

FRIENDS OF BETSIE BAY



NEWSLETTER
Late Winter/
Early Spring
2014

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online, anytime:
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ATTENTION BETSIE BAY/RIVER WATERFRONT PROPERTY OWNERS...

In the very near future, you may receive a Betsie River/Crystal Lake Watershed Management SURVEY. Please take the time to fill out this important way for you to actively participate in the planning stages of the Betsie Watershed effort. We need to hear from YOU! IF you've been selected to participate in this stage of the information gathering, you will receive a 'heads up' postcard letting you know this and preparing you for the arrival of the survey. Planning for a better future for this watershed is essential.

WHAT'S COMING UP...

FRIENDS 14th Annual Beach-to-Beach Clean Up

Saturday, April 19th 9:00am-10:00am
Elberta Farmers' Market Pavilion; RAIN or SHINE
Bring your gloves, good boots and LOTS of enthusiasm!



The GREEN FIRE Film Project

...with NM Michigan Invasive Species Network...

"Aldo Leopold and a Land Ethic for Our Time"

Saturday, April 19th 4:00-6:00pm
@ Frankfort's GARDEN THEATER
\$5 Suggested DONATION

The Friends of Betsie Bay are pleased to host a joint community effort with our partners, the NW Michigan Invasive Species Network/ISN, for an afternoon showing of an excellent documentary film project focusing on the challenges and necessity of conservation efforts and the joint efforts of ISN and the Friends of Betsie Bay with a brief intermission panel discussion of area experts. ISN is a part of the Michigan Invasive Species Coalition and their mission is "Protecting, enhancing, and promoting Northwest Michigan's natural communities through terrestrial invasive plant management and outreach." Check out their website: habitatmatters.org.

Aldo Leopold is considered by many as the father of wildlife management and of the United States' wilderness system. He was a conservationist, forester, philosopher, educator, writer, and outdoor enthusiast. Leopold's collection of essays, *A Sand County Almanac*, is one of the most respected books about the environment ever published. The documentary, *Green Fire*, was produced in partnerships with the Aldo Leopold Foundation, the Center for Humans and Nature, and the US Forest Service. *Green Fire* describes the formation of Leopold's idea, exploring how it changed one man and later permeated through all arenas of conservation. The film draws on Leopold's life and experiences to provide context and validity, then explores the deep impact of his thinking on conservation projects around the world today. Through these examples, the film challenges viewers to contemplate their own relationship with the land community. See: greenfiremovie.com.

Benzie Community Water Council Hosts the
2014 Water Festival:

KEEPING OUR WATERS BLUE

Friday, April 25th

Noon to 5:00pm @ Platte River Elementary School KID TIME with the return of live amphibians, Marlene Wood's Recycling Corner, and Kid's Science Fair.

Saturday, April 26th

6:00pm-9:00pm @ GARDEN THEATER with keynote speaker, panel discussions, and music.

The mission of the Benzie Community Water Council is to ensure that the waters of the county and the northwest corner of the state remain subject to the public trust doctrine, and are thus preserved and protected for the common good of the peoples and ecosystems they serve. It is our intent to work with any citizen groups and government entities committed to the common purpose of maintaining safe, clean and plentiful water for the equitable use of people, animals and plants. Visit the website: www.water-festival.org.

OUR CONSERVATION CHALLENGE

The Friends of Betsie Bay have been involved in several huge challenges in its short fourteen years of existence. In 2000, FoBB engaged in a long-term legal, land use issue, in a failed attempt to support Frankfort's Zoning laws. Today, we find ourselves in a similar but equally important long-term issue, supporting the bay's continued well-being. Our current target is, of course, phragmites—a well documented invasive species that has devastating ecological and hydrological effects. We won't fully eradicate a species like phragmites, that has invaded at this scale, however, we can prioritize where we win battles to restore the most important wetlands and coastal systems

