

## ► PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Adam London,  
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## Making Waves

I was five or six years old the first time I saw Lake Michigan. I was completely awe-struck by the enormity of it, surrounded by towering dunes of golden sugar sand and the expanse of a seemingly endless crystal blue sea. That initial visit was the start of a lifelong relationship for this Michigan boy. The wonder of it all has hardly diminished in my mind these many years later. Stepping into that cold, clear water for the first time every year is a near spiritual experience. Stealing the simmer from the hottest of summer days and refreshing the soul, Lake Michigan is truly one of our nation's greatest treasures.

A few years later, I met her larger sister up in the land of Hiawatha, the lake the Ojibwe call Gitche Gumee—Lake Superior. This titanic and frosty beauty has a spirit all her own: dark, brooding royal blue and shrouded with mystery and power. Lakes Michigan and Superior, along with their sisters Erie, Huron, and Ontario, have their own unique characteristics. These are the daughters of glaciers that deeply scarred the Earth nearly 10,000 years ago and they literally define the region. My home state is one of the very few that is discernable from outer space due the lakes' embrace of our two peninsulas. I suspect that my affection for the Great Lakes is similar to how others feel about the Everglades, the Mississippi River, and other monumental bodies of freshwater.

Beyond my own sentimental attachment to the Great Lakes is the fact that this natural wonder is home to a diverse and delicate ecosystem. The Great Lakes biome is one of Earth's unique places. It is also essential for the economy and health of an enormous

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region that more than 50 million people call home. The Great Lakes basin contains over 20% of the world's supply of fresh surface water—approximately six quadrillion gallons, which is enough water to blanket the continents of North and South America under two feet of water.

This resource is of incalculable value to public health and to our economic sustainability, and yet we do not always seem to behave as if we understand the importance of this treasure. Sewage overflows, invasive species, water diversions, industrial contamination, agricultural runoff, oil pipelines of questionable integrity, and illicit dumping of garbage are just a few problems the lakes have faced in recent years. Many of you may recall the national news about blooms of toxin-producing algae that compromised

the water supply systems of Toledo and other communities in the western basin of Lake Erie. In other news, Asian carp are poised to follow zebra and quagga mussels in the next of a series of biologic invasions threatening to decimate ecological balances, fisheries, and tourism. These are real threats not only to the quality of the environment but also to environmental health at large.

Amid these threats comes the disappointing news that the proposed federal budget seeks to eliminate funding for the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI). These cuts, as part of a 31% cut to the overall budget of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (U.S. EPA), could significantly jeopardize the health of these majestic lakes and all North Americans. Since 2010, GLRI has funded over 3,000 quality improvement projects throughout the region and has been supported by Democrats and Republicans alike. GLRI is merely one of many projects that are proposed for reduction or elimination as part of deep funding cuts to the federal agencies that our profession works most closely with, such as U.S. EPA, the Food and Drug Administration, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. These cuts are unfortunate and they underscore the importance of policy advocacy by organizations such as your National Environmental Health Association (NEHA).

The mission of our association is to advance the environmental health profession and to advocate for the cause of environmental health. I believe NEHA has done a tremendous job of providing resources for the growth and development of environmental health professionals. I also believe, however, that

we have failed to adequately apply our force to make waves politically. NEHA staff and national officers from the board of directors visited Capitol Hill earlier this year. This first NEHA Hill Day was made possible through the hiring of NEHA staff in the Washington, DC, area. During this gathering we had the opportunity to meet with the offices of many Representatives and Senators. The purpose of these meetings was to introduce them to our profession, offer our partnership, and ask for their support of the Environmental Health Workforce Act that was introduced by Representative Brenda L. Lawrence (D-Michigan). I was personally surprised by how interested these officials were in environmental health once they understood what it is. Framing our issues, such as the quality of our freshwater resources, in the paradigm of national

security and public safety was a tactic that I believe was especially powerful when speaking with people who might not otherwise support public health initiatives.

NEHA's Hill Day and an intentional engagement with legislators is going to become part of an ongoing strategy of our association to engage in the contact sport of politics. As your president and colleague, I ask you to take action this year for the sakes of our profession and the environmental health of our communities. This month, I ask you to call and write your elected officials. Tell them who we are and that environmental health is a critical part of our national security. Tell them that America is great because of places like the Great Lakes.

I have a second request of you this month: take a child outside and introduce them to the natural wonders of your region. A nearby

urban school district bussed a group of inner city children to Lake Michigan to celebrate the end of this past academic year. Many of these students had never seen the big lake before. They splashed and played with unbridled joy after their teachers convinced them that the waters were shark-free. I was touched to hear them talk about new dreams as future scientists and wanting to come back again and again. This field trip was as life changing for them as it was for me nearly four decades ago. Take a young person out into nature—this effort is one more way to make waves for better environmental health. 🐬



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# SUPPORT THE NEHA ENDOWMENT FOUNDATION

The NEHA Endowment Foundation was established to enable NEHA to do more for the environmental health profession than its annual budget might allow. Special projects and programs supported by the foundation will be carried out for the sole purpose of advancing the profession and its practitioners.

Individuals who have contributed to the foundation are listed below by club category. These listings are based on what people have actually donated to the foundation—not what they have pledged. Names will be published under the appropriate category for one year; additional contributions will move individuals to a different category in the following year(s). For each of the categories, there are a number of ways NEHA recognizes and thanks contributors to the foundation. If you are interested in contributing to the Endowment Foundation, please call NEHA at 303.756.9090. You can also donate online at [www.neha.org/about-neha/donate](http://www.neha.org/about-neha/donate).

*Thank you.*

## DELEGATE CLUB (\$25–\$99)

*Name in the Journal for one year and endowment pin.*

**Freda W. Bredy**  
Alexandria, VA

## HONORARY MEMBERS CLUB

(\$100–\$499)

*Letter from the NEHA president, name in the Journal for one year, and endowment pin.*

**Tim Hatch, MPA, REHS**  
Montgomery, AL

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Hancock, MI

**Paschal Nwako, MPH, PhD, REHS, CHES, DAAS**  
Blackwood, NJ

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Salem, MA

**Ned Therien, MPH**  
Olympia, WA

## 21st CENTURY CLUB

(\$500–\$999)

*Name submitted in drawing for a free one-year NEHA membership, name in the Journal for one year, and endowment pin.*

**Peter M. Schmitt**  
Shakopee, MN

**Leon Vinci, DHA, RS**  
Roanoke, VA

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*Name submitted in drawing for a free two-year NEHA membership, name in the Journal for one year, and endowment pin.*

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Lovettsville, VA

**David T. Dyjack, DrPH, CIH**  
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**George A. Morris, RS**  
Dousman, WI

## AFFILIATES CLUB

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*Name submitted in drawing for a free AEC registration, name in the Journal for one year, and endowment pin.*

**Vince Radke, MPH, REHS, CP-FS, DAAS, CPH**  
Atlanta, GA

## EXECUTIVE CLUB AND ABOVE

(\$5,000–\$100,000)

*Special invitation to the AEC President's Reception, name in the Journal for one year, and endowment pin.*