

# WaterWays



RIVER ALLIANCE  
of WISCONSIN

SUMMER 2017 | VOL. 23 | ISSUE 2

## Save the date for these upcoming summer events!

See all event details at: [www.wisconsinrivers.org/events](http://www.wisconsinrivers.org/events)

### JULY 17 - Back Forty Mine Speaking

**Tour** Madison Public Library with Professor Al Gedicks and Anahkwet (Guy Reiter)

### JULY 22 - Paddling through Climate Change, White or Marengo River (Ashland County)

In conjunction with Bad River Watershed Association

### AUGUST 3 - What A Metal Mine Means for the Menominee River

Paddle a short stretch of this beautiful border river to better understand the implications of the proposed Back Forty metal mine.

### AUGUST 5 - Multi-State AIS Snapshot Day

Join nearly two hundred volunteers at rendezvous sites around Wisconsin and eastern Minnesota to look for invasive species



### AUGUST 7 - Milky Moonlight in Milwaukee

On the Milwaukee River, co-hosted with Milwaukee Riverkeeper

**Wild & Scenic Film Fest 2017 Recap**

**ADMIT ONE** (Ticket graphic)

Attendance:  
Madison = 808  
Green Bay = 104

Fans' Favorite Film:  
*One Hundred Thousand Beating Hearts*

Next Year's Theme  
"GROUNDWELL"

"You exceeded my expectations. The films were awesome and truly inspiring. I will be attending in the future."

Learn more: [wisconsinrivers.org/noback40mine](http://wisconsinrivers.org/noback40mine)

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147 S Butler St., Suite 2  
Madison, WI 53703  
[www.wisconsinrivers.org](http://www.wisconsinrivers.org)  
[info@wisconsinrivers.org](mailto:info@wisconsinrivers.org)  
608-257-2424

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## Summertime Inspiration



By Raj Shukla

Summertime is the reason I've spent my whole life in Wisconsin. I love those early days with no mosquitos. I love celebrating with my community on the 4th of July. I love hearing kids giggle while they splash through waves lapping the shore of the nearest lake or river. Summer inspires me, and couldn't we all use a little more of that?

Wisconsin has already seen bad water policy come from the Capitol this year. The Governor signed what we call the Groundwater Giveaway (Act 10), legislation that hands out high-capacity well permits with little oversight and no periodic review in a region where lakes and streams dry up in summer because of—you guessed it—high capacity wells. Despite overwhelming support for a responsible approach, policymakers proved that the wishes of corporate lobbyists are more important than the concerns of local residents. It's the same story on aquaculture legislation (Act 21) that River Alliance opposed because of preferential treatment for one business at the expense of a trout stream the legislation threatens.

The pattern of policy aligning conveniently with the interests of the powerful, well-connected, and well-financed seems to emerge with every water challenge we face. But your energy and your passion can beat their money.



River Alliance Executive Director, Raj Shukla, speaks with Gary Besaw, Chairman of the Menominee Nation about the proposed Back 40 Mine. (River Alliance photo)

In the pages that follow, you'll learn about the proposed Back Forty sulfide mine on the shores of the Menominee River. It's a bad idea that threatens drinking water, the local economy and the quality of life for everyone in northeastern Wisconsin and anyone who

cherishes Lake Michigan. You can do something about it and River Alliance will show you how. We'll also give you the step-by-step summertime actions you can take to build relationships with your representatives in government.

And, you'll meet our good friends at Miles Paddled, who describe what moves them to traverse 2,000+ miles of Wisconsin waters and show you how to do it, too.

River Alliance of Wisconsin is a community of leaders who protect and restore water in unique and personal ways. It's a pleasure to show you a glimpse of the people and the issues that make our work so rewarding.

We wish you a beautiful and active summer. ●

## A Giant Sulfide Mine on the Menominee River... ...will destroy cultural and water resources, and harm public health



By Matt Krueger

Opposition continues to grow against the Back Forty Mine, a proposed open-pit sulfide mine 150 feet from the Menominee River, the border river between Wisconsin and the Upper Peninsula of Michigan. Local and county resolutions against the mine are being debated (cities of Marinette, WI; Menominee, MI) and passed (Brown and Marinette counties) in areas downstream of the mine, as its substantial environmental risks become better understood.



