



Outgoing Executive Director Gail Gruenwald and her faithful companion, Junie B, enjoy a sunset on the coast. Gruenwald will continue to advance the health of our watersheds for years to come. Remember to thank her for her decades of service to Northern Michigan when you see her out and about. PROVIDED BY TIP OF THE MITT WATERSHED COUNCIL

We say goodbye to long-time executive director

Gail Gruenwald

Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council

As the new year approaches, I find myself reflecting on this past year's incredible work at Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council. What makes this year different is that I am in my last few days as the Watershed Council's executive director, and this will be my last guest commentary in this newspaper.

I will remain a loyal member and volunteer, but I will no longer be any closer than many of you to the inner workings and successes of this great organization. I will miss this intimate involvement and will always be proud of what we have accomplished over my past 37 plus years. I look forward to welcoming in the next leaders and will contribute in whatever way I can to ensure future success.

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So, what did we do in 2021? A jam-packed agenda of projects, programs, and outreach. As with 2020, the Watershed Council continued its successful programming in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. Some programs looked different than in past years, but many were undertaken in the old-fashioned way: in person. We look forward to getting back to “normal” in the summer of 2022 and welcoming many of you to our events and projects.

As in past years, the Watershed Council’s work ranged from extensive water quality monitoring to advocating against harmful practices on or near our waters and addressing the emerging issue of harmful algal blooms in our lakes. Because of our breadth of knowledge of both science and policy we are “at the table” in so many ways. We’re proud of the positive impact we have on the health of our waters.

This year, we have continued to develop various green infrastructure projects throughout our service area. These projects help to protect our waters by absorbing and cleaning stormwater runoff.

We also completed surveys on several lakes to assess the presence of invasive species and shoreline health. We continued to implement our popular mobile boat washing station throughout the region, all in our new pick-up truck with funding assistance from the Petoskey-Harbor Springs Area Community Foundation and the Charlevoix County Community Foundation. We set up the boat wash at public launch sites on a dozen lakes to distribute information about invasive species and, of course, wash boats!

Our events and education programs continued to be primarily virtual this year. We successfully hosted lake and river clean ups, our annual boat sale, our annual membership meeting, and several webinars and workshops. The Watershed Council continued to design and implement watershed management plans, including on Mullett Lake, Burt Lake, and others.

Resources on the above topics, along with many others, can be found on the Watershed Council’s website at watershedcouncil.org.

The Watershed Council would like to thank our members and local foundation funders for making this work, and numerous other projects over the last 42 years, possible.

Our efforts this past year and throughout our history have focused on what each of us can do to protect our waters. The Watershed Council will continue to work tirelessly toward this end as we celebrate our 43rd anniversary in 2022. I will participate in this wonderful work for many years to come. Please join us! Together, we can protect our resources for the good of our community today and for future generations.

Gail Gruenwald is executive director of the Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council.