement successfully concludes that campaign and resolves a pending federal lawsuit.

In addition to obtaining a binding shut-down date and reducing sulfur dioxide limits now, the agreement requires PGE to pay $2.5 million into a fund managed by the Oregon Community Foundation that will provide:
$1 million for habitat protection and environmental restoration in the Columbia River Gorge; $625,000 for habitat protection and restoration in the Blue Mountains, Hells Canyon and Wallowa Mountains; $500,000 for local clean energy projects, such as solar panels on houses; and $375,000 for community-based efforts to reduce air pollution.

Columbia Riverkeeper and allies filed the lawsuit in federal court in 2008 after requests for pollution reductions and early closure of the plant were rejected by PGE. The case was strengthened when, after the lawsuit was filed, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency issued a Notice of Violation against PGE citing similar violations to those alleged in the lawsuit. "This outcome demonstrates that pollution control laws like the Clean Air Act provide tremendous benefits to public health and the environment," said Aubrey Baldwin, staff attorney at the Pacific Environmental Advocacy Center.

But the coal threat to the Pacific Northwest is far from over. Today, coal giants are seeking to export Wyoming and Montana coal to Asia through ports on the Columbia River and Puget Sound. Columbia Riverkeeper is challenging a proposal by Arch Coal and Ambre Energy for one of the world's largest coal export terminals – 60 million tons per year – in Longview, Washington. "This stunning proposal would increase strip mining, create a non-stop chain of dirty coal passing through our towns," said Columbia Riverkeeper VandenHeuvel. "We have a deep connection to the river and salmon, and don't want to trade that for a dirty coal town."

"The coal companies are desperate for new markets," said Matt Krogh, North Sound Baykeeper in Bellingham, Washington, where SSA Marine is proposing a coal export terminal. "Success stopping other coal projects has coal companies scrambling for new export facilities to get coal to Asia. We don't want all the diesel pollution, vessel traffic risks, train traffic, and water quality impacts that come with an 80-acre pile of dirty coal. Communities all up and down the west coast must be aware that this could be coming your way, too."

A PEA IN VAS OF IRAQ

WATERKEEPER HELPS SET UP PROGRAM WHERE SADDAM DESTROYED VITAL WETLANDS

STORY AND PHOTOS BY: PETE NICHOLS WESTERN REGIONAL DIRECTOR, WATERKEEPER ALLIANCE

In the fall of 2010, a sleepless night landed me in front of my computer, working as I listened to the radio. The BBC program I had turned to included a report on wetland restoration, which was so inspiring that I realized that I wasn't going back to sleep. What shook me completely awake was the location of the project: Iraq.

These wetlands on the banks of the Euphrates River in Nasriyah had been drained under Saddam Hussein's rule to create a military barrier, an undertaking that essentially wiped out one of the country's most biologically diverse and historically rich areas. Now, I heard, a native of that area named Azzam Alwash was not only working to re-establish the natural environment, but also promoting eco-tourism along the Tigris River. To me, he sounded like a Waterkeeper.

Environmentalism and eco-tourism in Iraq aren't things we generally hear about, and the uniqueness of Alwash's story convinced me to do something to encourage and support the effort. At the time, as Humboldt Baykeeper in Northern California and a member of the Waterkeeper Alliance board of directors, I felt this was a rare moment for connecting a person who could use some help and an organization that had the help to offer: Waterkeeper Alliance. So I tracked Alwash down on Facebook and began to discuss with him the possibility of establishing a Waterkeeper program in Iraq, which would be the first of its kind in the Middle East.

Working together, Waterkeeper members, Azzam and his very sophisticated staff at Nature Iraq developed the proposal for the Iraqi Upper Tigris River Waterkeeper. It was quickly approved, and its successful launch required only a site visit by a Waterkeeper board member to ascertain that the new program contained everything necessary to flourish. In April 2011, I made the trek to that war-torn country most Americans view as barren and dangerous.

Although Kurdistan in northern Iraq is relatively quite safe, I was a bit nervous as well as excited when I arrived there. But I found little anti-American sentiment and increasing tourism. I then became eager to see the parts of Iraq not usually shown on national news programs: the mountains and rivers, the "cradle of civilization" between the Tigris and Euphrates.

Iraq faces many significant and daunting issues: poor water-quality and infrastructure, lack of planning for a democracy emerging under the undoubted

CEFUL ION

AZZAM ALWASH STARTED IRAQ'S FIRST WATERKEEPER ORGANIZATION.

RIGHT AND CENTER RIGHT:

THE LESSER ZAB RIVER, A TRIBUTARY OF THE TIGRIS, IS STILL STRIKINGLY BEAUTIFUL IN MANY PLACES.

BUT LIKE MUCH OF IRAQ, YEARS OF WAR AND NEGLECT THREATEN ITS HEALTH, AS EVIDENCED BY THE SEWAGE OUTFALL, ABOVE, LEFT.
STILL, AZZAM, PICTURED HERE WITH PETE NICHOLS, HAS GREAT HOPE FOR THE RIVER'S REVIVAL.

PROTECTING AND RESTORING THE WATERS THAT IN LEGEND NURTURED THE GARDEN OF EDEN, THAT ENABLED THE RISE OF AGRICULTURE AND THE INVENTION OF THE WHEEL, AND FORMED THE ANCIENT BASE OF CIVILIZATION, IS A CHALLENGE IDEALLY SUITED FOR A WATERKEEPER.

influence of 'westernization'. Quantity of water is also a problem. The headwaters of both the Tigris and Euphrates are located in Turkey, which has invested heavily in dams to stem the flow of the rivers as they enter Iraq. These legendary waterways provide a perfect setting for a Waterkeeper program.

As do the wetlands where Saddam's destruction ruined thousands of people's lives, and where Azzam, Nature Iraq and Upper Tigris Waterkeeper Nabil Musa are relentlessly engaged in the job of restoration. They have seized the right moment to rebuild and protect this great natural resource, and the creation of Upper Tigris Waterkeeper couldn't be better timed.

Over the next 10 years, Iraqi citizens will have the chance to develop and frame environmental regulations, and the Upper Tigris Waterkeeper and Nature Iraq are in a position to establish an environmental voice early in their emerging democracy. Creating an advocacy program such as theirs will help ensure that environmentalists have a seat at the table when relevant laws and policies are developed.

I hope to return to Iraq soon to work further with Azzam and the Upper Tigris Waterkeeper staff. When I returned to the U.S., I helped to start a philanthropic vehicle, the Nature Iraq Foundation, to raise funds for environmental work throughout the region. The Foundation's mission is to tackle the many environmental issues that will inevitably face Iraq in the decades to come, including such critical steps as educating the Iraqi people about the value of clean water, arranging a 'water summit' with Turkey to discuss water-quantity issues, implementing water-conservation practices, and developing infrastructure to block the flow of pollutants, from raw sewage to toxics.

As I reflect on the adventurous and inspirational work of Azzam and his colleagues to reclaim nature from the awful legacy of a tyrant, I really believe that there is great hope for the environment of Iraq. I see great potential for additional Waterkeeper programs along the Euphrates and other rivers in Iraq –- and throughout the Middle East.

Protecting and restoring the waters that in legend nurtured the Garden of Eden, that enabled the rise of agriculture and the invention of the wheel, and formed the ancient base of civilization, is a challenge ideally suited for a Waterkeeper, and I am proud to help move that vision forward. W

GO JUMP IN A LAKE

BY KRYSTYN TULLY,
VICE-PRESIDENT,
LAKE ONTARIO WATERKEEPER

PHOTOS COURTESY OF LAKE ONTARIO WATERKEEPER

Like the staff at most Waterkeeper organizations, the staff at Lake Ontario Waterkeeper know a big part of our job is getting the residents of our watershed to understand that clean water is a right, not a privilege. To do that we first have to get people excited about their lake, river, coastline or bay.

So, seven years ago, a team of staff and volunteers at Lake Ontario Waterkeeper set out to answer the question,"Is it safe to swim in Lake Ontario?"

The first thing we discovered was that reliable facts and figures about beach water quality were hard to come by. So we started compiling our own.

For five years, we tracked which beaches were open and posted them on scraps of paper and clunky spreadsheets and generated an annual report for the Lake Ontario watershed. Each year we expanded our beach report to include more beaches in more parts of Southern Ontario and upstate New York.

It was interesting for us as researchers but it wasn't very helpful to beach-goers. What we really needed was some tool that would tell you where the beaches are and which ones are safe for swimming right now.

Two years ago, we decided to make that tool. First, we built a Swim Guide engine so that every day we could phone or visit the websites of scores of beach monitoring agencies and enter the information into our custom-built database.

Seven years and thousands of hours after we first posed the question of Lake Ontario being safe to swim in, we could finally crunch the numbers and answer: "Yes, usually."

Of course, answering that question was only step one. Our next challenge was figuring out how to give people easy-to-read beach quality information whenever they wanted it, wherever they wanted it.

That was no easy task. This summer, for example, we checked-in with about 70 different sources that monitor about 800 beaches every day. We recorded about 70,000 different points of data in the Swim Guide database. Then we converted that information into a format that meant something to potential beachgoers: here is where it is safe to swim, and this is how you get there.