"How dangerous, irresponsible, immoral, and absurd to propose a mine 150 feet away from a river that feeds into the Great Lakes." – Gary Besaw, Chairman, Menominee Nation

Sulfide mines are notorious polluters, as they produce sulfuric acid, among other toxins, as a byproduct. But even among sulfide mines, the Back Forty is singularly dubious, for a number of reasons. Poisons such as cyanide would be dumped into the ground to extract gold. Processing of tailings (a toxic slurry of ore wastes) would occur on-

site, substantially enlarging the physical footprint of the mine, and the risk it carries. The proposed pit would be over 700 feet deep, meaning two Statues of Liberty, stacked upon one another, would still be 100 feet below the surface. The pit would have to be "dewatered," which would draw down groundwater supply to nearby streams and wetlands. On top of all of this, the mine would desecrate sacred sites of the Menominee Tribe (including the physical place of the Tribe's origin story), depress property values for nearby residents, and endanger drinking water both for adjacent local wells and downstream Marinette, Wisconsin's municipal well, which draws from Green Bay, close to where the Menominee enters the Bay.



"If something happens, we're left with a giant hole. That's it. We're left with a poisoned river, and a giant hole." – Tim Landwehr, Business Owner

And if all of this weren't proof positive the Back Forty is a reckless idea that needs to be stopped, the mine would be 150 FEET from the Menominee River, and its engineered infrastructure would not withstand the catastrophic flood events that Wisconsin is seeing more frequently (such as the summer 2016 northwestern Wisconsin flood flows the US Forest Service described as five times the 500-year flood event), as the effects of climate change alter our rainfall patterns.



"There's no metallic sulfide mine of this type that has not polluted, to date." – Deb Skubal, Property Owner

River Alliance helps Wisconsinites protect what they value, including our state's incredible water resources; we recently filmed three Wisconsin citizens to launch an awareness and advocacy campaign in opposition to the proposed Back Forty Mine. These videos

spotlight Wisconsinites who stand to be negatively impacted by the mine, including Gary Besaw (Chairman of the Menominee Nation), Deb Skubal (Menominee River property owner), and Tim Landwehr (Tight Lights Fly Fishing Company).

YOU can help protect Wisconsin's waters by learning more about the proposed Back Forty Mine and signing up for action alerts at the link below. ●

Watch the videos and sign up for Back 40 Action Alerts at: [www.wisconsinrivers.org/noback40mine](http://www.wisconsinrivers.org/noback40mine)

# Summer Advocacy Tips



By Allison Werner

We get many requests for tips about how to best reach out to elected officials about policies and issues that matter to you, your family, and your community. Our biggest recommendation is to build a relationship with your elected officials; summertime is a great time to foster these relationships. Do you need to befriend or agree with your elected official? No. Your goal is to be known as a knowledgeable and passionate advocate, so when they see an email or phone message from you, they'll take note. Even if you disagree, they know you have a point of view they should consider.

It can be really helpful to get to know your elected official, and for them to know you, before there is an urgent matter you are advocating about. This isn't always possible of course, but summer is a great time to tell them why you care about Wisconsin's rivers, lakes, and drinking water; healthy habitats for fishing; algae free water for swimming and boating; or whatever issue means the most to you.

Here are some advocacy tips for you and/or your organization for using summertime to strategically build relationships with elected officials—from the town board to Congress!

- **Attend their public events.** Your elected officials often use the summer to hold town halls or listening sessions. This is a great opportunity to introduce yourself, or your organization. Remember to be brief and focus on your most important issue of concern. You can find out about these events by subscribing to their newsletters, email alerts and/or following them on Facebook.
- **Invite them to see your water issues in person.** Take them fishing to illustrate why your river needs protecting, boating to see why shoreland zoning has helped your lake, or walk on the beach during a blue-green algae bloom to show them the issue first hand. We know many individuals and groups that have had success advocating for their issue because of the first-hand experience their elected official had with the issue.



