

Connect with your environment

Learn about environmental issues, in your community and how you can get involved.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Volunteers share a water flow model for the 2011 Children's Water Festival. You can register to volunteer for the 2015 event at Behrend.

Student water festival needs many volunteers

By ANNA McCARTNEY
Contributing writer

More than 1,700 fifth-grade students from Pennsylvania, Ohio and New York will converge at Penn State Behrend on Thursday, May 14, for the Great Lakes Children's Water Festival.

The festival will educate these future scientists, teachers, town planners, politicians, farmers, consumers and business leaders about drinking water, groundwater, watersheds, surface water and water quality and the importance of water conservation through dynamic and interactive activities.

But the festival is not possible without volunteers. More than 400 volunteers are needed to ensure its success. The Water Systems Council, the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection and other sponsors of the event need local volunteers to serve as presenters, classroom guides, classroom assistants, registration volunteers, mess hall workers and logistics coordinators.

Volunteer time blocks include a morning session, 7 a.m.-noon; afternoon session, noon-5 p.m.; or a day-long session, 7 a.m.-5 p.m.

A video of a past festival can be seen at www.watersystemscouncil.org/video/ChildrensFestival_Video.swf.

Volunteer descriptions below can help you determine where you could help. Register online at the WSC website at www.watersystemscouncil.org/water-festivals/ or by contacting Margaret Martens at (202) 625-4387 or mmartens@watersystemscouncil.org.

Volunteer descriptions

- **Presenters:** Lead a

hands-on activity that may be one you currently present or one suggested by the festival organizers.

- **Class guides:** Lead one class around campus for the entire 4½ hour block to ensure timely arrival and help when necessary. Training to familiarize guides with the college campus is available the day before the festival.

- **Classroom volunteers:** Provide help to presenters during the entire day.

- **Dining hall volunteers:** Help during lunch.

- **Runners:** Carry materials, drinks and lunches (will require lots of walking).

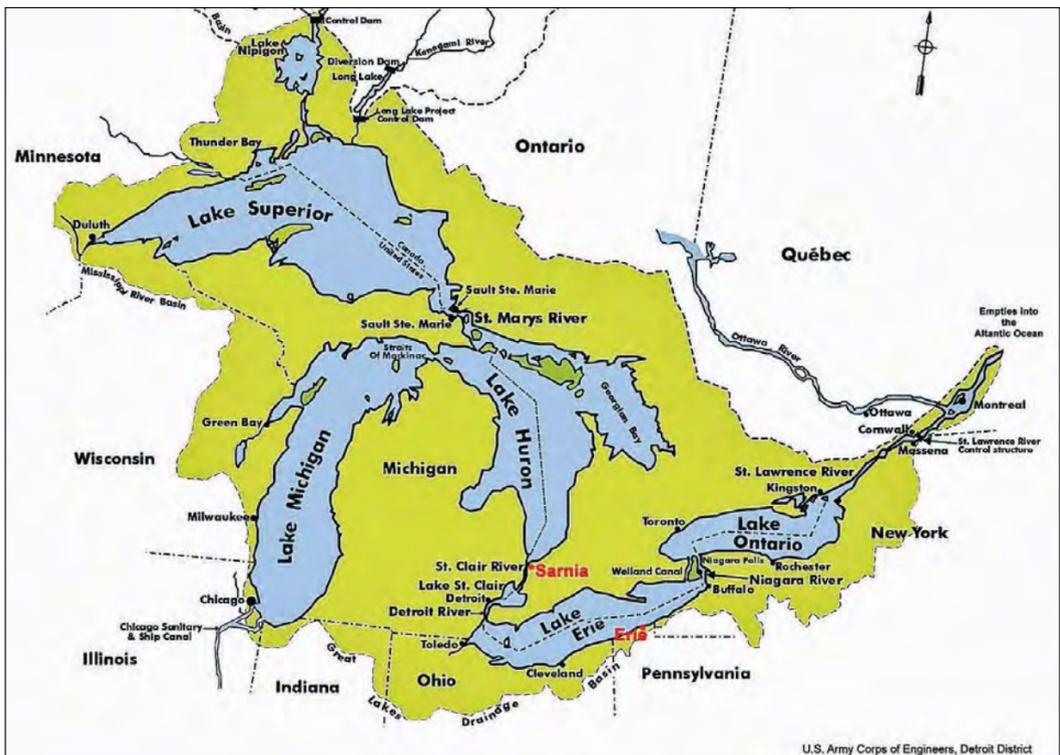
- **Registration desk volunteers:** Register and distribute T-shirts.

- **Logistics volunteers:** Help direct bus, volunteer and VIP drop off, pickup and parking.

- **Facilities volunteers:** Help with setup and take-down at the festival.

The festival, which is coordinated by the Water Systems Council, will also help the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection meet commitments for water conservation and efficiency outreach in the Great Lakes Compact Agreement. The Water Systems Council is the only national, nonprofit organization solely focused on household wells and small water well systems. WSC is committed to ensuring that Americans who get their water from household private wells have safe, reliable drinking water, and to protecting our nation's groundwater resources.

ANNA McCARTNEY, a communications and education specialist for Pennsylvania Sea Grant, can be reached by e-mail at axm40@psu.edu.



U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Detroit District
U.S. ARMY CORP OF ENGINEERS

The Great Lakes drain a large watershed (green area). The water flows from land in the United States and Canada to streams and rivers that empty into the Great Lakes, which are essentially one slow-moving river that flows west to east, dumping water into the lake below through their connecting waterways. Understanding these connections is important for protecting this precious freshwater resource.