for recreation and wildlife. Yet, the challenge is that conservation organizations such as the Friends of Betsie will one day need to be able to pass this responsibility on to landowners and municipalities. But the ongoing protection of our lands and waters from invasive species is not going to go away, so how do we make it part of daily life and practice? Perhaps we all need to anticipate stepping up, accepting the fact that we are all vital to the solution. Conservation and caring for our lands and waters needs to be the responsibility of all of us, it can't be viewed as a luxury, or something that happens only if dedicated individuals and groups support it. Maintaining a healthy environment needs to be a way of

life and central to our lifestyles if we want to stay on top of these growing and challenging threats, and to pass on resilient habitats and landscapes to future generations. Friends of Betsie Bay members can be proud of the work we do, and happy to do it. However, we know that real long-term solutions will reside in recognizing and accepting responsibility and costs of everyday vigilance. The cost of doing nothing, and suffering the impact of invasive species on our lands and waters, will far exceed the cost to society and individuals of proactive prevention, everyday vigilance and maintenance. So when the snow melts off in the spring, what are you going to do about this issue in your community?

FOBB UPDATES...

Dredging the Bay

The proposed dredging projects throughout the State have all been put on hold, as water levels continue to rise in the Great Lakes Basin. Reminder, the ban on fishing at the Frankfort-Elberta bridge remains in effect for at least two more years which will hopefully continue to encourage healthy breeding of the coho and native fish species.

Phragmites Project

Slowly but surely, we're headed for a "maintenance" process of the invasive reed, phragmites, on Bestie Bay. Anytime I'm headed toward Elberta. I always take a "rubber-necking" gander to see how the phragmites stands we've been working on are changing. Good news, THEY ARE.... Many are only re-sprouting from within the deeper stands, and each year, we're attracting more property owners on the bay side of Lake Street to sign up for treatment, which helps radically! There's another interloper, the invasive cattails (*Typha angustifolia*), which are glad for the reduced competition and clearly are expanding into the former phragmites infestation areas. Not so great when any monoculture takes over an area but clearly cattails are less detrimental to the ecosystem as compared to phragmites. A

constant reminder in this process is the long term need to continue our efforts because the Betsie River is quite infested with phragmites stands and this means we'll be constantly looking at new outbreaks. This year we gained two new property owners and the Grand Traverse Band of Chippewa and Ottawa Indians. THANK YOU to ALL the property owners that have invested in the value of treatment for the healthy ecosystems on their properties!

Beach-to-Beach Clean Ups

We continue to be amazed at how many people show up every year to help keep our waterfront areas cleaned up! Every spring and fall we partner with Alliance for the Great Lakes (greatlakes.org) to host local efforts of making sure the Betsie Valley Trail, including Elberta and Frankfort beaches, are cleaned up in preparation for a busy summer season, and again, after our tourists head home. This year we also collected samples of algae/Elberta and a milifolil/Frankfort which we sent out for proper identification and confirmation. These are both potentially much more challenging species to a healthy Lake Michigan. This summer when you visit a beach, be sure to pay attention and see if you notice some changes. See above in the WHAT'S COMING UP News for this year's dates for clean up.

SWEET ENDINGS

The Friends of Betsie Bay have such awesome members! This newsletter has taken WAY TOO LONG to write and without even asking, many folks dutifully sent in their contributions at the end of the year...How often do all those other hard working non-profits enjoy that kind of dedication with a big contingency and outpouring of community support every spring and fall for cleaning up our bay area. When area guests arrive in the spring, the beaches and trails are clean... When they leave in the fall, we clean 'em again. Often those quiet acts of support don't get much of a "fist pump" but that's the backbone of the Friends of Betsie Bay! This is my last newsletter. It's way past time to hear new voices, new perspectives and new energy in this communication. I've enjoyed these one-sided conversations I've been able to have through this newsletter. If you think this effort looks pretty snazy...that's ALL Aimé Merizon! She makes us look downright special...Erica Plesha, a recent graduate of NMC's Water Studies program, helps make sure our wonderful website, friendsofbetsiebay.info, looks spiffy and updated while keeping our Facebook page alive as well. These are the unsung heroines of this effort. Sooo, if you're looking to have your own voice heard in carrying on this communication tool, please give us a shout! We'd love to hear what you have to say! Don't forget, you can donate anytime you wish on our website or email us at friendsofbetsiebay@gmail.com