

Green Bay Press-Gazette

SUNDAY, September 14, 1997

\$1.75 (52 Michigan only)



Mother Teresa's legacy lives on in her mission

By Donna Bryson

CALCUTTA, India — In the mid-1950s, the mission of Mother Teresa...

More on A-2

Mother Teresa's lifelong journey of love ends... Hillary Clinton visits Mother Teresa's orphanage...

ATM fees gain popularity

Fees for using automated teller machines are on the rise, but some area banks are holding out...

GREEN BAY PACKERS vs. MIAMI DOLPHINS

Noon today at Lambeau Field

TV, Radio, and Announcer info for the Packers game.

Future of Fox River at stake

Progress made, but PCBs and runoff pollution still hurting river

By Susan Campbell

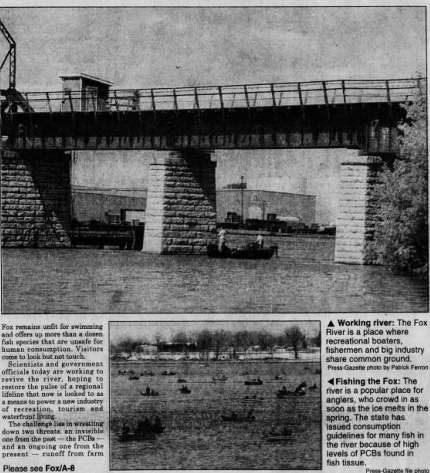
Everywhere David Allen looks around the lower Fox River and Green Bay, he sees PCBs...

NWTC president brings a new vision

Staff says Raft brings enthusiasm

By Tom Costello

Jeff Raft, the new president of Northwest Wisconsin Technical College, has taken full advantage of starting his new post...



Cohen: Terrorism in U.S. soon may threaten our freedoms

Washington — Terrorism is threatening to the point that American citizens may have to choose between...

INDEX, WEATHER, LOTTERIES, SPORTS, LIFESTYLE sections.

W-8 \*\* Sunday, September 14, 1997 Green Bay Press-Gazette

SPECIAL RIVER REPORT  
RENEWAL

### 'Old-timer' remembers when Fox was young

By Susan Campbell Press-Gazette

Gregory Schaut Sr. sits on the banks of the Fox River, catching trout and steelhead. The river is his link to both a career and a childhood spent from boyhood to old age.

But for all its constancy, the river has changed.

Schaut reflects the past. "You've got an old-timer, you've got a kid," he says, almost wistfully.

In reminiscence, Schaut spent years in the river near the Main River Bridge in Green Bay. He remembers fishing for perch and walleye, and raising his own.

"When we were kids there was no industrial plants, no nothing. I was away for a while, and then I come back from being in the service and there are all the changes. It's all over the world the same way. It's not only here. People pollute it and they don't care."

—Gregory Schaut Sr., longtime Fox fisherman



Press-Gazette photo by John Horvath

"When we were kids there was no industrial plants, no nothing. I was away for a while, and then I come back from being in the service and there are all the changes. It's all over the world the same way. It's not only here. People pollute it and they don't care."

Schaut, now a widower, still fishes the Fox. He takes his post every day along the riverbank every day, sometimes staying from dawn to

### About this series

This five-part series examines the health of the Fox River. TODAY Although great strides have been made in cleaning up the Fox, it remains a sick river. MONDAY A growing body of evidence links PCB contamination to health risks in wildlife and people. TUESDAY Although fish consumption advisories have been issued since 1976, some fishermen still eat fish caught in the Fox. WEDNESDAY Runoff of soil and fertilizer from farm fields poses today's biggest pollution threat. THURSDAY Even the spets design over how to address PCB contamination.

### Chronology of Fox cleanup

Decade of developments in the cleanup of the Fox River:

- 1971: One of several incidents of a public dispute about water quality in the Fox River. Near Green Street the committee writes "River water is terrible, in fact it is no longer fit to be called a river, but more in line of an open sewer."
- State sponsors first modern scientific survey of Wisconsin waters and streams after discharge from a northwest Wisconsin pulp mill kills 25 to 30 tons of fish.
- 1981: Pollution cleanup program. 1,200 separate abatement projects in the Green Bay metropolitan drainage basin. GMSD soon builds the city's first sewage treatment plant.
- 1983: The stretch is so bad that fish caught regularly die. Green Bay's windows closed after six years of closure by the state Board of Health. One year brings an estimated 1,500 to 2,000 deaths. A series of health-related beach openings and closures follows. First closure comes in 1983.
- 1983: Research into why dead fish are being pulled in from Green Bay reveals they died from oxygen levels in the water, caused primarily by algae bloom.
- 1984: A petition circulated by the newly formed Waters League calls for state action on water pollution and present state hearings of the Committee on Water Pollution of the Brown County Courthouse.
- Area conservationists succeed in getting Fred Kuttler elected to the state legislature after a campaign based on water-pollution control.
- 1982: State orders installation of wastewater treatment facilities for four municipalities and paper mills in the Fox.
- 1987: Paper mills begin discharging polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) into the Fox River through the routing of chlorinated paper, which contains the chemicals.
- 1972: Clean Water Act. The law requires industries and municipal sewage treatment plants to meet minimum pollution-control standards. Pastors launch a successful court challenge against the GMSD to force major upgrades to the city's sewage treatment plant, not to mention a site and pollution that took the size of when the contract was signed.
- 1984-1986: The production of polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) is restricted by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency in meeting requirements of the Clean Water Act.
- 1986: Clean Water Act. The law requires industries and municipal sewage treatment plants to meet minimum pollution-control standards. Pastors launch a successful court challenge against the GMSD to force major upgrades to the city's sewage treatment plant, not to mention a site and pollution that took the size of when the contract was signed.
- 1989-91: The state Department of Natural Resources and U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service discuss starting a cost Natural Resource Damage Assessment to address PCB contamination. The state does not launch such an assessment.
- 1992: The state, paper mills and area municipalities form the Fox River Coalition with the goal of having a voluntary river cleanup.
- 1992: The EPA announces its plan to conduct a damage assessment in the river and Green Bay. Fish & Wildlife, which has jurisdiction over natural resources, health and PCBs, launches its Natural Resource Damage Assessment and identifies seven companies as potentially responsible parties for the contamination.
- November 1996: Representatives of Fish & Wildlife, the state and First National Coal. — one of the seven potentially responsible parties — reach a consent decree designed to reduce the assessment, compensate the public for losses and require a health care advisory.
- December 1996: Fish & Wildlife notifies paper mills and the state that it may file a formal notice of its intent to sue for cleanup costs after Aug. 31, 1997, deadline.
- January 1997: The DNR and companies agree to spend up to \$10 million as a down payment toward the cleanup, funding a destruction project, studies and habitat restoration. Fish & Wildlife issues formal notice of intent to sue the mills.
- March: Paper mills agree to fund the cleanup. Indian tribes and the mills sign an agreement that stipulates for 90 years any legal action.
- May: More than 100 people attend a public hearing in Green Bay on an update on the Fox River cleanup.
- June: The EPA, citing the health risks PCBs pose to humans and the fact that 800 pounds of contaminants are washed into the bay each year, announces its intent to sue in Superior federal court for PCBs in Superior list of Great Lakes public health concerns.
- July: Tribes, state and tribal officials sign agreement in Green Bay to share their resources in developing a comprehensive cleanup plan for the river.
- August: U.S. Fish & Wildlife, Service; Pulp Mill Owners; Environmental History Project.

### FOX From A-1

Just as the river helped shape the Fox Valley and today, its success or failure in those efforts will shape its future.

Choices made now will determine whether water for now children play in the water as well as when the water moves fish kept than tossed back and whether the growth design and building commerce envisioned along its waterfront take shape.

The challenge is daunting, the damage daunting.

Field researchers have found twisted banks and feet that grow sideways, locked or not at all. They've found eggs that don't hatch and chicks that starve to death despite regular feeding. They've found birds that grow fat, then die, and fish that die with others of the same sex.

Below the water surface, PCBs have been linked with similar deformities in lake trout, lake fish with cancer, sediment and lowered reproduction, and egg and by young mortality.

In all, Fish & Wildlife reports that dozens of fish and wildlife species throughout the lower Fox River and Green Bay have and continue to reveal problems related to elevated PCB levels.

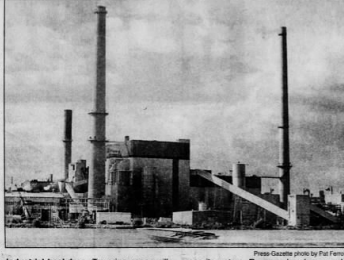
The statistics show PCBs are carving a destructive path through nature's food chain, from the sediments to bottom feeding organisms to fish and fish-eating birds.

The cycle has implications for humans. "What you've really got here is the danger already occurred," Allen said. "A landfill is a disaster waiting to happen. Will the landfill leak and will it be spread over large areas that people and natural resources use?"