Out to lunch

Lost cooler drifts from Sarnia, Ontario, to Harborcreek

By ANNA McCARTNEY
Contributing writer

An important lesson about water flow in the Great Lakes can be learned from a Thermos collapsible cooler found by Don Benczkowski and Matt Walderon at the mouth of Eight Mile Creek on Oct. 22, 2014.

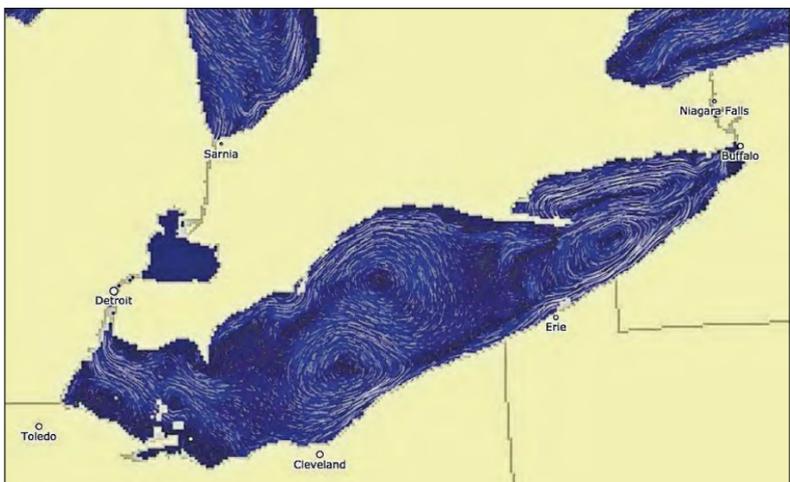
The cooler contained someone's old lunch, a hotel key card, prescription work glasses and identification information for Glen and Lisa Campbell of Ontario, Canada. When Benczkowski, the Coastal Zone Resources Management program manager, contacted the Campbells, he learned the lunch bag had been lost in March 2014.

Campbell was working in Sarnia, Ontario, on a Great Lakes freighter docked for winter maintenance when his cooler went missing. He was happy to get the cooler back and surprised to hear it had been found so far away. "I had left it on the deck and the wind probably blew it into the water," he said.

So how did his lunch cooler, which traveled at least 365 miles, get from the banks of the St. Clair River to the mouth of Eight Mile Creek in Harborcreek Township in Erie County, Pennsylvania?

Answering this question requires understanding how water flows through the Great Lakes Basin.

The five lakes are connected to each other through waterways, forming one system that includes all land, rivers and streams, which drain into any of the Great Lakes. Once in the lakes, the water moves by currents, is pushed by winds and storms, and eventually some of the water flows out of each lake. The water from Lake Superior, the highest above sea level, moves through the St. Mary's River into Lake



NOAA

The lunch cooler traveled from Sarnia via the St. Clair River, Lake St. Clair and the Detroit River into Lake Erie. Great Lakes current maps show the actual water flow. See the changing lake currents by month at www.glerl.noaa.gov/res/glctfs/currents/.



BOATNERD.COM

The freighter CSL Assiniboine was docked in Sarnia, Ontario, when Glen Campbell's cooler bag fell from the deck into the water.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Glen Campbell was surprised at the distance his cooler bag had traveled.

Huron. Lake Michigan's water also moves slowly into Huron through the Straits of Mackinac. Huron's water passes through the St. Clair River (where the cooler fell in), into Lake St. Clair and the Detroit River, into Lake Erie (where cooler was found).

Erie's water flows into the Niagara River, over Niagara Falls into Lake Ontario, and from there, water flows into the St. Lawrence River, then into the Gulf of St. Lawrence, where it finally enters the Atlantic Ocean between Nova Scotia and Newfoundland.

We can't be certain of the exact distance the cooler traveled from Sarnia to Shades Beach but it was probably much greater than 365 miles. Great Lakes current maps created with data from student-built drift buoys (see the March 17 NIE page and the current map above) show the actual water flow that changes depending on lake conditions.

However, both the traveling lunch cooler and the drifter buoys certainly prove that water does indeed flow from one lake to another and that understanding these currents can help all of us recognize the importance of keeping pollutants out of the Great Lakes.

ANNA McCARTNEY, a communications and education specialist for Pennsylvania Sea Grant, can be reached by e-mail at axm40@psu.edu.



How you can take steps to save water

People should protect water resources. Here's why. There is only 3 percent of fresh water on the Earth and only 1 percent of it is available to humans! The Earth's population is going up and the water available to each person is decreasing. Another problem is that the Earth is getting warmer, so places are getting drier. If we use

less water, more and more people will have water to survive. One good way to save water is to leave an open rain barrel outside. It will fill with water when it rains. So when you want to water your garden, use the water you have saved.

— Rosa Simon, fourth grade, Tracy Elementary School

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Check out these websites to learn more:

- www.nefsc.noaa.gov/drifter/
- www.glerl.noaa.gov/res/glctfs/currents/
- www.ndbc.noaa.gov/
- www.paseagrant.org

Find stories about problems in your community that need cooperation to fix them.

Why must we cooperate to protect the Great Lakes, the world's largest freshwater resource? Write a letter for "your space" encouraging your fellow students, parents and neighbors to protect the Great Lakes. E-mail it with your photo to axm40@psu.edu.