The Swim Guide is a free application for your smartphone (and a website, too: theswimguide.org). This free app helps people find the closest beaches, know at a glance which ones are safe for swimming, and share their love of beaches with their friends.

This last part – sharing a love of beaches – is really important to us. We can't restore and protect the world's greatest beaches without you and your friends.

In the spirit of sharing, Lake Ontario Waterkeeper went and added all of the beaches on the Great Lakes to Swim Guide because we know that people who live near one Great Lake also love to visit parks and beaches in different watersheds.

We also invited other Waterkeeper organizations to join the Swim Guide team. Fraser Riverkeeper now tracks beaches in the Vancouver area. North Saskatchewan Riverkeeper tracks beaches in the Edmonton area. Biscayne Bay Waterkeeper does the same for beaches in the Miami area.

Swim Guide includes original descriptions and photographs of hundreds of beaches in Ontario, British Columbia, New York State, Ohio, Michigan, Wisconsin, Illinois, Minnesota, Alberta and the Miami area. "In a few years, we hope there's a Swim Guide in every major beach community in North America," says Mark Mattson, who heads Lake Ontario Waterkeeper, as he shows off the app.

It shows you where the beaches closest to you are, gives you real-time status updates, and lets you compare your local beach to other beaches in Canada and the United States. "We made the Swim Guide because safe recreational water contact is one of the hallmarks of an environmentally strong community," says Mattson. "Swimming is an important environmental, cultural, and economic issue - that's why every important environmental law in North America tries to protect beaches."

The Swim Guide is fun and easy to use, but the need for clean beaches is no light matter to Lake Ontario Waterkeeper or to the nearly 200 other Waterkeeper organizations around the world. Clean beaches are not luxuries. They satisfy some very basic, fundamental needs in our communities. Beaches provide a free, accessible respite for people on hot days. They provide gathering places for families and friends. They are immensely valuable natural assets for local economies.

Beaches are also excellent indicators of how our democratic institutions are holding up. If you cannot safely swim in your area, chances are that someone is breaking the rules. Chances are that bad decisions were made in the past, meaning good decisions need to be made in the future.

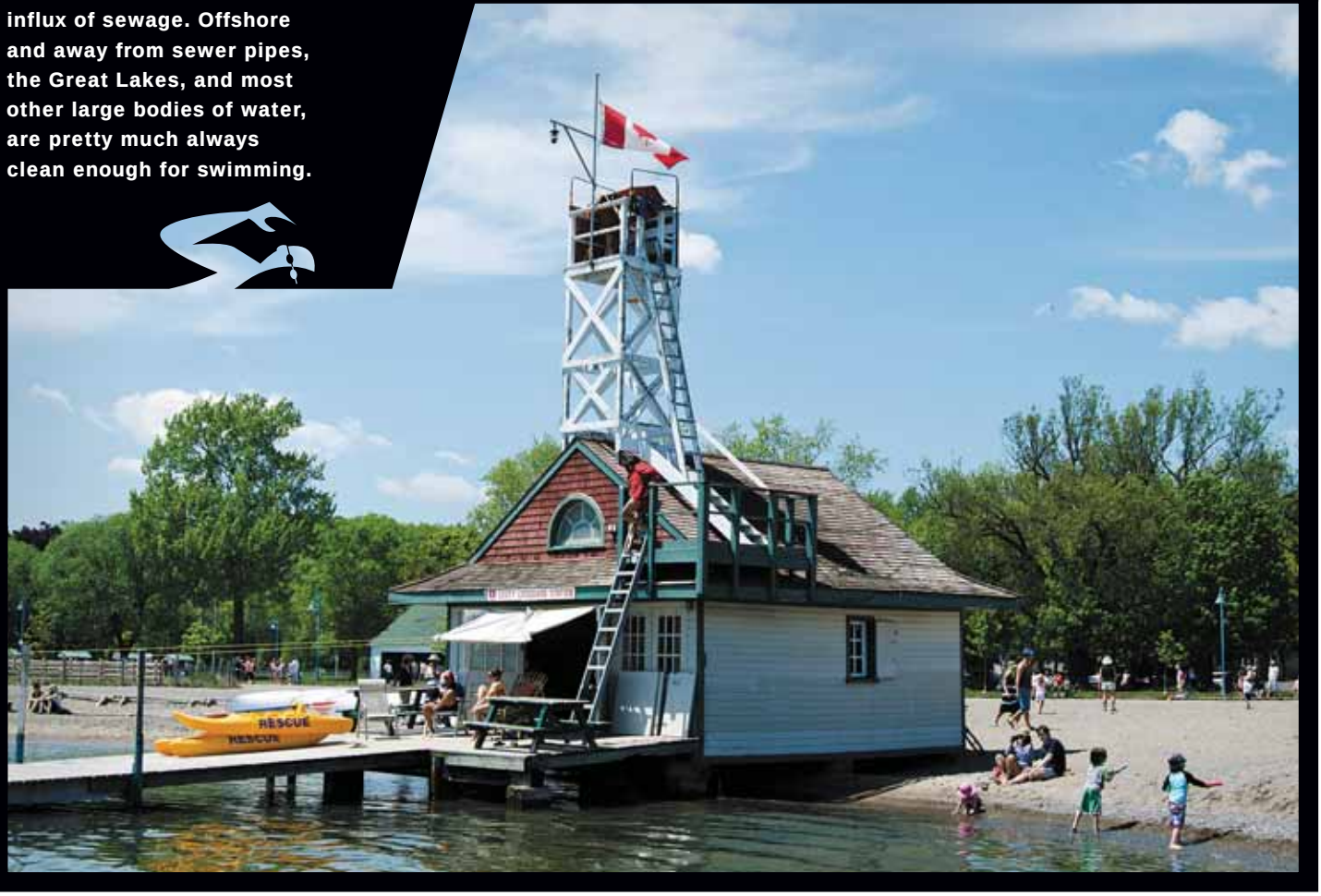
In its simplest form, a beach is a strip of shoreline accessible to the general public that facilitates access to a body of water which every one of us has the right to use and enjoy. When pollution claims a beach, it makes it unavailable to you for safe enjoyment, and your beach is lost. Taken away.

The Swim Guide helps to win back those lost beaches by highlighting the ones with chronic pollution problems and comparing one region to another. The Swim Guide also helps to protect and celebrate the clean beaches, the ones waiting for you next summer. W

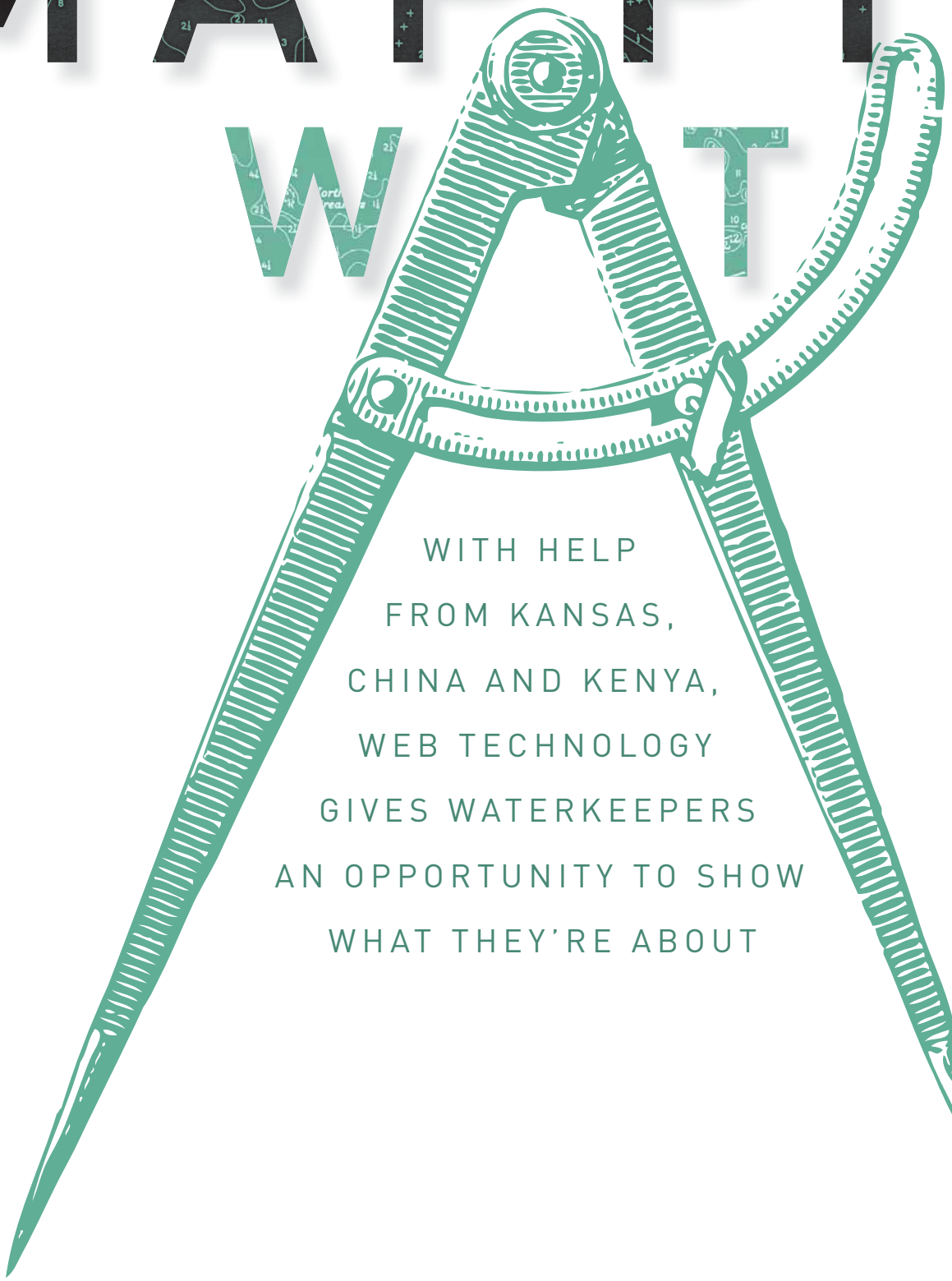
IN A FEW YEARS, WE HOPE THERE'S A SWIM GUIDE IN EVERY MAJOR BEACH COMMUNITY IN NORTH AMERICA.

