

On behalf of the Board of Directors, I welcome everyone to the Great Lakes Coalition 2020 Annual Meeting. I am Ron Wilson, President of the GLC.

Since the last time we met, we had 17 days of fall storms that had gale force winds and waves that got taller and stronger with each passing storm. Many of us lost beaches, decks, seawalls, and cottages. During the stormy fall the Great Lakes Coalition lobbied for the Governor's Executive Order and legislation sponsored by Senator Victory that would expedite the permit process. The Governor responded and gave us an expedited permit process that still would take a week.

The Great Lakes Coalition testified for Senator Victory's legislation that would allow licensed contractors to jump in to do the work needed and then file for a permit later, explaining what they did. Members also talked about high lake levels and their situations with Sen. Kim LaSata, Rob Sisson, Debbie Stabenow's staff, and many others.

We began to build coalitions with local government associations, especially the Michigan Municipal League. Their coastal cities were getting hit as hard as private property owners were. They lost beaches, marinas, boardwalks, parks, and roads. Their drinking water treatment plants and their storm water and sewage treatment plants were in harm's way as well. Why did we do this? The media and many legislators only saw cottage owners as people who built mega mansions along the coastlines. The majority of cottage owners are not millionaires, but normal working class families. Many cottages, like my family's, have been handed down for generations. By getting coastal cities as well as the state with its damages to state parks and highways, legislators and media are receiving a clearer impact of lake levels and the need for action.

Last fall, we reached out to Rob Sisson, the new International Joint Commissioner who replaced Lana Pollack. In December we invited him to attend a tour put together by Representative Joe Tate of Grosse Pointe. We toured Wayne County's storm water treatment facility, a home in Detroit along the canals, and the roads, marinas, and parks nearby. It was certainly eye opening for all of us. After the tour Rob Sisson, an IJC staffer from Windsor, Rep. Tate, Herasanna Richards from the MML, and I discussed the issues further.

We also contacted other states. Three groups involved in Lake Ontario levels responded. Together, we hosted 3 webinars. The first focused on the impact high water has on cottage beaches and on local communities. We were shocked when Brian Dissette told us that tiny South Haven would need: \$20 million for new sewage and drinking water treatment plants, revetment for roads, and a new bridge if the water levels continued to get higher. Sen. Stabenow heard of this and contacted the US Army Corps of Engineers who helped South Haven install Hesco Barriers to prevent water from flooding key points in the city.

The second webinar focused on the causes of high water levels. UM Professor Drew Gronewald told us that the amount of evaporation had decreased dramatically after 2013. Howard Learner told us of hundreds of toxic or sewage treatment plants that were along Lake Michigan that could leach into Lake Michigan should the water level continue to increase.

The third webinar focused on current water levels and what cities and cottage owners could do to protect their properties. John Allis from the Army Corps of Engineers told us the water in Lake Michigan-Huron was 33 inches above their average high water mark, while Lake Superior was only 8 inches above its average. We also had speakers tell us the proper way for protection and/or remediation. They also talked about the permitting process.

All of these webinars can be found on our website.

The GLC didn't stop there. We were in contact with ABSCA, a national group that focuses on beach restoration and other similar projects. They provided us with their national standards for beach restoration and protection. The standards helped Sen. LaSata with her legislation. We also contacted Jon Altenberg of the Great Lakes St. Lawrence River Initiative. It represents Mayors and similar officers from Canada from each state and province along the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Seaway. Its staff was very excited to work with the GLC and the Lake Ontario groups, especially on federal legislation.

Finally, we have contacted the Northeast-Midwest Congressional Initiative. We will be providing them with data and anecdotal stories members provide us. Send us your photos and anecdotal stories, especially ones with historical perspective. When I testified before a House Committee in January, I showed the State Representatives photos of when my cottage was built in 1933 by my great grandfather, my son's wedding on the beach in 2013, and then the results of the storms. They were stunned. Pictures tell a story that many can't otherwise grasp.

Lastly, please renew your memberships or make a healthy contribution. Convince your neighbors to do so as well. You can renew or make generous donations with your credit card on our website: www.greatlakescoalition.org