"Here it's like you've got a landfill that's already broken with a river running through it."

Butter then it was. Most of the news about the Fox River came from the fact that environmentalists note the water quality since the 1980s, when sewage mingling with pulp-mill waste killed many fish species.

Because the Great Lakes is a slow-moving, nearly closed system, it's not surprising that PCBs are cutting edge of Fox PCB research



Press-Gazette photo by Fred Reinhardt

Industrial backdrop: Towering paper mills grace its waters. Progress has been made in cleaning up the Fox, but problems remain.

drove out other species as well over the years — some of which only recently have made a comeback.

The bald eagle is one of them, the rebound across the United States thanks to the banning of the insecticide, DDT, which thinned eggshells so much that they crumbled under the weight of the nesting parent.

Mike Meyer, a Department of Natural Resources wildlife management biologist who has studied nests in the field since 1980, said more pairs of bald eagles are nesting in the Fox River area in the past 20 to 30 years.

Six pairs are nesting along the shoreline of the bay, compared with none in 1980.

Still, the bald eagle is having a harder time establishing itself in Green Bay than in most other areas in Wisconsin.

"The Green Bay area is really one of the last sites in the state where we have really high contaminant levels in eagles," Meyer said. "We know that the eagles that nest and feed in Green Bay have reproductive failure very frequently."

What researchers haven't been able to determine is whether PCBs

are the primary cause of the reproductive failure. The damage assessment is a federal tool for cataloging injuries to the environment as a first step toward cleanup.

Looking for links between PCBs and hormonal effects in wildlife is another part of that research, though a major part. Allen said.

The Fox River and Green Bay are an ideal place to study the effects of PCBs, he said. PCBs are the dominant contaminant here, meaning they can be linked most easily with wildlife injuries that are

### Listing as Superfund site could force cleanup

By Susan Campbell Press-Gazette

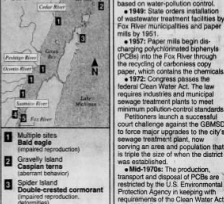
Years of talk about cleaning up the Fox River reached a milestone this summer when the EPA accepted plans to list the waterway as a Superfund site.

Placement on the federal National Priorities List, experts say, could force a cleanup by threatening stiff fines for designated polluters who fail to cooperate.

The Superfund listing would complement the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service's work on cleaning up the Fox River under a Natural Resource Damage Assessment, which already is in order. The assessment estimates the damage to the environment and wildlife, then assesses cleanup and restoration costs to seven paper mills held responsible for the contamination.

All of the parties involved — the paper mills and state and federal agencies — also are working to reach a voluntary cleanup plan and

### Bird injuries from PCBs



Press-Gazette photo by John Horvath

Multiple sites (eagles, hawks, owls)

Bald eagle (nesting/reproductive)

Double-crested cormorant (reproductive)

Caldwell (reproductive)

Spotted owl (reproductive)

Ruffed Grouse (reproductive)

Sharp-shinned hawk (reproductive)

Black-crowned night-heron (reproductive)

Black-crowned night-heron (reproductive)

Source: U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

harm reproduction or, if it's another chemical found in high levels in and around the Fox River system — DDT, an offshoot of DDT.

New threats, with many of the old pollution problems solved and the focus now on PCBs, come with the biggest active water pollutant load will be forgotten.

Conservationists, environmental agencies and paper mill representatives all say a comprehensive push must be made to clean up the problem.

Soil, sediment, leachate and other chemicals run off from construction sites into tributaries that swirl their way to the Fox.

"We believe that's probably our biggest problem right now," said Dennis Hiltner, spokesman for Appleton Papers Inc., one of the mills targeted in the cleanup. "That's a true national issue."

Other threats to the possibility that other trading post species follow the path toward the bay and the continuing destruction of wildlife along the

area where other chemicals are present at high levels.

In the Allen said the widespread damage found in and around the Fox basin falls short of what the agency reported to find when it first talked of launching the damage assessment back in 1989.

"We've now gone a long way down the road toward putting together our information," he said. "This will lead us to be one of the most prominent and used sources for cleanup action in the country."

plains of PCBs seepage from the Fox into the bay convinced the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency this year to pursue the only guaranteed means of protecting public health, removing or containing PCBs in the water.

The seven Fox River paper mills are not held responsible for the cleanup, estimated to cost from \$100 million to \$1 billion, because they discharged PCBs into the river while doing what and eroding carbonates only paper that contained the chemicals.