When a beach is posted, it is usually because human or animal sewage is contaminating shoreline waters.

Bacteria lasts one or two days, so you will see chronic beach postings in areas where there is a constant influx of sewage. Offshore and away from sewer pipes, the Great Lakes, and most other large bodies of water, are pretty much always clean enough for swimming.



MAPPING WATER



WITH HELP FROM KANSAS, CHINA AND KENYA, WEB TECHNOLOGY GIVES WATERKEEPERS AN OPPORTUNITY TO SHOW WHAT THEY'RE ABOUT

AS KNOWLEDGEABLE REPRESENTATIVES OF PARTICULAR WATERBODIES, IN A TIME WHERE TECHNOLOGY ERASES MANY BOUNDARIES BOTH PHYSICAL AND MENTAL, WATERKEEPERS ACROSS THE WORLD ARE EMBRACING MAPPING TECHNOLOGY TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THEIR OWN WATERSHEDS.

NG THE ERS WE LOVE

BY: BART MIHAILOVICH, SPOKANE RIVERKEEPER

Although I've long been impressed with the Kansas Riverkeeper website, I was a little slow to get the message it was sending me. No other site throughout Waterkeeper Alliance features such a thorough array of map resources. But the question I didn't ask was, why not? In fact, why did many sites present no maps at all?

The light went on for me after Spokane Riverkeeper's technical advisor Ron Hall and I met, over Skype, in early 2011 with Kansas Riverkeeper Laura Calwell and Dr. Cynthia Annett, the Kansas program's science advisor. Annett told me that day of an informal study that she'd made of Waterkeeper websites. One night she stayed up till dawn visiting every site to determine how hard it was to find maps of the Waterkeepers' watersheds. To her surprise, and very much to my surprise as I heard this, very few members offered maps of their watersheds either on or within a click or two of their homepages. I thought, how could that be? Here we are – stewards of watersheds around the world, ever willing and able to speak for hours about them, yet generally failing to perform the simple act of showing the world where we are and what we represent.

So, naturally, I re-examined my Spokane Riverkeeper website, and realized it was one of the laggards. It was then and there I became a "citizen mapper."

Basically defined, a citizen mapper is someone who uses available information and technology to enhance current maps for the benefit of our environment and culture. An example would be to add markers to an existing Google map of a river to show the locations of outfall pipes that may be sources of pollution. Now the term has lent itself to "The Citizen Mapper Project," a pilot program created by the Spokane and Kansas Riverkeepers. Ron Hall, who is a certified Google Earth modeler and trainer, is the technical advisor for the project, which not only develops maps for Spokane Riverkeeper and advances the mapping program of Kansas Riverkeeper, but also educates about mapping technology. Our hope is that a template program can be developed for use by other Waterkeeper organizations, as well as other community groups and schools.

Kansas Riverkeeper's existing collection of maps provides a model and an inspiration for the new program.

"Maps have always been an important advocacy tool" says Riverkeeper Calwell, who has held that position since 2003, after serving as secretary and president of its parent organization, Friends of the Kaw – an alternate name for the Kansas. "Folks are more likely to take action if they know where a specific site or stretch of the river is being polluted or endangered."

She explains that, between 2003 and 2007, Friends of the Kaw paid thousands of dollars, mostly acquired from grants, to build interactive maps on its website that were intended for specific uses such as

OUR HOPE IS THAT A TEMPLATE PROGRAM CAN BE DEVELOPED FOR USE BY OTHER WATERKEEPER ORGANIZATIONS, AS WELL AS OTHER COMMUNITY GROUPS AND SCHOOLS.

"WATCHING PEOPLE USE AND CRITIQUE THE MAPS MADE ME AWARE THAT THEY CAN BE POWERFUL TOOLS FOR BOTH EDUCATION AND AWARENESS. THEY CAN TELL A STORY EVEN WHEN THE RIVERKEEPER IS NOT THERE TO EXPLAIN IT."

location of access ramps, in-river dredges and historical sites.
"Around 2007 we figured out how to use and tailor Google maps for our purposes for free – that was the 'aha' moment," says Calwell.

When they redesigned their website in 2010 they embedded many Google maps, and Dr. Annett figured out how to embed global-positioning-system photos into those maps, county by county. With the aid of Google's Picasa Album software for organizing photos, visitors were able to take virtual tours down the river.

In addition to the countless possibilities offered by Google Maps and Google Earth, a Waterkeeper organization further from Kansas than the Land of Oz has applied a newer product for data input and sharing that is designed to be very compatible with mobile technology and social networks. China's Qintang River Waterkeeper uses Crowdmap, developed by Nairobi-based Ushahidi Inc., to display citizen reports of pollution on their website maps. This effort is at an early stage, but has already attracted an impressive amount of citizen participation.

"I got praise from our local environmental bureau when I reported our observations to them," Quintang's Hao Xin reported via email in late August. "Also, mass media, including newspapers and television, have reported a lot on the efforts of our mapping platform, especially after [we were accepted into] the United Nations Environment Program's Eco-Peace Leadership Program during the summer."

Hao and the developer of the Crowdmap platform have also been recruited to be supervisors in the Zhejiang Provincial Environmental Protection Bureau.

Hao stressed the educational value of the Qintang program: "Citizens may not realize there are such large numbers of pollution sites around us. This disclosure will hopefully stimulate their interest to participate in water protection."

At the 2011 Waterkeeper Alliance Conference in Chicago, Ron Hall(via Skype once more), Cynthia Annett, Laura Calwell, Hao Xin, his associate, Chia-Rung Yang, and I addressed a packed room on the benefits of mapping our watersheds and the relative ease of doing so with current and developing free technology. The presenters suggested ways for those attending to get started in creating watershed maps ranging from the basic to the advanced.

Ron Hall, a lynchpin holding together this collective effort,

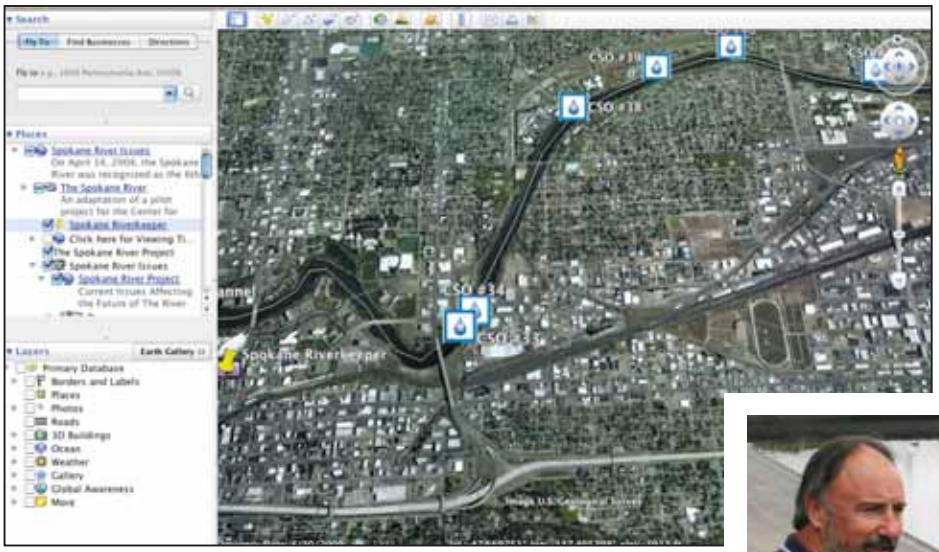


PHOTO: BART MIHAILOVICH

PHOTO: TIM CONNOR

ABOVE, A SCREENSHOT OF SPOKANE RIVERKEEPER'S GOOGLE EARTH PLUG-IN APPLICATION. **RIGHT**, RON HALL, GOOGLE EARTH AND MAPS CONSULTANT FOR SPOKANE RIVERKEEPER AND KANSAS RIVERKEEPER, MAPPING THE SPOKANE RIVER.

has worked with the Spokane Riverkeeper since its inception, and before that for the Spokane River Project of the Center for Justice. He has been advisor and mentor since my first day as Riverkeeper. When I arrived, he had begun his expert work, in collaboration with Tim Connor, the Center for Justice's Communications Director, and first Spokane Riverkeeper Rick Eichsteadt, to develop a Google Earth plug-in application to highlight the features of and threats to the Spokane River. It has become an extensive resource with hundreds of pieces of media, links, data and narrative.

