

made by the Hessen Literary Society in Wiesbaden.

Bernhardt is the second Wisconsin writer to stay in Germany as part of this exchange. In 2005, the group sent over Paula Sergi, a poet from Fond du Lac. In 2006, the group hosted German writer Julia Wolf for a three-month stay at the Edenfred creative arts residency in Madison, owned by the Terry Family Foundation. Wolf also received a \$3,000 stipend from the Greater Milwaukee Foundation's Theodore and Anna Grollmann Fund.

The plan is to continue alternating between hosting a German writer one year and sending a Wisconsin writer to Germany the next.

Information about the exchange may be found at the websites of the participating organizations, including www.wisconsinacademy.org and www.portalwisconsin.org.



Villa Clementine, Bernhardt's humble home in Wiesbaden.

Fresh Water and Muddy Policy

BOOK REVIEW BY CURT MEINE

The Great Lakes Water Wars

by Peter Annin
Island Press, 2006

FOR DECADES THE CITIZENS, governments, businesses, and organizations of the Great Lakes watershed have been involved in a remarkable experiment in natural resource management. The hypothesis behind the experiment is that unprecedented collaboration can protect, sustain, and maintain a great aquatic ecosystem, repository of 20 percent of the world's surface fresh water. The experiment continues as the demand for fresh water grows regionally, nationally, and globally, and as other forces are felt upon the waters: climate change, invasive aquatic

species, declining aquifers, polluted runoff, legacies of contaminated sediments, faltering wastewater treatment infrastructure, privatization and commodification of public waters, and international trade agreements.

Collaborative approaches have increasingly become the norm in resource management fields, from forestry to watershed restoration to sustainable agriculture. The joint effort to steward the waters of the Great Lakes basin stands as one of the oldest, most instructive, and most problematic examples of collaboration. In *The Great Lakes Water Wars*, Peter Annin reports on this ongoing experiment—its history and complications, contingent results, and emerging uncertainties—with well-measured concern and a sure eye for the

human drama behind the policy scenes. Annin is a Madison-based former *Newsweek* magazine correspondent and associate director of the Institutes for Journalism and Natural Resources. He provides a concise primer that remains readable while not shortchanging the story's legal details and bureaucratic dramas.

That is no easy task. To grasp the significance of the Great Lakes waters and their management challenges, Annin must grapple with the minutiae of water policy even while stretching his perspective across spatial scales. Early in his account Annin visits the apocalyptic wastelands that were once covered by the waters of the Aral Sea in Central Asia. There Soviet-era water engineers and agricultural planners

conspired to create, through diversion of the Aral's waters, one of the world's most stunning examples of environmental mismanagement. From the bed of the former sea, shrunk disastrously in just half a century to a quarter of its former extent, Annin draws a lesson as stark as the Aral's briny, desiccated flats: "Large lakes have limits."

Annin returns to the local scale to describe those places in the Great Lakes basin where we can see those limits just beyond the water's horizon. At the heart of Annin's book is a series of careful accounts of flash points in the "water wars": the diversion of water out

forward to export Lake Superior water to Asia by freighter. For basin-dwellers, the scheme brought old, only slightly submerged fears to the surface: *They are coming for our water!* Only "they" were not former Rust Belters relocated to the Sun Belt sprawl of the arid Southwest, but distant consumers newly entitled through the power of international trade accords.