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Green Bay Press-Gazette Sunday, September 14, 1997 • A-9

**SPECIAL RIVER REPORT**

## Push for Fox cleanup started decades ago

**By Susan Campbell**  
Press-Gazette

**I**n these days, pulp mills discharge refuse from their plants every day. The Fox River is a case of never-forgotten fighting on a familiar, but distant, battleground.

Next year will mark 50 years since a landmark letter, hand-delivered to the governor, sought an end to pollution of the Fox River and Green Bay.

In those days, pollution in the Fox had reached inhuman levels, creating such a stench and silt that the public crummed into a Brown County courtroom for a hearing on the matter on the eve of Christmas holiday to voice its anger.

This time around, however, the case is inevitable rather than ugly, and public hearings have failed to attract a full house for even one night.

"I always felt in those days that there was as much interest in this as in the Packers winning an important game," said Kathleen, a retired De Pere lawyer who helped spearhead a movement in the 1940s to rid the Fox and the bay of pollution.

In those days, pulp mills discharged refuse from their plants every day. The Fox River and human waste washed in the water from the city's inverted and unimproved sewage system.

Conditions were such that a state game warden brought a bucket of Fox River water into the courtroom, dropped a handful of glasses in and watched them die "in a great hurry," Kathleen recalled.

**Hurdles remain cumbersome**

These days, state and federal officials talk of the accumulation of toxic chemicals in the bottom of the bay, of health risks to people that may show up in a generation or two.

The threats to public health and wildlife may not be as immediate or tangible, but they are equally serious, say environmentalists like Kathleen.

And the hurdles to cleanup remain equally cumbersome.

Kathleen, now 84, says it was a struggle to get the paper mills to change their polluting ways back then, and it will be just as hard now to force them to clean up their chemical waste from the past.

"I have an absolute mistrust of what the mills will do without a gun to their head," Kathleen said in a recent interview at her family's Deer County cottage on Lake Michigan.

**Beginning the fight**

That led to a campaign Art Kathan led 50 years later to force the Green Bay Metropolitan Sewerage District to upgrade its treatment of multiple wastes, including toxic sludge.

People hated my family because of this," she said. "You could feel the hatred of those people. It was not an easy thing to be against pollution in Green Bay. That's the economy they were 'red' people — that's what they thought of them."

His outspokenness cost Kathan friends as well, he said, recalling he once was shouted at on the street by a paper mill executive.

But Kathan and his fellow rabble-rousers were undeterred. These people for the current cleanup shouldn't be discouraged by what he said.

"I'd say keep at it, be County and the Isaac Walton League," he said. "I think we lit the flame."

**'Rabble-rouser': Art Kathan goes over pages of news clippings detailing one of the early efforts to clean the Fox River back in the 1940s. Kathan was one of a handful of conservationists who led a movement to clean the river of untreated waste from pulp mills and unimproved sewers. Their actions have helped many fish species return to the river.**

**Photo-Gazette photo by Patrice Perce**

**'Mavericks' kept pushing**

Indeed, the Kathans and their colleagues were labeled as others he said.

"I'd say keep at it, be County and the Isaac Walton League," he said. "I think we lit the flame."

**Efforts gave a boost to environmentalism**

**By Susan Campbell**  
Press-Gazette

**I**t was not unusual for veterans returning from World War II to get out to night their communities after serving their country with new eyes.

But the ability of Art Kathan and other members of the local Isaac Walton League to promulgate the cleanup of the Fox River and lower Green Bay helped on this state quest regarding water-quality protection.

What made them unique — and successful — was their understanding of the political system, coupled with a potent combination of legal, chemical and advertising skills, said Paul Womack, research director for the Fox-Walton Rivers Environmental Recovery Project in De Pere.

A dose of good old-fashioned righteous indignation also helped.

"I was a question of morality," Womack said. "The sense of it is right for any group of people to try to make a change — and they didn't do the job alone."

Just as today's environmentalists hold their own the work begun by their predecessors in the 1940s, Womack said the conservationists of those days stood on the shoulders of people like those who pioneered the idea of promoting environmental change.

"They added oomph to Wisconsin's more toward environmental leadership in the 1960s," he said of Kathan and the others.

"These guys can't take credit for all that has gone on in Wisconsin, but when the rug got stuck in the mud, they got in the oomph to get it out."



**Photo-Gazette photo by Patrice Perce**



**Photo-Gazette photo by Patrice Perce**



**Photo-Gazette photo by Patrice Perce**



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