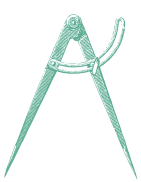
"Creating the maps has been a personal journey of education and awareness about the Spokane River, the issues surrounding its health and future, the people that love the river, and the public who need to know more about it," Ron says. "Watching people use and critique the maps had made me aware that they can be powerful tools for both education and awareness. They can tell a story even when the Riverkeeper is not there to explain it. "

Besides being a powerful educational and outreach tool, citizen mapping is a means of enforcement. And, as technology continues to evolve, applying it will continue to become easier. I'm often reminded by Ron Hall that Google Earth is the fifth most popular web-browser in the world, which tells us that if we want to place our information and reveal our vision where people are looking, we need to do so on Google Earth. The mapping world is where Waterkeepers need to be.

Invoking the proverb "a long journey begins with a single step," Ron offers a little advice to those hoping to get started: "Use GPS units to collect data in mass. Use Google Earth/Google Maps to generate maps on your desktop. Look for existing geographic-information-system data from government, corporate, non-profit and educational sources. Use Google Map Maker."

Laura Calwell recommends that Waterkeepers "look for a trustworthy, techie volunteer who enjoys and has the time to fiddle around with this type of technology. I really only have very basic skills when it comes to web sites but I have learned how to make and manipulate simple Google maps – if I can do it, almost anyone can."

That said, I'll add, speaking for all of the citizen mappers out there, that, although there is no substitute for viewing a river or lake or bay in person, we are fortunate to have a great alternative. I encourage all Waterkeepers and all citizens interested in clean water and healthy communities to use the available and improving technology to show the world what we care for and what needs to be done. W



BESIDES BEING A POWERFUL EDUCATIONAL AND OUTREACH TOOL, CITIZEN MAPPING IS A MEANS OF ENFORCEMENT AND, AS TECHNOLOGY CONTINUES TO EVOLVE, APPLYING IT WILL CONTINUE TO BECOME EASIER.

THE PEOPLE VS. GOL

RIGHT: MASSIVE PLUMES OF SMOKE RISE OUT OF THE GULF OF MEXICO FROM OPERATIONS TO COLLECT AND BURN SURFACE OIL AFTER THE DESTRUCTION OF THE DEEPWATER HORIZON OIL DRILLING RIG.

PHOTO: JOHN L. WATHEN

LATH

WHEN BP WANTS AN ECOLOGICAL DISASTER TO DISAPPEAR, IT'S HARD TO KEEP IT IN THE PUBLIC EYE.

BY RENEE BLANCHARD

PHOTOS: JOHN L. WATHEN

ABOVE, LEFT: TWO BOATS TOW AN OIL BOOM TO SKIM OIL FROM THE GULF OF MEXICO.
ABOVE,RIGHT: THE OIL SLICK FROM THE DISASTER SPREAD ACROSS THE GULF FOR HUNDREDS OF SQUARE MILES.

Wherever big polluters degrade America's environment – and it is still a common occurrence all across the country - they take similar steps to win the public's trust and limit their legal liability. They attempt to control the media's coverage of the damage that they have caused. They work to recreate the narrative of events in their favor, producing catchphrases and polished advertisements. And they waste precious time by creating divisions within the affected communities.

I have become all too familiar with these tactics. In the wake of the BP oil disaster in the Gulf of Mexico in April 2010, I returned to my home state, Louisiana. After watching the catastrophe from afar, I wanted to be part of the struggle to ensure full restoration. Since last spring, I have been based in New Orleans coordinating the efforts of seven Waterkeeper organizations located along the Gulf Coast. The seven groups came together as the Save Our Gulf Initiative to lead the fight to restore and protect local watersheds, coastal communities and the greater Gulf.

Since the drilling-rig Deepwater Horizon exploded and sank and began spewing millions of gallons of toxic crude oil into one of the country's most important fisheries, BP has consistently attempted to play down the disaster, focusing more of its financial resources on running a public relations-campaign than a recovery effort. And in fact, at this point, some 18 months since the drilling-rig exploded, BP has succeeded in making most of the country believe that all the oil they spilled in the Gulf of Mexico has disappeared and the disaster they caused wasn't nearly as damaging as it has been reported to be.

The truth is that the BP blowout last year led to the nation's worst oil spill and probably its worst environmental disaster. It will be years before we can fully assess the effects of releasing 250 million gallons of crude oil and 1.8 million gallons of dispersants into a major body of water. It was four years after the Exxon Valdez oil disaster in Alaska's Prince William Sound, for example, that herring stocks crashed.

BP is facing financial liability from three sources: Clean Water Act fines, the Oil Spill Claims Fund, and funding for Natural Resource Damage Assessment restoration projects. The Clean Water Act states that a company illegally discharging oil into a water body is required to pay either $1,100 or $1,400 per barrel, depending on the degree of negligence. The company's total fine, therefore, could exceed $6 billion. The Oil Spill Claims Fund is the vehicle set up by BP and the Obama Administration to compensate individuals and businesses harmed by the BP event. The Natural Resource Damage Assessment is a legal process through which the federal government collects scientific evidence and determines damage done to the ecosystem by the offending companies. Both parties (the federal government and BP) have hired scientists to assess the extent of ecosystem damage. But since their evidence will not be released to the public until the legal process is over, many citizen groups, journalists and scientific institutions not under contract have begun conducting their own environmental monitoring.

One example of citizen monitoring is the Save Our Gulf Initiative. Between August 2010 and June 2011, Gulf Coast Waterkeepers tested sediment, water samples and over 100 aquatic organisms for oil contamination and found significant levels of total petroleum hydrocarbons (TPH) and polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAH). TPH represent all detectable hydrocarbons that occur in crude oil, including PAH, a specific kind of hydrocarbon that can be dangerous to human health.

Downplaying ecosystem impacts is business as usual for the oil industry, but it played out on a larger scale in the

PHOTOS: JOHN L. WATHEN

ABOVE, LEFT: TOXIC OIL FROM THE BP SPILL MAKES LANDFALL IN A GULF COAST WETLAND.
ABOVE,RIGHT: A SHRIMP BOAT HEADS OUT TO SEA TO JOIN THE SKIMMING OPERATIONS.

BP oil disaster. In the summer of 2010, stories of BP's hiring security guards to prevent journalists and residents from taking photos and videos of oil washing ashore and clean-up workers without protective gear were commonplace, and similar reports are heard to this day. The media covered BP's response plan extensively in May and June of 2010 as the oil flowed out of the Macondo well, but coverage slowed afterward. Meanwhile, between April and July, BP, intending to shape the story of the disaster on its own terms, more than tripled the amount spent on public relations in the same period of the previous year, and it consistently minimized the amount of oil discharging into the Gulf of Mexico. This strategy created doubt in the minds of political leaders and the public about the true magnitude of the damage that the company had caused, and it masked the glaring mistakes in BP's response plan.

