

## Sweetwater

A NEWSLETTER OF THE  
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We're on the Web!

See us at:  
[sweetwateralliance.org](http://sweetwateralliance.org)

## Welcome to Pat and Wendy, our newest board members!

Pat Farrell's story:

"A native of Kentucky, I moved to Duluth in 1997 to take a job at UMD. I was thrilled to move to Duluth and the northland, having spent many summer days here both as a child and an adult. At UMD, I teach classes in soils, physical geography, environmental conservation and weather. I am very interested in the educational benefit that the stormwater garden will provide our community. Stormwater gardens mimic the cleansing function of natural wetlands and what a better way to learn that function than to witness it firsthand here in Duluth. I am impressed with the energy, dedication, and creativity of Jill Jacoby and Sweetwater Alliance and look forward to working as a Board member."

Wendy, a 4-year Duluthian, joined SWA last fall, shortly after hosting a fundraising dinner party (she spent all day in the kitchen!). For a graphic designer/artist/gardener who loves the outdoors, this project is a natural fit. She is a Returned Peace Corps Volunteer who realizes the value of being involved in projects that benefit the community. She has spent most of her life dedicated to planting trees and flowers and supporting environmental causes, and now

has the opportunity to learn more about our Lake Superior watershed and help raise public awareness about natural resource conservation. Wendy enjoys the BWCA, kayaking, fishing, sailing (notice the water theme?) and cooking dinner for a crowd. It's an honor for her to serve on this board.

Sweetwater Alliance was incorporated in 2002 as a 501 (c) (3) non-profit organization. The work we do is fusion of ecological restoration, art and environmental education. Currently, our major emphasis is to fund, design and build a Stormwater Garden on Duluth's lake Superior waterfront. We hope that this first project in Duluth will inspire other communities to join in collaboration with Sweetwater Alliance to undertake similar projects around the world.

Who we are:

Ellen Lindgren – *President / Treasurer*

Wendy Sjoblom – *Vice President*

Trish Stinnett – *Secretary*

Pat Farrell – *Board member*

Jill Jacoby – *Executive Director*

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**Sweetwater Alliance**



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## A Summer of Politics

Jill Jacoby, Executive Director

It's been a summer of politics and political decisions for the Stormwater Garden project. We've had a partial victory, and a foot left in the door for a full victory in the future!

During early spring Sweetwater Alliance asked the City Council to consider a 2-acre parcel for the Water Garden project. The Duluth City Council went on to ask "that the administration review the expanded area proposal for the living water garden along the east side of Slip 2 and provide the council with a report of the effects of the proposed expansion on current and potential future development of Bayfront by April 20, 2005" (Resolution 05-0219R).

This provided a document by the City Administration and Planning Department followed by a point-by-point response from Sweetwater Alliance. Those docu-

ments are archived on our web under the newsletter link.

This dialog led to a 6 – 3 vote by the Council on June 27th to allow the water garden to proceed on a 1/2-acre but not the 2 acres we had asked for. Voting against both the 1/2-acre and 2-acre projects were Jim Stauber, Tim Little, and Russ Stewart. Voting for the 1/2 acre but against the 2 acres was Greg Gilbert who stressed that he felt an overall design plan was needed for the undeveloped Bayfront land.

Sweetwater Alliance asked Councilor Gilbert to clarify his vote by submitting a resolution to allow us to complete two designs, one for the approved 1/2 acre and one for the 2 acres. We stressed to the Council that it is important for us to show that the water garden would compliment other uses (such as boats in slip 2) and this could best be done through a design

process. It would also allow us to answer several of the Council's questions on construction and maintenance costs.

On July 11th Councilor Gilbert's Resolution (05-0488R) passed 6 to 3 with Councilors Stauber, Little and Stewart voting against the resolution. We feel the wording of this resolution is significant and have reprinted it below.