Petenwell and Castle Rock Stewards members show DNR Secretary Cathy Stepp the blue-green algae bloom on Petenwell Lake. (River Alliance photo)

- **Invite them to your events.** If you belong to an organization such as a: river or lake group, civic group, neighborhood association, etc., invite your elected officials to an event that will introduce them to your organization and the issues you care most about. If you have a newsletter or email list, add your elected officials to the list so they know about your events in advance.
- **Follow up.** If you get the opportunity to meet your elected official, send them an email afterward to thank them for listening and to restate the issue you are concerned about. This gives you a chance to provide more detail and maybe even a link to a news article or website that has more information about the issue.
- **Send a letter or email.** If you are unable to connect with your elected official in person, you can still send a letter or email to share your concerns. Again, this is an opportunity to introduce yourself, and/or your issue. Include an invitation to see the issue first hand or attend an event, as mentioned above. If there is a vote or position they have taken that you agree with, be sure to thank them—it is rare for them to receive recognition, and it is meaningful.

There are many bills, ordinances and policies on the horizon. Having a connection with your elected official increases the odds of your next request to vote for or against a bill of being noticed and considered. As always, please let us know if you have questions about being an advocate or issues that you care about. ●

## Valiant Volunteer Efforts in the Upper Sugar River Watershed



By Amanda Perdsock

Twelve volunteers gathered on the Bruce Company property in Verona on the morning of April 29th to help with the building of wader wash stations (one person came from far as Fond du Lac!). It was a blustery day, with temperatures in the 40s and the threat of rain looming over head, but spirits ran high. With a can-do attitude, volunteers and event organizers successfully assembled 30 stations in four hours. The stations will be placed around the Upper Sugar River Watershed and other nearby streams. Stations like the ones



The entire group of wonderful wader wash station volunteers. (River Alliance photo)

built are becoming more necessary on Wisconsin's trout streams as new populations of aquatic invasive species are discovered.



This lost boot was found caked with New Zealand mudsnails on Black Earth Creek in Dane County by a DNR streams biologist this past April. (Photo courtesy Bobbi Peckarsky)

Materials for these stations were funded by a grant awarded by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources to the Upper Sugar River Watershed Association to slow the spread of New Zealand mudsnails in Dane County. New Zealand mudsnails can create drastic changes in stream nutrient flows and species assemblages. It's important for stream users to utilize tools like the brushes installed at wader wash stations so they don't unknowingly transport invasive species to previously uninfested waterways.

Our thanks to all of the hearty volunteers for their hard work, to the Upper Sugar River Watershed Association, and to Southern Wisconsin Trout Unlimited for co-hosting the event with River Alliance. Additional thanks goes to the Great Lakes Brewing Company for hosting the post event volunteer appreciation party. ●

# A Hobby Gone Wild



By Danika Laine

In 2007 Barry Kalpinski took his first paddle in a kayak; he loved it instantly. What started as a blog to share trip details and tips with friends eventually grew to become MilesPaddled.com—an accessible and comprehensive guide to paddling Wisconsin's rivers and streams. Timothy Bauer, also an avid paddler and the author of *Canoeing & Kayaking South Central Wisconsin: 60 Paddling Adventures Within 60 Miles of Madison*, began to contribute content in 2011.

**River Alliance recently spoke with Barry and Timothy, who shared some advice and wisdom on paddling and caring for Wisconsin's waters.**

**DL: You're both very experienced paddlers, but what is your advice for someone who has never paddled before, but is curious to try it out?**

**TB:** Find a river or lake close to home and there get your feet wet first. Become comfortable with being in a boat and learning basic control. Then seek out unique escapes and special places within an hour's drive away for say 2-3 hours. Buy a state map, a paddling book, look up info online. Build confidence and believe in yourself. Just as in life, we're all going to get dumped at some point, but that doesn't preclude falling in love again—especially with the water and being outdoors.