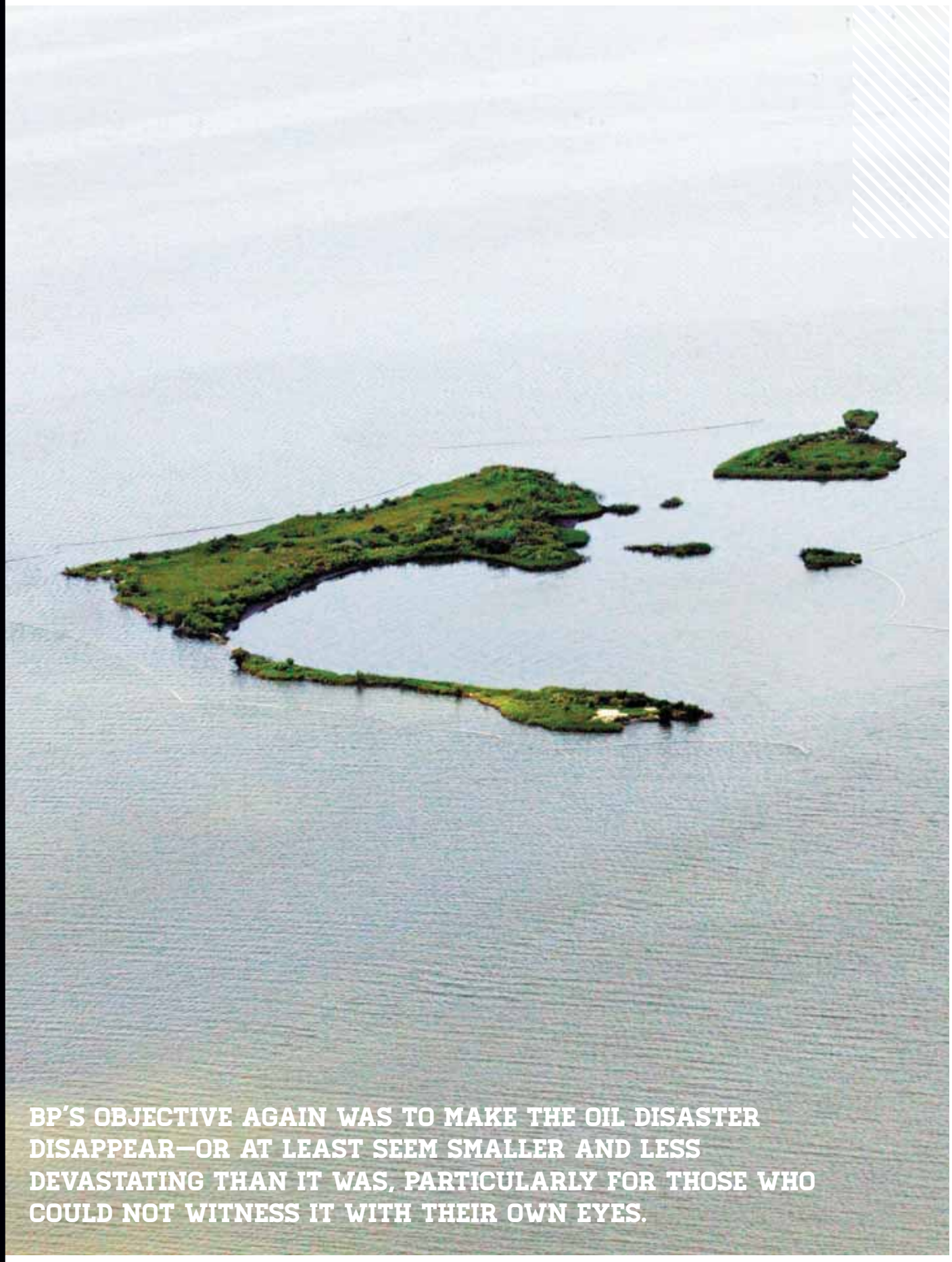
There is now little uncertainity about the missteps that led to the BP oil disaster or the company's lack of preparedness for a spill of that size. One ludicrous example was BP's identifying the walrus as a species that would potentially be impacted, although the walrus is an animal found no nearer to the Gulf than the coasts of Canada, Alaska or Greenland.

In June 2011, fourteen months after the explosion at the Deepwater Horizon, BP introduced a number of new safety measures, but a new blowout-preventer device was not among them. The blowout-preventer is the last technological barrier for preventing an oil-spill. Its importance is underlined by the fact that spills happen every day in the Gulf of Mexico. In fact, there were over 3,000 incidents of crude-oil discharge there between September 2010 and September 2011. Given BP's unpreparedness, residents on the frontlines, whose livelihoods depend on the health of these waters fear that it is just a matter of time before another oil spill of this size devastates the Gulf again. So citizen and environmental groups are attempting to spur the media to put additional pressure on the industry to fix the systemic problems that led to the BP disaster.

As a consequence of the Gulf catastrophe, there has been increased public scrutiny of response plans and environmental action at other locations. For example, in June 2011, the executive director of Greenpeace International, Kumi Naidoo, climbed onto a Cairn Energy arctic oil-rig, demanded to see its oil-spill-response plan, and was arrested by Greenland Coast Guard officials. Shortly afterwards Cairn Energy released its plan, which it had previously refused to reveal. But, like BP, the company's plan lacked information on how to deal effectively with an oil spill in the difficult conditions of deepwater drilling. And it too continually downplays the potential size of any spill in that fragile environment. Greenpeace International took bold steps to gain media coverage of the lack of transparency on the company's oil spill preparedness. The organization supported over 20 individuals as they conducted civil disobience against the company over a three-month period.

The tactic of civil disobedience has a proven record of effectiveness for community members who feel they have no other avenue for help, and the bold steps it involves are becoming widely accepted along the Gulf Coast as a valuable means to focus media attention on the environmental, health and economic impacts of irresponsible oil-exploration. At several community meetings I have attended there have been calls for such activism.

But BP has been active in its own fashion. Besides saturating traditional media sources with its version of events, the company was quick to deploy a sophisticated social-networking strategy. On popular Internet search-engines, such as Google and Yahoo, BP purchased common search-terms related to the oil disaster, so that its sponsored websites would rise to the top of search lists. Legitimate news stories



BP'S OBJECTIVE AGAIN WAS TO MAKE THE OIL DISASTER DISAPPEAR—OR AT LEAST SEEM SMALLER AND LESS DEVASTATING THAN IT WAS, PARTICULARLY FOR THOSE WHO COULD NOT WITNESS IT WITH THEIR OWN EYES.

PHOTO: JOHN L. WATHAN

OFF-SHORE ISLANDS IN THE GULF, ENCIRCLED BY OIL BOOMS, WAIT FOR THE OIL.

PHOTOS: JEFFREY DUBINSKY

ABOVE, LEFT: THOUSANDS OF BIRDS, LIKE THIS LAUGHING GULL ON A BEACH IN GRAND ISLE, LA., WERE CASUALTIES OF THE BP DISASTER.
ABOVE, RIGHT: LOWER MISSISSIPPI RIVERKEEPER PAUL ORR TAKES A SAMPLING OF OYSTERS TO TEST MORE THAN A YEAR AFTER THE DISASTER.

therefore were less likely to reach the public looking for unbiased information. This effective tactic is commonly used by corporations and nonprofits alike, but it is particularly pernicious when used in the midst of a disaster affecting millions of people in need of accurate reporting.

Corporate public relations tactics such as those seen during the height of the BP oil disaster serve the purpose of "re-creating" the disaster narrative. BP's objective again was to make the oil disaster disappear—or at least seem smaller and less devastating than it was, particularly for those who could not witness it with their own eyes.

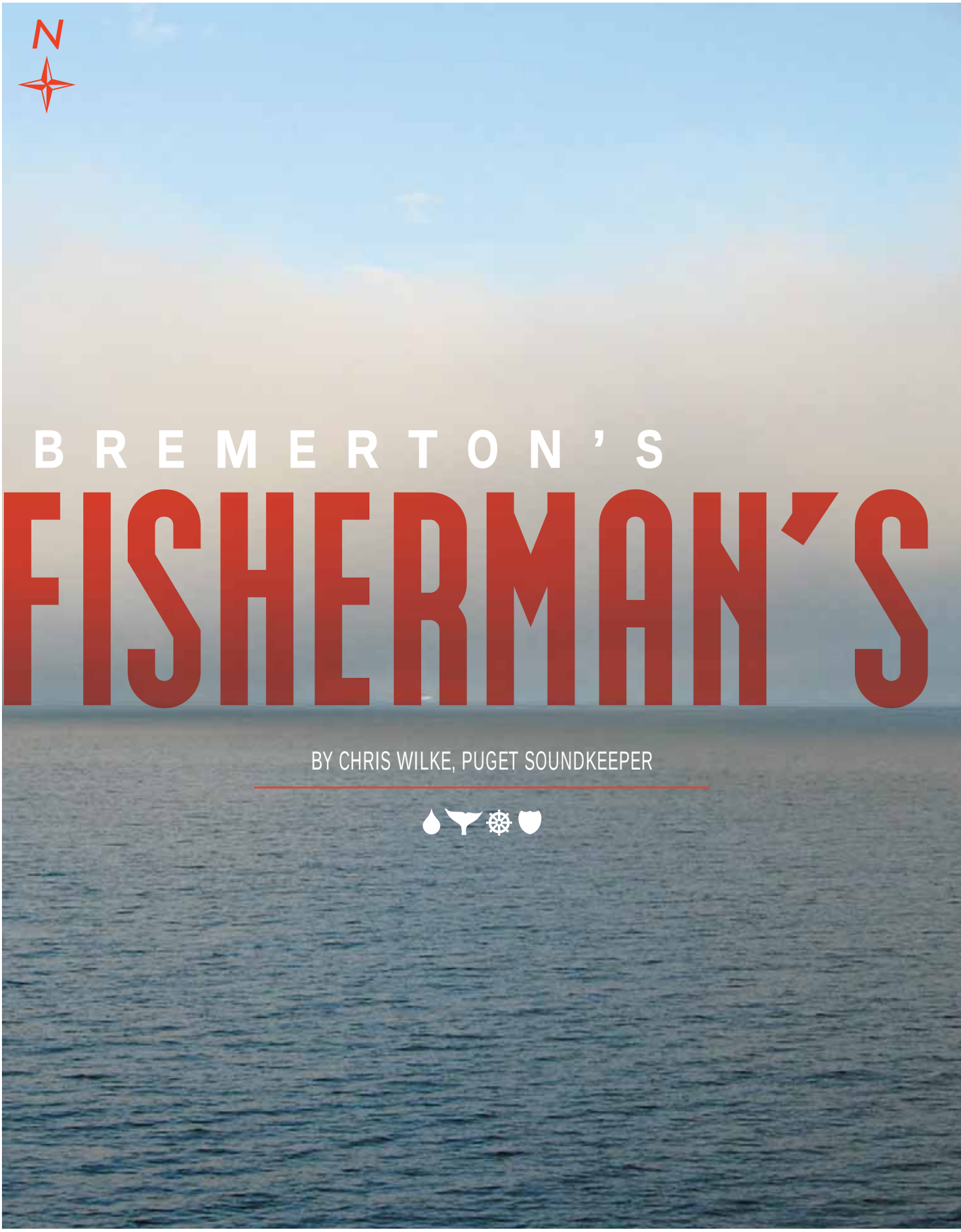
While socializing in New Orleans, I am often asked what my occupation is. When I describe my work with Waterkeepers and many of the coastal communities most affected by the oil disaster, and I share stories of the most recent oil-slick sightings and abnormal shrimp- and crab-catches, I am often met with shocked disbelief. Time and again I have found that, to my listeners, the BP disaster is over. The oil is gone. These responses have stopped surprising me.