**RESOLUTION CLARIFYING RESOLUTION 05-0454 REGARDING LIVING WATER GARDEN.**

**BY COUNCILOR GILBERT:**

WHEREAS, the council duly passed Resolution 05-0454; and

WHEREAS, there are two possible configurations of the proposed living water garden, each of which deserves consideration.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the intention to accept a grant from the Minnesota Lake Superior coastal program, expressed in Resolution 05-0454, applies to the design of two configurations; one, a .5 acre site located near the north end of Slip 2, and the other a 1.5 acre site along the east side of Slip 2.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the city has not committed to the use of the said 1.5-acre site for a living water garden.

This is the foot in the door to returning to the Council to ask for more land! This was a crucial resolution and vote and we thank Greg Gilbert for his effort.

On August 8th Councilor Stauber introduced a resolution (05-0521R) that had two parts:

The more troubling of the two stated "...that the council's intention to accept a grant and allow planning and design of a

*continued on page 2...*



"politics" from page 1

living water garden in the area of Slip 2 is conditioned upon the completion of the project, and it, therefore, being in operation on or before June 5, 2007."

This was clearly a hostile resolution. There is simply no way that a project of this scope could be designed, funded, and constructed in a two year time period. President Ness offered an amendment to drop this wording of the resolution which passed 7 -2. We thank President Ness for his amendment.

The second part of this resolution stated, "that the city council declares that the parcel of land of approximately 1/2 acre in area which is the site for planning and design of a living water garden...is located at the north end of Slip 2."

This is the exact location Sweetwater Alliance had suggested the 1/2-acre site to be located, leaving us confused as to why the resolution was created! This part of the resolution passed 9 - 0.

So, where this leaves us today is that we are finalizing paperwork with the City of Duluth and the Coastal Program and we will move into the design process in the near future. Our grant expires in June of 2006 and we will have two designs to show the community shortly afterwards. Then...we will need your support to help convince the City Council that the larger site would create an impressive world-class water garden worthy of waterfront land.

A heartfelt thank you to all of our supporters who e-mailed, called, and spoke to the City Council on behalf of this project.

If you've followed our progress with the City through the various local medias - you may have some questions about some of the issues raised. We'll address some of them here and now!

## Questions and Answers

1. If the water garden is about treating stormwater, you treat it at its source, before it enters the system.

This is referring to our proposal of pumping water from slip 2 as our water source. Water chemistry tests conducted in 1999

have shown that the slip is contaminated with high levels of chloride (road salt) and fecal coliform. Pumping water from the slip will be treating stormwater pollutants.

However, we agree that it is best to treat stormwater at its source and our objectives for this project include inspiring and motivating homeowners, businesses and governments to do just that. Our Slip 2 site is not perfect, but it's strength is that it is very visible, it could tie into the educational message of the Aquarium, and in the future will be surrounded by marina development, a possible extension of the Lakewalk and Munger Bike Trail, and future developments to the west.



We have also stated to the City Council and Administration that we have yet to design this project. We will look at the possibility of pumping water straight out of the manhole that exists on the site. We will also look at baffles that will catch and hold the most polluted water entering the slip. But we want to stress that this project has multiple benefits: It will improve water quality; it will also educate the public about their connection to stormwater and what they can do about it. It will fuse art, ecological restoration (the site is currently a contaminated Brownfield), and education. This fusion is the creative force that will make this a unique feature and attract interest from residents, tourists, the media, and others.

In addition, we'd like to point to the City's Stormwater Plan (found at [http://duluthstreams.org/stormwater/duluth/stormwater\\_plan.html](http://duluthstreams.org/stormwater/duluth/stormwater_plan.html)) that defines six general stormwater related tasks that

the City will be addressing. The first of which is providing education and information to the public about pollution including "increased public awareness that they are part of the stormwater system. That our streets, our catch basins, our ditches, our streams, even the flow of water from our driveways can ultimately take pollution to Lake Superior".

What better way to teach the public about stormwater then to have them look down into the slip where they can view the stormwater pipe and then witness how wetland plants can clean pollutants out of stormwater. We should not forget that a big part of our stormwater issue in Duluth and elsewhere, is that we have destroyed the natural wetlands that would have held and purified stormwater. An educational program on stormwater must include information on the values and functions of wetlands.

