

# Water WoRDs

## *Updates from the Water Resources Division*

### **Happy Belated Birthday, Clean Water Act!**

We did not forget. But we have been pretty busy around here implementing programs that likely would not be what they are today if it weren't for passage of the federal Clean Water Act 40 years ago. So while we did not spring for cake and balloons, we do want to take a moment this week to reflect on the gains we've made after 40 years, while looking forward to the challenges ahead.

While many people may think of the late 1960s and early 1970s as eras of bad hair and fashion, poor choices were also made with respect to our nation's environment, including water quality. Our wake-up call to action came in the form of burning rivers, the slow death of Lake Erie from phosphorus inputs, and the specter of a 'Silent Spring' made famous by Rachel Carson's groundbreaking research on the effects of the pesticide, DDT. When the Clean Water Act was enacted on October 18, 1972 (after Congress overrode a veto by President Nixon, a bit of fun trivia), it established a national goal "to restore and maintain the chemical, physical, and biological integrity of the Nation's waters."

The Clean Water Act kick started local efforts to eliminate raw sewage discharges to our waters and control other wastes discharged by industry. The United States Environmental Protection Agency has put together [a great Web site celebrating the Clean Water Act](#). Plus our friends at the [Association of Clean Water Administrators](#) have also put together some special tributes on their site.

Since 1972, Michigan and 45 additional states have implemented state-law programs that uphold the wastewater discharge permit provisions of Clean Water Act (aka Section 402), ensuring that states have primary responsibility for regulating the water resources they know best. Michigan (and New Jersey) went even further and enacted state legislation allowing implementation of Section 404 of the Clean Water Act overseeing dredge and fill permits for wetlands in the state.



Metro Beach, Lake St. Clair. 1973.



National Steel, Detroit River. 1969.

On July 26, 2010 (the same day as Enbridge Energy's Line 6B oil spill to the Kalamazoo River), the Department of Environmental Quality was reorganized to bring all of Michigan's Clean Water Act-related programs together into one division: the Water Resources Division (WRD). So while our new division did not get off to the most auspicious start, we learned the value of having all water resource programs within one working division.

In upcoming posts, we plan on discussing programs with a federal nexus, like beach monitoring and wetland regulation, as well as stand-alone Michigan programs such as our Groundwater Discharge Permits. We readily admit that all the goals set forth by Congress in 1972 have not been met - yet, but we're going to get there.



Ypsilanti Community Utilities Authority, wastewater treatment plant outfall to the Lower Rouge River. 2004.

## What do you do in the WRD?

Meet Nicole Zacharda

After almost 13 years working in the WRD's Enforcement Unit, Division Chief Bill Creal recently asked me to lead a new communications effort for the division, which includes managing (and at times, writing) content for Water WoRDs. Since I am also the person that gathers input from readers on our "WRD Question of the Week," we thought it made sense for me to be the latest WRD staffer introduced.

I'm a farm kid from mid-Michigan that went into the environmental protection field out of a concern that Michigan's kids in the future might not have a chance to enjoy the childhood I did: running around in woods and swamps, catching frogs, and splashing in our lakes and streams. It has been a privilege to work with people across our state to correct water quality violations and protect our Great Lakes. I look forward to telling our stories and sharing news with our readers.



Nicole Zacharda

## WRD Question of the Week

As we look back on 40 years of water quality regulations, where have we made the greatest gains, and what do you think we need to focus on in the next 10 years and beyond?

Send a message to Nicole Zacharda at [zachardan@michigan.gov](mailto:zachardan@michigan.gov) and tell us what you think. We will compile reader ideas and comments to share with WRD staff and inform future posts.