To counteract BP's deluge of public-relations money, individuals and organizations located on the Gulf Coast have set up blogs, facebook pages and twitter accounts to release up-to-the-minute updates and post photos and videos of oil-contamination locations, community responses, clean-up efforts, along with BP's activities. But resources of money and experienced personnel are inadequate, and their efforts don't attract much notice. The lack of continued attention to their message is frustrating to many who spend much of their days attempting to spread the word about the continuing impacts of this environmental crime.

Because the disaster has largely been wiped from the minds of many who live on the Gulf Coast, there have been rifts among communities. When the Gulf Coast Waterkeepers released a report sharply critical of BP's role in the recovery effort in October 2011, the Alabama Press Register editorial board expressed concern that the report was unnecessarily alarming citizens about continuing oil-contamination. Newspapers, politicians and oil companies cause divisions within already stressed communities when they single out community members who address continued ecosystem and health impacts and the need for long-term environmental monitoring. Their contentions take much-needed resources and time away from the quest for solutions, and provide the polluters with even more impetus for touting their version of the story.

In early July 2011 the American Petroleum Institute released a report detailing a decline in the number of offshore-related jobs since the BP event and criticizing the slowed pace at which deepwater-drilling permits were being issued to energy companies. The institute's push for business as usual is not surprising in an industry in which irresponsibility goes hand in hand with profitability. That energy-business analysts have forecast expenditures of more than $330 billion over the next five years for offshore operations and maintenance is a strong incentive for distracting people away from the very real dangers of deepwater oil extraction. Reports of this kind make headlines. And they are part of an organized effort to deflect the attention of elected officials and the public from systemic problems that have not been rectified since the oil disaster began. Once again, these are tactics that are frequently employed by polluting industries when their interests are at odds with nearby communities.

Recovering from a disaster of the magnitude of the BP disaster in the Gulf of Mexico can seem overwhelming at times. And those feelings are only further complicated by the push and pull between political leaders, community members and a polluter facing billions of dollars in fines. This tug of war on the Gulf Coast is creating tensions never seen before in an area whose residents are used to picking themselves up by their bootstraps and going to work rebuilding their lives and their communities. I feel privileged to be part of that struggle, and to share the lessons of how an oil company works to wash away its responsibility and how community members are standing up and defending the place they call home. W



BREMERTON'S FISHERMAN'S

BY CHRIS WILKE, PUGET SOUNDKEEPER

PUGET SOUND.

TALE

SPURRED BY PUGET SOUNDKEEPER, A CITY LEADS WASHINGTON STATE'S WAY TO SEWAGE CONTROL.

Summer this year marked a long-sought milestone for Puget Sound as one of the communities along its shores fulfilled a 20-year-old promise to all but eliminate its sewage overflows from the Sound's fish-crowded waters. This saltwater estuary, with more than 2,000 miles of shoreline, is nestled between the Cascade and Olympic Mountains in western Washington. It is home to eight species of salmon and trout, 10 species of marine mammals, including an endangered population of orca (killer) whales, and several commercially important varieties of shellfish. Seattle, Tacoma and other major metropolitan areas line up along its eastern shore, and ferries cross from there to the smaller communities that dot the peninsula and islands to the west. Among these is Bremerton, a city of about 40,000 that is home to the Puget Sound Naval Shipyard, a major facility for the Pacific Fleet.

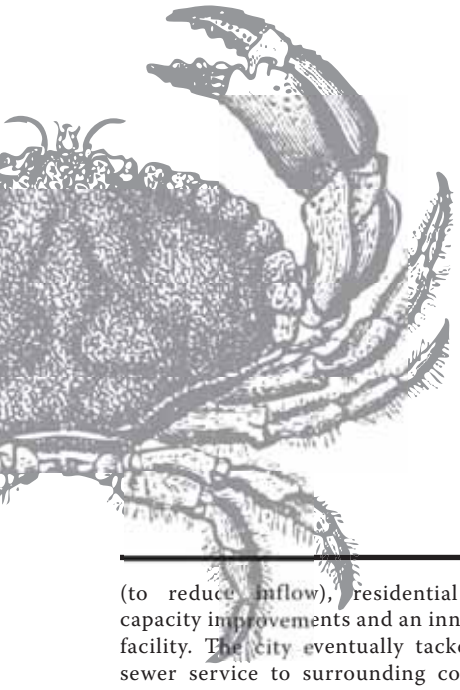
Puget Soundkeeper Alliance is one of the founding programs of the Waterkeeper movement. Inspired by the work of Hudson Riverkeeper, Long Island Soundkeeper and San Francisco Baykeeper, Puget Soundkeeper's first boat-patrol was launched in 1990. Soon afterward, Puget Soundkeeper took action against illegal discharges from the Naval Shipyard and began to address the sewage problems caused by the city of Bremerton, which continuously fouled the oyster- and clam-beds in the area.

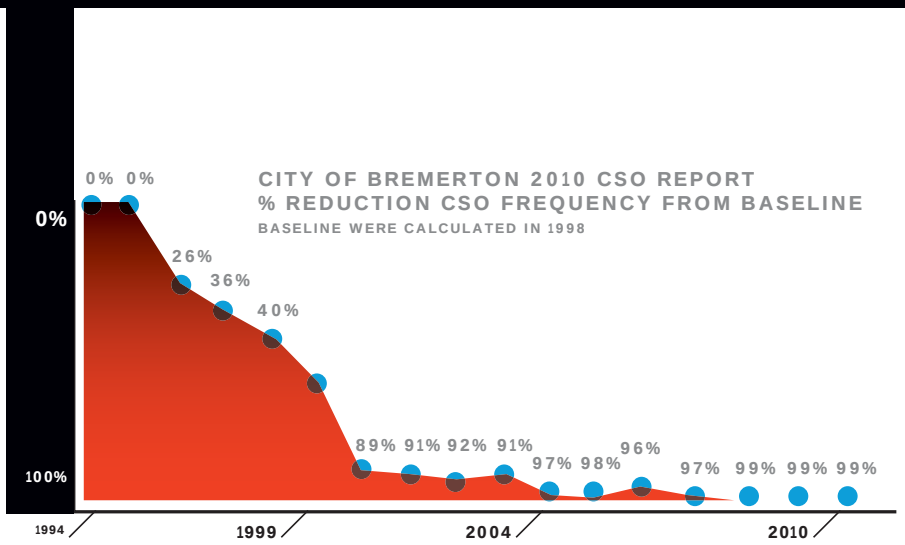
In the early 1990s, Bremerton's combined sewer system discharged an unhealthy mixture of untreated sewage and stormwater 600-to-800 times per year at its 15 outfalls. This amounted to well over 100 million gallons discharged annually. And the problem was hardly new. Driven by rainfall that overwhelmed an inadequate and antiquated system, these combined sewer overflows, or CSOs, were the primary cause of the rich shellfish beds in Dyes Inlet, northwest of Bremerton, being closed to harvesting since the 1960s.

Nor was the problem unique. According to the U.S. EPA, there are 772 communities around the United States, with an overall population of over 40 million people, that produce combined sewage overflows, and most of them are not close to achieving "control" of these discharges. In Washington State, according to a recent Natural Resources Defense Council report, CSOs still cause the closing of more swimming beaches than any other source. But determined citizen action and this one municipality's dedication have yielded remarkable improvements.

In 1993, the still-young Puget Soundkeeper Alliance settled the first citizen Clean Water Act case in Washington State with the City of Bremerton, resulting in a strong federal consent decree that called for a series of retrofit projects to be completed over the next 18 years. These projects included upgraded and new treatment facilities, stormwater and sanitary sewer separations

PHOTO: CHRIS WILKE





(to reduce inflow), residential downspout disconnections, capacity improvements and an innovative wet-weather treatment facility. The city eventually tacked on projects like extending sewer service to surrounding communities and implementing low impact development (LID) projects designed to infiltrate stormwater into the ground and keep it out of the sewers.

