MEMBER PROFILE

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Describe your work.

My dissertation research is interdisciplinary, and I am being advised by a committee with diverse membership comprised of a limnologist, aquatic ecologist, economist, rhetorician of science, and geographer.

I am using a mixed methods approach to explore the following: 1) what are the public preferences for restoration and conservation at areas targeted for restoration by the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI), specifically Great Lakes Areas of Concern (AOCs) and National Park Service (NPS) sites; 2) what are the conversations about AOCs and NPS sites on Twitter; 3) how do these conversations connect to things we measure (e.g. visitation, preferences for restoration, political happenings); and 4) how might Twitter be a useful research tool for groups like Great Lakes planners, the International Joint Commission, and even the IAGLR board.

Describe how you engage with policy making.

I see my work as policy adjacent in that it can help inform policy decisions. For example, for my dissertation I did a survey of 1,200 Great Lakes residents to understand their preferences for restoration and conservation. My findings should be useful for regional planners or EPA officials wishing to purse management and policy actions that have the support of local communities.

I have also done research on water quality in Lake Malawi. In that work, conducted collaboratively with researchers from the Malawi Department of Fisheries, we found that *E. coli*, an indicator for fecal contamination, had persistently high levels at sites along the shoreline but dropped off at 15 meters off shore. For beach managers and public health officials along Lake Malawi, this finding should be helpful in setting suggested guidance for shoreline usage of the lake.

As a student I have twice participated in Great Lakes Day in Washington, D.C. Both visits were invaluable learning experiences. After training in crafting and delivering a message to congressional staffers short on time, we visited congressional offices to advocate for the Great Lakes region and the work accomplished through GLRI. In the Great Lakes, we often bemoan federal funding decisions, and it was helpful to hear firsthand what politicians are balancing as they consider support for the Great Lakes. My team had a memorable visit with the late John Dingell from Michigan's 12th Congressional District. He was unhurried in welcoming us into his office, was familiar with Great Lakes-related happenings in his district, and was keen to talk about the health of waterbirds in Michigan. It was clear his interest in the Great Lakes was both political and personal.

What are some of the biggest research needs to inform policy?

As a student interested in learning about the black box of policy and management decision making, I would like to see more research



and articles about the steps from environmental concern to policy decision. One of the best examples of this that I have read is an article in the Journal of Land Use & Environmental Law about the Microbead-Free Waters Act of 2015 (Strifling, 2016). It would be interesting to see the Journal of Great Lakes Research take up similar case studies exploring the detailed steps of taking an ecological issue and the research informing its topic to its policy or management outcomes. Perhaps this is a contribution I can make after finishing my dissertation.

See page 9 for more on Strifling's perspective on the Microbead-Free Waters Act of 2015.