Ian Stone

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Describe your work.

There are several common threads between my current work at the University of Michigan Water Center and previous roles I held during graduate school and as a Great Lakes Fellow post-graduation. Convening experts, rightsholders, and stakeholders with the aim of planning for the future has been a constant: What issues are headed our way? What can be done to prepare for and safeguard the lakes in the long term? Specific projects have changed, but those overarching questions have steadily guided my work.

What inspired you to enter this work?

I was fortunate enough to have a small pond in the backyard of my childhood home. At the time I didn't know that it was the remnant of a great glaciation, nor did I know much about the critters that called it home. That information wasn't necessary to know that it was special. I spent endless hours pacing the banks, appreciating the daily, seasonal, and yearly changes to its structure and the life within. This guided me to an education in environmental science and eventually to the Annis Water Resources Institute at Grand Valley State University where I primarily studied algae on Muskegon Lake.

Witnessing the profound changes initiated by Muskegon Lake's designation as an Area of Concern motivated me to dive deeper into Great Lakes water policy. The policies of the past successfully transformed Muskegon Lake, ultimately resulting in its delisting in 2025. I felt in many ways that I had an obligation to make sure my generation does the same for those who follow, which led me to where I am now.

If you could brief policymakers on one Great Lakes issue that urgently needs attention, what would it be and why?

If I could brief policymakers on anything, it would be the urgency of maintaining strong relationships and multijurisdictional collaboration in Great Lakes management. A core tenet of Great Lakes management—much to the envy of other transboundary waters across the world—has been our ability to work together. Imperfect and clunky at times, to be sure, but always collaborative. At a moment in time when relationships across borders feel as strained as they have ever been in my lifetime, I think policymakers could use a reminder that the Great Lakes remain great not merely through multilateral coordination, but through truly multinational cooperation and collaboration. We need to ensure that cooperative spirit lives on, and if we truly want the Great Lakes to thrive for generations to come, this must extend to include all the sovereign nations of the region.

What is something about yourself that you'd like to share with other IAGLR members?

I am a ride-or-die Detroit sports fan. Perhaps my thinking is currently being influenced because as I am writing this, I am looking out at Comerica Park as the Detroit Tigers have just won on a walk-off home run! World Series here we come!

Although water is my career focus, I am an unabashed tree hugger. I credit my love



of trees to my father, who taught me their magic from a young age. I firmly believe we stand to learn a great deal from trees. My "favorite" tree changes like the breeze, but today I'm thinking about the lopsided, wind-torn white pines along the Lake Michigan coast, so for now, those are my favorites.