FLOW’s Mission

To ensure the waters of the Great Lakes Basin are healthy, protected, and public for all.

FLOW Executive Director Liz Kirkwood (right) joined Winona LaDuke (left) and Holly Bird (center) for a Line 5 oil pipeline protest on May 13, 2021, at the Straits of Mackinac. Photo by Beth Price

In a live-streamed event presented by FLOW, author Sally Cole-Misch converses with Dave Dempsey about the new edition of his book Great Lakes For Sale. Photo by Jacob Wheeler

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This past year marked an extraordinary year for FLOW, as we celebrated a decade of keeping our water public and protected. In reflecting upon this past decade, we have much to be grateful for, even in these challenging times.

First and foremost, we are thankful for you, who have made our work possible year after year. You have understood the urgent need to steward our water as a commons protected from one generation to the next. You have seen the need for us to establish a new healing relationship with water and to apply science and the rule of law as foundational principles for making informed policy decisions that protect human health and the entire water cycle. You stood with us to take on the threats of water privatization and commodification, oil pipelines in our waters, water insecurity, an affordability crisis, chemical contamination, crumbling infrastructure, and much more.

Because of you, our movement continues to grow, forging potent alliances and partnerships with people, organizations, and governments across the Great Lakes Basin, including indigenous tribes, frontline groups, and business and community leaders. In the next decade, it will take all of us rowing together in the same direction to secure the kind of durable and lasting water policies needed for these globally unique and magnificent Great Lakes.

We give thanks to FLOW founder Jim Olson for his visionary legal thinking, leadership, and passion in founding a nonprofit wholly dedicated and committed to protecting water as a shared commons for all peoples from one generation to the next. His lifelong dedication to clean, safe, affordable, and public water has never faltered. Jim’s work continues to this day. We cannot begin to thank him enough.

We give thanks to our current and past board members and advisors, who have been tremendously helpful in charting our visionary policy work and establishing our unique public-interest voice across the Basin.

We give thanks to our staff for lending exceptional talent and devotion to Great Lakes protection every day. Our staff brings heart and soul to this challenging and rewarding work, drawing on decades’ worth of law, policy, and communication experience to improve the future of all living creatures and communities in the Great Lakes. And our policy work is richer thanks to a decade of amazing interns, volunteers, visual artists, writers, performers, and filmmakers sharing their gifts.

We give thanks to our partners, allies, and friends who share our core values and goals, working to secure water for all, and who bring diverse and rich perspectives to solving complex issues.

The next 10 years are critical, and urgent solutions are needed to protect water and public health from the climate crisis. Your unwavering support and commitment make all the difference.

We thank you for empowering our work for the last decade and for standing boldly with us in the next 10 years. Our pledge to you remains the same: We are committed to law, science, facts, and truth. We focus on empowerment for the common good and public interest. We speak for the water. We include all persons and succeed together.

Our warmest wishes to you,
In 2021, FLOW celebrated 10 years of working with the support of ardent individuals and dedicated organizations to protect the Great Lakes through application of public trust principles. It’s work that cuts through politics and sustains communities with water that is clean, safe, affordable—and public.

Thank you to everyone who has supported FLOW since our founding in 2011, as well as to those who joined us along the way during our first 10 years. Thank you for our shared successes. Your commitment to safeguarding our public waters is what drives us forward. Together we will keep working for the love of water!

**Fiscal Year**

October 1, 2020 — September 30, 2021

**Total Revenue**

$862,815

**Event and Other Income**

$11,903

**Grants**

$471,252

**Business and Corporate Donations**

$188,569

**Individual Donations**

$191,091

Jim Olson and Maude Barlow present to the International Joint Commission on use of public trust doctrine to protect the Great Lakes.

Liz Kirkwood starts as FLOW’s first full-time Executive Director.

FLOW fights Nestlé’s groundwater grab and the confluence of the Flint lead crisis and Detroit water shutoffs culminates with pivotal meeting in Flint.

FLOW releases “Public Water, Public Justice” model legislation to extend public trust protection to groundwater and establish a royalty on bottled water to fund water infrastructure.
FLOW provides vital assistance with fracking ordinances to Michigan communities during Collingwood-Utica shale boom.

FLOW becomes a founding co-leader of Oil & Water Don’t Mix campaign to shut down Line 5 in the Straits of Mackinac.

FLOW collaborates with tribes and hunting and angling groups to ban open-pen aquaculture in the Great Lakes.

International Joint Commission’s 2016 Report acts on proposal advanced by FLOW, recommends public trust doctrine as principle to protect Great Lakes water quality.

Attorney General Dana Nessel files suit to revoke and terminate Enbridge Energy’s 1953 easement in the Straits of Mackinac, relying on FLOW’s public trust legal principles.

Drawing on FLOW’s public trust arguments, Governor Gretchen Whitmer orders revocation and termination of Enbridge Line 5 pipeline easement in the Straits of Mackinac.

FLOW celebrates 10 years of protecting the Great Lakes, groundwater, and drinking water for all!

10th Anniversary Celebration Sponsors

We gratefully acknowledge sponsorship support for FLOW’s September 2021 “Confluence” event—celebrating 10 years of ensuring the Great Lakes are healthy, public, and protected for all—from:

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Thank You for Supporting FLOW and the Waters of the Great Lakes Basin

With a recognition that it is only through support from our generous donors and volunteers that FLOW’s work can be accomplished, we salute and thank those whose contributions in the fiscal year spanning October 1, 2020, through September 30, 2021, made our work possible.

We sincerely endeavor to recognize our supporters with accuracy, as well as with gratitude. Please contact FLOW to alert us to any error or omission—and accept our heartfelt apologies.

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7
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The following donors have made gifts between October 1, 2020 and September 30, 2021, to The Olson-Dempsey Fund for the Great Lakes, established in December, 2020, to support work that educates the public about the power of public trust law, underscoring the rights and responsibilities of the public and public officials. By underwriting public presentations, communications initiatives, and engagement activities, the Fund shines a light on the power of the public trust to inform law and science-based policy protecting the Great Lakes.

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FLOW is grateful for the generosity of colleagues and community members who provide goods, services, and expertise to help us do more and reach farther in ensuring that the waters of the Great Lakes Basin are healthy, public, and protected for all.

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The following donors have made gifts between October 1, 2020 and September 30, 2021, to The Helen and William G. Milliken Fund For Love of Water, established in July, 2020, to support work that:

- Protects the Great Lakes and the public trust rights of those who depend on them,
- Inspires community action advancing environmental stewardship, and
- Sustains internships at FLOW to foster a new generation of environmental leaders.

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I have a dream that we can move forward together to accomplish the protection of water as a commons and public trust, because we come to understand that is what’s in our hearts.

Jim Olson, FLOW Founder & Senior Legal Advisor