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Common Ground on Water

What do a blustery Illinois, the tropical paradise of Long Island in the Bahamas and the rocky state of Maine have in common? Each is dealing with a precarious state of water resources and is engaging citizens to address such issues. These initiatives are building on local assets-celebrating their place. Historically, advocacy groups have addressed issues in a diagnostic analysis. The initiatives discussed in these stories have found it more effective to celebrate and honor what works and build on those strengths.

Apart from its fertile land, water is the Midwest's greatest resource. The Great Lakes hold 18% of all the surface water on earth. Six Midwestern states share the Great lakes shores and part of the Great Lakes basin. Minnesota, Michigan, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Wisconsin, Pennsylvania, New York and the Canadian provinces of Ontario and Quebec are included.

Climate change is already lowering levels and threatening the long-term health of this water source. Additionally, industrial agriculture is polluting the groundwater in this region. Illinois has the dubious distinction of having the most polluted groundwater as a result of industrial agricultural practices.

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources in collaboration with the University of Wisconsin looked at applying simple and inexpensive practices on farmland in the Pecatonica River Watershed to reduce phosphorus, nitrogen and silt accumulation. Within one year the practices resulted in close to a 50% reduction in pollution. See details of the study at:

https://www.aae.wisc.edu/news/PDF/Pecatonica_project.pdf

The Center for Governmental Studies at Northern Illinois University and Extension at the University of Illinois is looking at working with farmers in an adjacent watershed in Illinois to apply similar techniques. This study will be able to look at both the impact of the practices and related climate change.

Such polluted surface and groundwater in the Midwestern watersheds is resulting in Dead Zones in the Gulf of Mexico via the Mississippi River. Dead zones are caused by nutrient runoff from agricultural and other human activities. Water within dead zones is so low that fish and marine life are endangered. Read about the growing danger to the Gulf of Mexico at:

<http://www.noaanews.noaa.gov/stories2015/080415-gulf-of-mexico-dead-zone-above-average.html>.

This subject came up during a conversation with Joe Irena, the founder of Ocean Crest Alliance on Long Island, Bahamas during a visit in February. Ocean Crest Alliance (OCA) is a non-profit seeking to "honor, protect and restore the health of the world's oceans and the life of the earth's systems through conservation, research, education, science and technology".

Work will be conducted in four main areas – fisheries, ecosystems, coral reefs, and marine biodiversity. The information gathered and the various media produced will provide educators, government leaders, policy makers, conservation groups and the entire public sector with valuable information. Our research conducted, provides relevant and beneficial information to every marine ecosystem worldwide and to all

of Earths Living Systems. Ocean Crest Alliance works to assist in the design and establishment of the worlds *Marine Protected Areas (MPA's)*.

Find a listing of the identified MPSs on their site at:

<http://www.adoptampa.org/>

<http://mission-blue.org/2014/04/ocean-crest-alliance-bahamas-hope-spot-within-a-hope-spot/>

The most important component of OCA's concept of sustainable MPA operations is to design, build and operate a well-equipped research and education facility. Each facility will directly support their own respective MPA. The crowning jewel of our LIMMA initiative revolves around the opening and operations of the Ocean CREST Alliance Research & Education Facilities on Long Island, Bahamas, operating as part of the national global network of MPAs.

Founder Irena has developed a prototype for the Long Island location. See the details at the link below.

<http://www.oceancrestalliance.org/oca-facilities/>

Organizations can support the Center as they participate in research by investing in E-shares, the equivalent of a research time share. This property offers amazing opportunities for citizen science topics involving all interested individuals who are passionate about being involved in celebrating their marine world. Contact the founder at jjr-oca@oceancrestalliance.org for further details.

Finally, Dr. Linda Silka, Senior Fellow at the Senator George Mitchell Center for Sustainability Solutions-University of Maine, has written a chapter in PASCAL's recently released *University Engagement and Environmental Sustainability* discussing Maine's Sustainability Solutions Initiative (SSI). Marine issues are prominent in Maine. The state is situated on the Atlantic Ocean and has a coast longer than all other seaboard states. Author Silka's chapter concentrates of facilitating conversations between researchers and stakeholders. The chapter discusses how successful sustainability efforts cannot be generic. Efforts must be place-based. This publication will be featured in the Glasgow PASCAL conference in June. See details at:

<http://conference2016.pascalobservatory.org/>

Let me leave you with an example of water as the medium for powerful art. This is the work of John Siblik, the Director of the School of Art and Design at Northern Illinois University.

Enjoy!

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1WyW6hdkezo>

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