The City's Stormwater plan works hand-in-hand with Sweetwater Alliance's goals for the Stormwater Garden.

2. The land is precious as a potential money-maker. Uses could include a cruise ship terminal, city marina and public boat launch.

There is no reason why these uses cannot co-exist. In fact, the water garden would make a most elegant entranceway to the City for disembarking cruise ship tour boat and charter fishing passengers. For the Bayfront to attract visitors it needs to have multiple uses.

We'd also like to point out that this is the last undeveloped piece of waterfront land in the downtown/canal park area. The public has spoken loudly in the past through the defeat of the Equinox retail development proposal, the USS DeMoines project, and others. There needs to be a mix of uses, both public and private on the Bayfront. If planned well, all of these uses will compliment and enhance each other. We see no reason why these projects should be mutually exclusive.

3. There are other locations available for the water garden such as 21st Avenue West, next to the Aquarium, or land above slip 2.

In essence, the Coastal Program grant submitted jointly by both the City and Sweetwater Alliance was written site specific for the Slip 2 location. The Department of Natural Resources, who administers the Coastal Program grant in Minnesota, sent us a letter outlining 10 concerns with changing the water garden location. The letter stated a reapplication to the Coastal Program would be required, which would be a lengthy process, might not be approved and that current funding expires on June 30, 2006. In addition, the DNR stated that "the application in part was approved due to the convincing argument that the large number of visitors to the Bayfront site provides a unique education and outreach opportunity"

We are eager to discuss any concerns you might have about this project. Please feel free to call Jill Jacoby at 218-728-5392.

## Some Ways YOU Can Help!

We need volunteers to be on our "Friends of the Sweetwater Alliance Committee", people who would like to be active participants in supporting and promoting the stormwater garden project. This is a good way for folks, who would rather donate their time rather than money, to support our efforts. We are also in need of an accountant, an attorney, and one or two more board members. And, we would be very grateful for a donation of frequent flyer miles! If you or someone you know might be interested in helping, please contact Jill at 728-5392.

## Design Charrette for Bayfront's Stormwater Garden

By Trish Stinnett

Landscape Designer and Sweetwater Alliance Board Member

On Saturday December 11th at Hartley Nature Center in Duluth, Sweetwater Alliance invited artists to be involved in a "dynamic sharing of information and dialog ... that provides your input into the design of the Stormwater Garden." (Jacoby) Around 20 local artists along with a few designers, board members, and other interested parties participated in the event.

After presentations by Executive Director of Sweetwater Alliance Jill Jacoby and Barr Engineering's Landscape Ecologist Fred Rozumalski, the artists brainstormed for several hours. They were broken into smaller groups and came up with design concepts the combined form and function.

I was in a group of about four people a sculptor, an artist/art teacher, a native plant nursery person, and a landscape designer. We each brought something different to the table and came up with an elaborate design that combined each one of our specialties.

The groups shared their ideas, after a wonderful lunch from Savories. Most groups used images from nature. Giant sculptures, organic walkways, as well as ponds and wetlands shaped

as animals were just some of the ideas that came from the brainstorming.

One main theme that came from the session is that visitors to the water garden should see the dirty water coming into the site and then see the clean water leaving the site. Another important suggestion is that visitors to the water garden relate to the cleansing system, by informing visitors how they can make a difference.

Many of the artists seemed very enthusiastic about getting involved with the stormwater garden. They liked the idea of local art educating the public about local issues. participant Sue French said "One thing you could learn when you come is how to make your own little yard in Duluth part of the solution, part of the bigger picture." That is one of the main goals that the Sweetwater Alliance hopes to achieve with the Stormwater Garden.

Sweetwater Alliance received a grant from the Beim Foundation to involve the artists into the design phase of the Stormwater Garden project. Sweetwater Alliance feels that the event was a success and hopes that in the future during the design and construction phases of the projects artists can again be involved.



Patricia Johanson (front, right) discusses design elements with workshop participants