

Local author releases new 'Great Lakes Water Wars' edition

BY CLAIRE DUQUETTE

For the Ashland Daily Press

It is difficult to look across the awe-inspiring Lake Superior expanse and think of seeing not cold, clear water but a barren, sand-filled basin. It seems a scenario only possible in a post-apocalyptic work of fiction, yet across the globe there are communities once dependent on a precious freshwater lake that have been decimated by ill-conceived water diversion projects.

For those living in the Great Lakes basin, protecting and conserving the 20 percent of the world's fresh water sitting on a collective doorstep spanning eight states and two Canadian provinces could seem an impossible task. Yet, the framework to do just that is provided by the Great Lakes Compact.

Peter Annin, co-director of the Mary Griggs Burke Center for Freshwater Innovation at Northland College, first made the amazing story of the compact available in a concise, dynamic way in 2006 with the publication of "The Great Lakes Water Wars."

A veteran journalist with a career spent covering domestic terrorism for Newsweek before turning his focus to environmental journalism, Annin has now released a revised and updated version of this landmark publication. The 2018 edition, which dovetails with the 10-year anniversary of George W. Bush signing the compact into law, includes chapters on climate change, regional water diversions, and even the proposed Foxconn project.

Remarkably, Annin's revised book broke the news that the southern Wisconsin community of Pleasant Prairie was able quietly to use a Great



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SEE **ANNIN**, 5A

Meet the author

Author Peter Annin will be talking about the new release of his book, "The Great Lakes Water Wars," at 4 p.m. Friday at the Sigurd Olson Environmental Institute, Northland College, Ashland.

Annin:

Lakes Compact loophole to divert far more water than anyone outside that community realized.

Annin said the germ of an idea for this book came in 1998, when he was still on the Newsweek staff. The Nova Group, a Canadian enterprise, hatched the idea of filling tankers with water from Lake Superior and taking it to Asia to sell to thirsty countries for a profit. The International Joint Commission, a multi-national body charged with making recommendations on policy affecting Canada and the United States, held a public hearing on the proposal in Chicago that Annin covered. What the IJC heard was a resounding “no.”

“There were fishermen, lawyers, hard-hat workers and soccer moms there,” Annin recalled in a recent interview. “There was a tremendous diversity of

people. It was the first time I saw the Great Lakes community come out, sit in one room and testify on behalf of the Great Lakes in a passionate and emotional way.”

Annin thought there was a bigger story about the Great Lakes to be told than just reporting on a single proposal.

“But I parked the idea,” he said.

Two years later he left Newsweek to run an environmental journalism program, just about the same time as the idea of the Great Lakes Compact was being developed.

“I could see that the public — and even journalists — were really struggling to wrap their heads around the issue,” Annin said. “I thought, ‘Someone has to write this book.’”

Bringing his reporter’s tenacity for research and writer’s skill to the book, Annin put the Great Lakes Compact into historical context, clearly explaining why the compact was necessary and how it came to be.

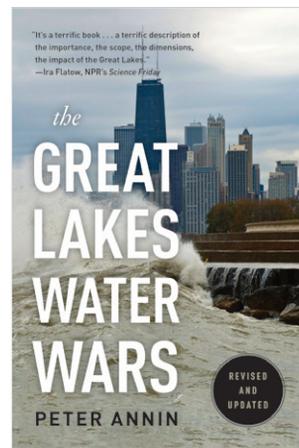
In the new edition,

which he has worked on since coming to Northland College three years ago, Annin looks at what has happened in the decade since the compact became law, and he looks forward toward new challenges that will test the strength of the international agreement.

“There have been two water diversions — New Berlin and Waukesha; climate change has become increasing relevant in many communities; and Asian carp are closing in on Lake Michigan,” Annin said. “So much has happened that this edition of the book is almost like a new book.”

Despite the challenges he sees ahead for the Great Lakes and pressures that the compact may face, Annin says the fact the compact exists is remarkable.

“Thanks to the adoption of the Great Lakes Compact, the basin has never been safer from the threat of long-range, large-scale water diversion,” he said. “That



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The revised and updated version of “The Great Lakes Water Wars” by Peter Annin, published by Island Press, is available at Apostle Islands Booksellers in Bayfield, or directly from Island Press at www.islandpress.org.

doesn’t mean we can be complacent. This water body will be a magnet for attention, we need to continue to be vigilant and make sure water use remains sustainable and corners aren’t cut in a way we end up regretting later. But the compact is quite strong, and the more it gets tested, the stronger it should become.”