Spurred by Puget Soundkeeper's citizen action, this comprehensive approach has yielded fantastic results. Water quality around Bremerton has been steadily improving over the past decade. The total flow and the number of CSO events are both down by 99 percent. In 2003, the shellfish beds in Dyes Inlet were opened to harvest for the first time in nearly 40 years. This resurgence of shell fishing has been especially significant culturally and economically for the Suquamish Tribe, for whom the rich waters of the inlet, according to tribal chairman Leonard Forsman, are ancestral fishing grounds.

On most days it is now safe to swim in Dyes Inlet and Port Washington Narrows on Bremerton's eastern and northern shore. (Short-term closures are still occasionally ordered as a precaution, but now only after very large storms.)

On June 29, 2011 the city celebrated the on-schedule completion of its CSO-control project, at a total cost of $50 million. According to the Washington Department of Ecology, Bremerton is the first "complex CSO community" in the state to achieve the regulatory goal of one or no overflow events per year, on average. While Puget Soundkeeper released the city of their reporting obligations under the 1993 consent decree, in contrast, the City of Seattle and surrounding King County are not required to reach targeted levels until 2025 and 2030, respectively, under the terms of consent decrees negotiated with the Department of Ecology and the EPA.

IN THE EARLY 1990s, BREMERTON'S COMBINED SEWER SYSTEM DISCHARGED AN UNHEALTHY MIXTURE OF UNTREATED SEWAGE AND STORMWATER...

During the celebration, Bremerton Mayor Patty Lent thanked Puget Soundkeeper Alliance for its "vision and partnership," and presented the organization with an award for helping the city achieve the goal of water quality protection. The city's pride in this accomplishment is such that it has begun to challenge other Washington municipalities to complete their own CSO-control plans, using Bremerton's success as an example.

I was delighted to accept the city's award on behalf of Puget Soundkeeper Alliance, but greater credit belongs to others. This project actually spanned nearly the entire period of Puget Soundkeeper as an active Waterkeeper organization. These include the four Puget Soundkeepers who served before me, beginning with Ken Moser, who filed the original papers on behalf of the organization and its members -- one of whom was a Bremerton-area shellfish-grower. Ken was followed by B. J. Cummings, Sue Joerger and Bob Beckman, who assisted and monitored the city's progress throughout the project, pressing them occasionally when needed.

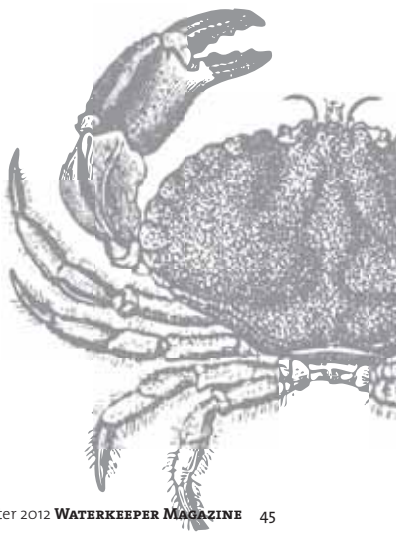
I was asked to speak to the audience in Bremerton's Norm Dicks Government Center, named for the U.S. Congressman who was kind enough to attend and speak warmly about Puget Soundkeeper. I thanked the city for their efforts and reminded the attendees about the importance of the Clean Water Act and its promise of swimmable, drinkable and fishable waters. Our challenges in the fight to recover Puget Sound remain large and daunting, such as toxic sediments in areas such as Bremerton's Naval Shipyard. But celebrating a victory, especially one that has not been accomplished elsewhere in the region, gives momentum to our labors and shows that even massive problems with elusive solutions are only temporary if we devote our resources effectively.

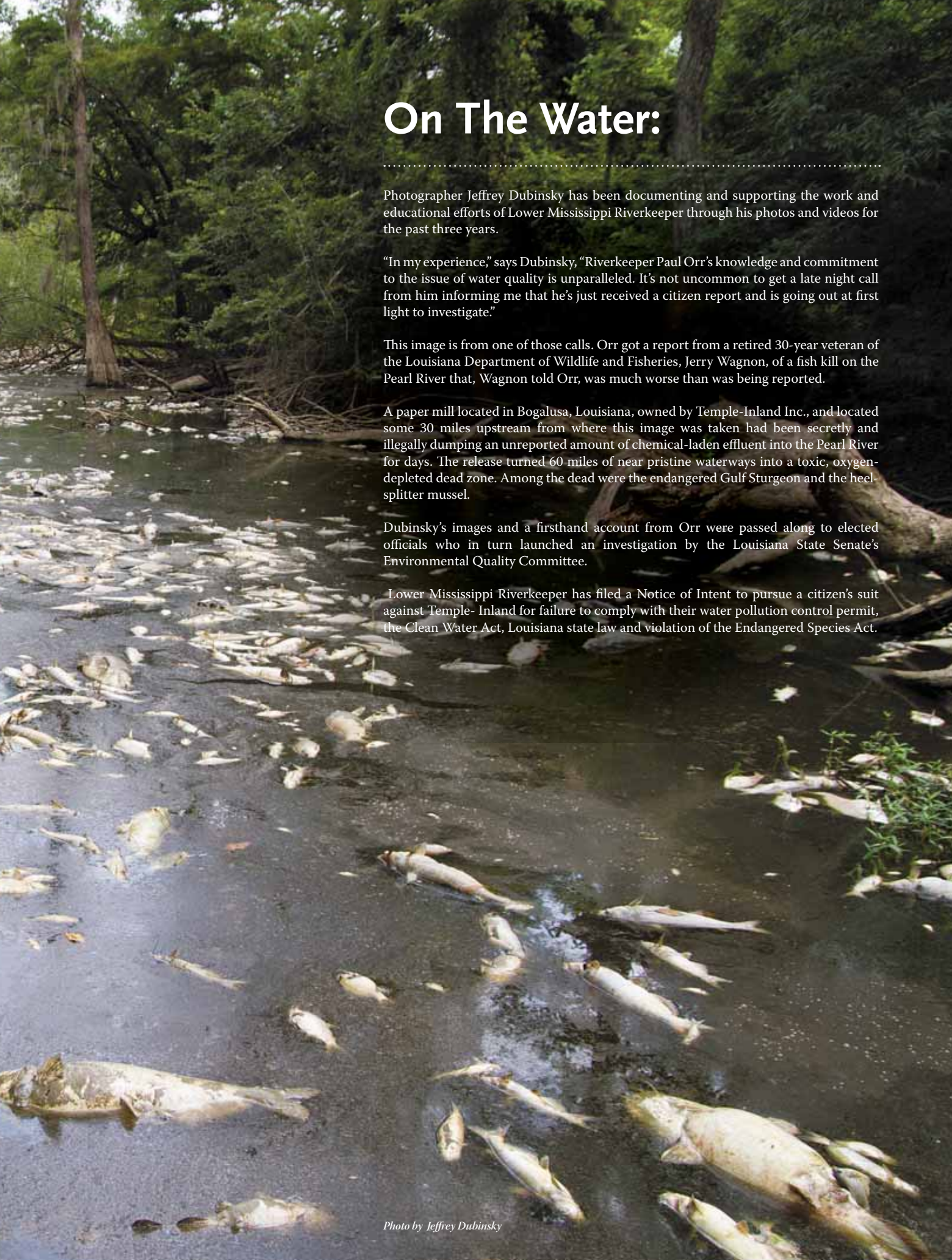
As the Clean Water Act comes under attack in the U.S. Congress, our success underscores its enormous value and particularly the importance of its provision for citizen action in securing community access to swimmable, drinkable and fishable waters. W

PHOTOS: CHRIS WILKE

PHOTO: KATELYN KINN

TOP LEFT AND CENTER: BREMERTON'S TWO BRIDGES CROSS PORT WASHINGTON NARROWS, WHICH CONNECTS DYES INLET TO THE REST OF PUGET SOUND.
TOP RIGHT: INNOVATIVE UV DISINFECTION TUBES INSIDE BREMERTON'S WET-WEATHER TREATMENT PLANT.
ABOVE: BREMERTON'S MAIN WASTEWATER TREATMENT PLANT.





On The Water:

Photographer Jeffrey Dubinsky has been documenting and supporting the work and educational efforts of Lower Mississippi Riverkeeper through his photos and videos for the past three years.

"In my experience," says Dubinsky, "Riverkeeper Paul Orr's knowledge and commitment to the issue of water quality is unparalleled. It's not uncommon to get a late night call from him informing me that he's just received a citizen report and is going out at first light to investigate."

This image is from one of those calls. Orr got a report from a retired 30-year veteran of the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, Jerry Wagnon, of a fish kill on the Pearl River that, Wagnon told Orr, was much worse than was being reported.