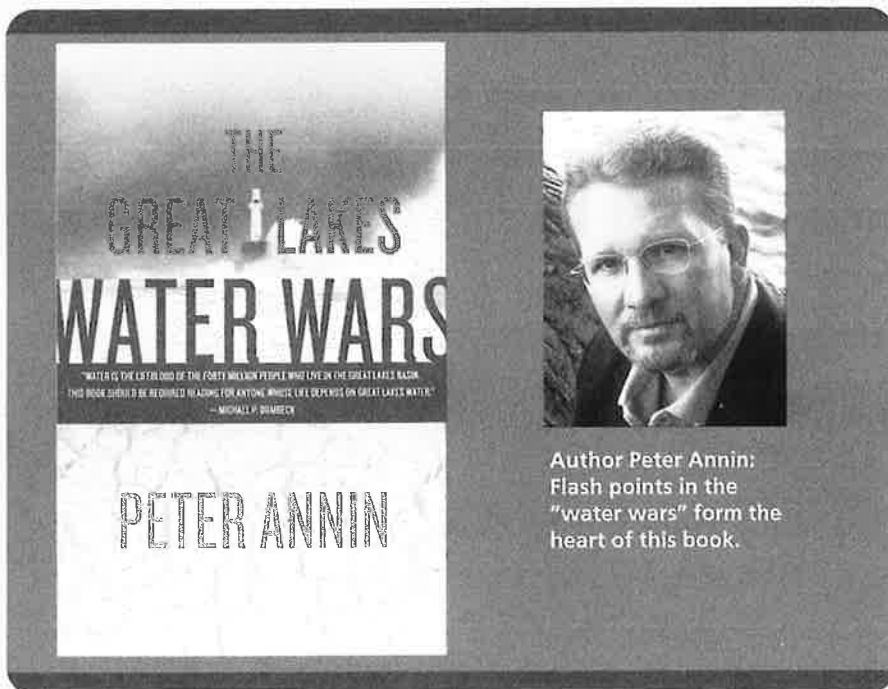
Thus began the struggle, still continuing, to devise a new and more comprehensive agreement for collaborative management of the lakes. The product of that struggle, the yet-to-be-adopted Great Lakes Compact, is a

concerned about what everyone else does upstream. Minnesota has been the most progressive water jurisdiction in the Basin—Indiana decidedly less so—with Wisconsin, Ohio, and Pennsylvania somewhere in between.

Annin tracks the evolution of the relationships among the region's partners in the last decade as "geographical loyalties were pushed" and "different stakeholders figuratively circled one another in the negotiating room." At issue is not only the future of the lakes, but whether the basin's citizens, leaders, and democratic institutions are up to the job—and responsibilities—of cooperative governance. As Annin concludes, "If the region can't figure out a way to protect and manage the waters of the Great Lakes Basin, someone else will step in to do it for them. Rightly so. The Great Lakes are far too precious to be left in the hands of the incompetent and the incapable." *The Great Lakes Water Wars* is itself a vital contribution to competent and capable stewardship.

Annin's book focuses intensively on the evolution of policy involving Great Lakes water use, management, consumption, and diversion. In so doing, it cannot cover the entire gamut of Great Lakes issues and perspectives. (I would like to have read more, for example, on the historical ecology of the lakes as a manipulated system, the ecological necessity of watershed-wide management, and the role of Native American and Canadian First Nations in the development of Great Lakes policy.) It nonetheless stands as an accessible, timely, and much-needed overview of the globally significant effort to keep well the Great Lakes.

Curt Meine is senior fellow with the Aldo Leopold Foundation in Baraboo and director for conservation biology and history at the Chicago-based Center for Humans and Nature.



Author Peter Annin: Flash points in the "water wars" form the heart of this book.

of the basin through the reversal of the Chicago River in the late 1800s; the diversion of water into the basin in the 1930s and 1940s through control dams on the Ogoki River and Long Lac north of Lake Superior; the tangled policy implications of requests in the 1980s and 1990s for diversions of water at Pleasant Prairie (Wisconsin), Lowell (Indiana), Mud Creek (Michigan), and Akron (Ohio). These historic (if little-known) battles tested not only the integrity of the Great Lakes watershed boundaries, but the ability of existing policy to safeguard the lakes.

A wake-up call came to all parties in 1998, when a novel plan was put

complex expression of shifting chemistry among the basin's varied "water personalities" (Annin's term):

Michigan is adamantly opposed to diversions, but balks at limitations on its own in-Basin consumptive use. New York has major hydropower considerations. Illinois is worried about maintaining its U.S. Supreme Court-mandated water allocation that keeps metropolitan Chicago alive. Ontario shares many of Michigan's anti-diversion sentiments, and Quebec, at the tail end of the system, is