Barry Kalpinski and Timothy Bauer on Robinson Creek near Black River Falls, WI. (Photo courtesy MilesPaddled.com)



A view from the Wolf River near Lily, WI. (Photo courtesy MilesPaddled.com)

**DL: Can you tell us about a few of your favorite paddling experiences of all time?**

**BK:** My favorite (and wonderfully awesome) paddling trips are usually on obscure streams. There's always the excitement of the unknown or what will be discovered. That's what [I think] is great about paddling—no matter where you go—you're discovering nature in a way that very few people do, even if it's a popular stream.

**TB:** [Some of my] most personally fulfilling and meaningful paddling experiences include canoe camping down the Lower Wisconsin River because it is so singularly fun and beautiful. Also, scouting a raucous Class III rapids on the Big Rib River, near Wausau, reading the swirling water, determining what line

I should take and what hazards to avoid, and much to my astonishment, running it successfully.

**DL: How does your time paddling inspire you to advocate for Wisconsin's waters?**

**BK:** Paddling around the state absolutely inspires us to advocate for protecting Wisconsin waters because we see water quality issues first hand. Where MilesPaddled.com is concerned, it's hard to beat the accessibility to 15,000+ lakes

and endless miles of rivers and creeks, but I love Wisconsin's waters beyond the recreational opportunities. It benefits all of us to have a voice at the table or at least support those who can speak on our behalf to preserve what we have.

**TB:** Absolutely! When on the water, especially in southern Wisconsin, one sees the effects of bank erosion and improper cattle management all the time. The bottom line is one can still be pro jobs and supportive of family farms without being anti-environment. I've always felt that to be a totally false dichotomy that's used to divide the public. However, it takes outreach, networking, and a whole lot of communication between private interests and stakeholders to combat the unwieldy power of big business lobbyists whose money floods our state legislature and drowns out our collective voice.

**DL: What irks or concerns you about water/environmental policy in Wisconsin or beyond?**

**BK:** It's funny because litter used to bother me, but it doesn't as much anymore. It's the bigger issues at hand that bother me now, including high-capacity wells that literally affect the water table and choke streambeds like the Little Plover River; frack sand mines that have popped up all over the state which harm water quality; the invasive species that continue to spread; and, the farm run-off that makes once wonderful streams and lakes untouchable to swimmers and anglers.

**TB:** My three main environmental policy concerns are decrepit dams, phosphorus runoff from fertilizers, and high capacity wells. High capacity wells drain the groundwater, pure and simple. With little regulation and even less enforcement, such unlimited irrigation will diminish area lakes and rivers, affecting the wildlife (particularly trout streams, which are not only part of our heritage, but a source of local tourism revenue).

**DL: Anything else you'd like to add on the topic of paddling?**

**BK:** We do our best to be good stewards to the rivers and streams we paddle and not disrupt much. We clip what we can to make them navigable in the attempt to keep them paddleable. And, we share them so others can experience them too!

Barry and Timothy maintain MilesPaddled.com as their self-described "hobby gone wild." You can support MilesPaddled.com



by sharing the resource widely with friends, or volunteering to submit your own paddle reports. Learn and explore more at:

[www.MilesPaddled.com](http://www.MilesPaddled.com) ●

HELLOS:



**Nadia Bogue**

River Alliance is pleased to welcome Nadia Bogue to our Board of Directors. Nadia is a native of Madison, Wisconsin, but has lived in Milwaukee for the past 15 years. For Nadia, living in Milwaukee has solidified the need to care for our waters as a life source, an economic driver, and a recreational asset. Professionally, Nadia protects land and water by creating projects that manage water through green infrastructure and plan development.



**Eli Gomez**

Eli joins River Alliance as an Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) summer intern.



**Angelina Hanson**

Angelina joins River Alliance of Wisconsin as our Communications and Development Assistant.



**Ava Pfeffer**

River Alliance welcomes Ava Pfeffer as our 2017 La Crosse Area Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) Intern.



**Michael Thomas**

Michael joins River Alliance as an Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) summer intern.