A paper mill located in Bogalusa, Louisiana, owned by Temple-Inland Inc., and located some 30 miles upstream from where this image was taken had been secretly and illegally dumping an unreported amount of chemical-laden effluent into the Pearl River for days. The release turned 60 miles of near pristine waterways into a toxic, oxygen-depleted dead zone. Among the dead were the endangered Gulf Sturgeon and the heel-splitter mussel.

Dubinsky's images and a firsthand account from Orr were passed along to elected officials who in turn launched an investigation by the Louisiana State Senate's Environmental Quality Committee.

Lower Mississippi Riverkeeper has filed a Notice of Intent to pursue a citizen's suit against Temple- Inland for failure to comply with their water pollution control permit, the Clean Water Act, Louisiana state law and violation of the Endangered Species Act.

Photo by Jeffrey Dubinsky

By the Great Lakes' Troubled Waters, 2011 Conference Addresses Local Issues and Reinforces Global Unity

By Daniel Abrams

Waterkeeper Alliance's annual conference was held June 22nd to 26th at Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois, beside Lake Michigan, the largest lake within the boundaries of the United States. The conference addressed a broad range of pressing water-related issues—from climate change to destructive coal-mining to recent legislative assaults on the U.S. Clean Water Act. Over 130 Waterkeepers, including new members from the Tigris River in Iraq and the Big Blackfoot River in Montana, converged on the campus just north of Chicago. As environmental legislation comes increasingly under attack in the U. S. Congress, the conference proved to be a great source for trading each other's strategies and expertise and drawing on the Alliance's collaborative knowledge and strength to counter these threats.

The location of the conference on Lake Michigan was also a vivid reminder of the need for water-based economies that will foster everyone's right to clean water. The Great Lakes of North America hold 20 percent of the world's fresh water but only one percent of the water is renewable. Today the Lakes face many threats. There is increasing evidence of climate change in the Great Lakes region—air and water are warming, causing frequent and unusually strong storms that have resulted in massive flooding and an increase of sewage spilling into the Lakes. Old, failing infrastructure in communities around the Lakes contributes to the increase in sewage into waters that abound with swimmers and provide drinking-water for more than 40 million people. In addition, the Great Lakes are threatened by invasive species that enter the freshwater system from the ballast of ships traveling the Atlantic Ocean and the St. Lawrence Seaway. This ballast water contains a wide variety of living organisms, and in the Great Lakes a new invasive species is now being detected every eight months. Further threats to the Lakes include conversion of pristine natural areas to housing developments, particularly summer homes, and the excavation of sulfide mines.

Eleven Great Lakes Waterkeeper organizations in the United States and Canada are working separately and together to address the challenge of protecting one of the U. S. and Canada's greatest natural resources. With this in mind, the Great Lakes Waterkeepers joined forces to advocate for passage of the Great Lakes Compact, a 2008 agreement involving eight states and two provinces that assures that Great Lakes water will stay in the Great Lakes by regulating diversions and in-basin consumptive uses. The Great Lakes Waterkeepers have also combined their voices to comment on important policy issues such as Asian-carp control and the EPA order for the cleanup of the Chicago River.

An accompaniment to the last discussion was interest in creating a Chicago River Waterkeeper, which would give the Alliance a presence in Chicago for the first time. In addition, an environmental-law clinic is being established at The University of Chicago, mirroring the Pace Environmental Litigation Clinic in New York.

But not all the talk was about the Great Lakes and the great metropolis of the Midwest. Far from forgotten was the great environmental catastrophe of 2010, the BP oil disaster in the Gulf of Mexico, which was the topic at a forum in which Gulf Coast Waterkeepers reported that they are still cleaning oil off their beaches and out of their watersheds and still trying to get the governmental support they desperately need.

The outstanding speakers who addressed the assembly were led by U. S. Senator Dick Durbin of Illinois, who was introduced by Alliance President Robert F. Kennedy, Jr. Senator Durbin notably committed to filibuster any dirty-water, anti-environment bills that reach the Senate. Others who spoke were Rahm Emanuel, mayor of Chicago and former White

THE CHICAGO SKYLINE AT NIGHT, GLISTENING OFF LAKE MICHIGAN.

House chief of staff; Dr. Wade Davis, explorer-in-residence at National Geographic; Cameron Davis, senior advisor to the administrator for the Great Lakes Region; Northwestern Professor Timothy Feddersen; Michael Kobori, vice-president for social and environmental sustainability, Levi Strauss & Co.; and Terry Axelrod, founder of the fundraising organization Benevon.

The conference continues to grow each year, providing more educational opportunities and more effectively consolidating regional collaborations. Among the many countries represented in 2011 were Australia, Bangladesh, Canada, China, Colombia, Ecuador, India, Senegal and Mexico, working together to exchange information, plan new strategies and share a vision for confronting the global water crisis. Thirty-nine panel workshops focused on such areas as advocacy, fundraising, communications and leadership skills. This networking strengthens the members' ties to each other and re-affirms their awareness that, although their struggles may sometimes seem solitary, they are bound together in one of the most critical global causes of our time.

"I thought this was one of the best conferences ever," one Waterkeeper commented. "I felt more spirit and connectivity than I have for a while."

That swinging town of Chicago also treated the conference attendees to several musical events, including a k.d. lang concert at Ravinia Festival and a conference-closing Saturday night performance by the Plain White T's at the Park West Theater.

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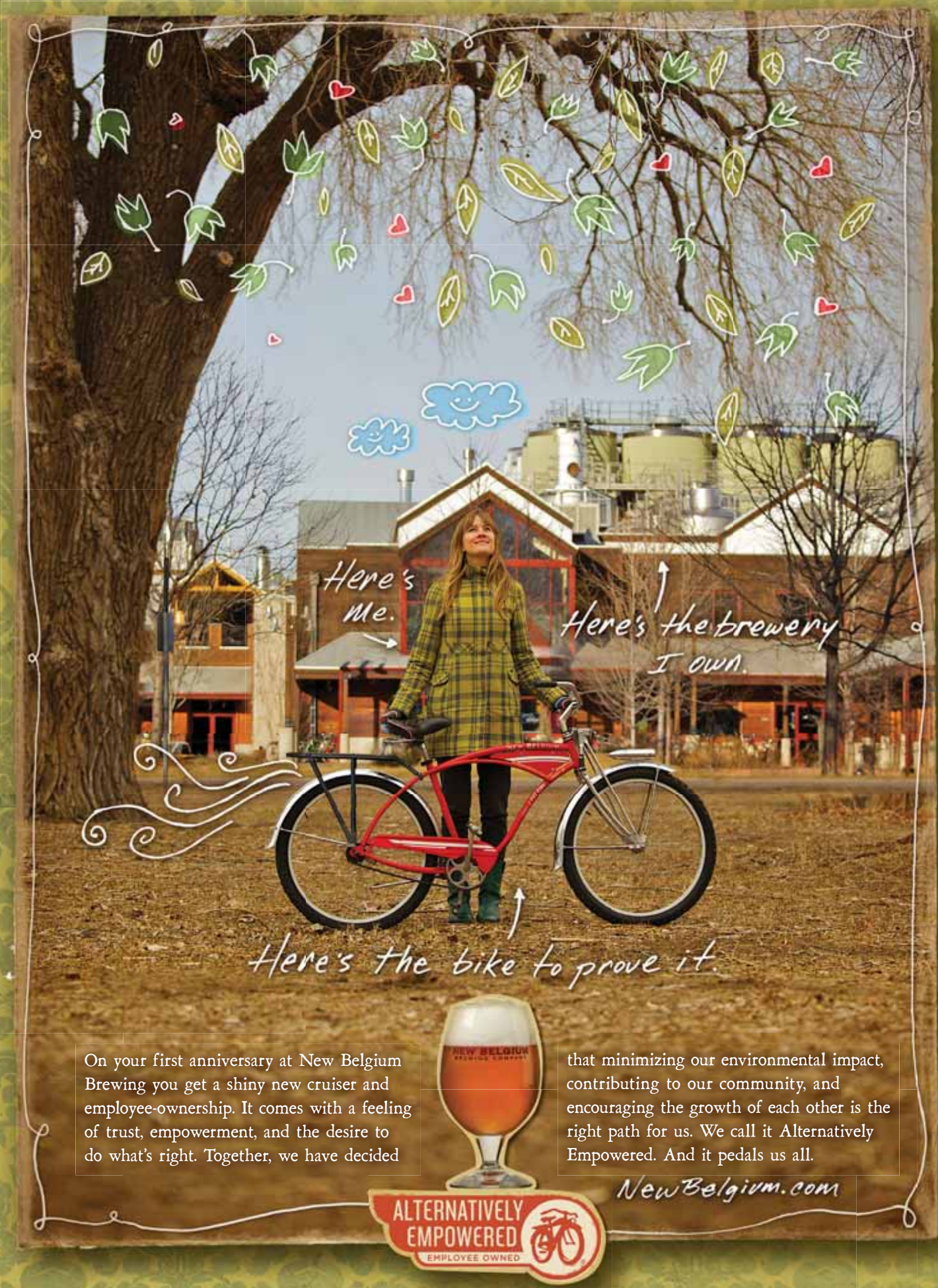

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