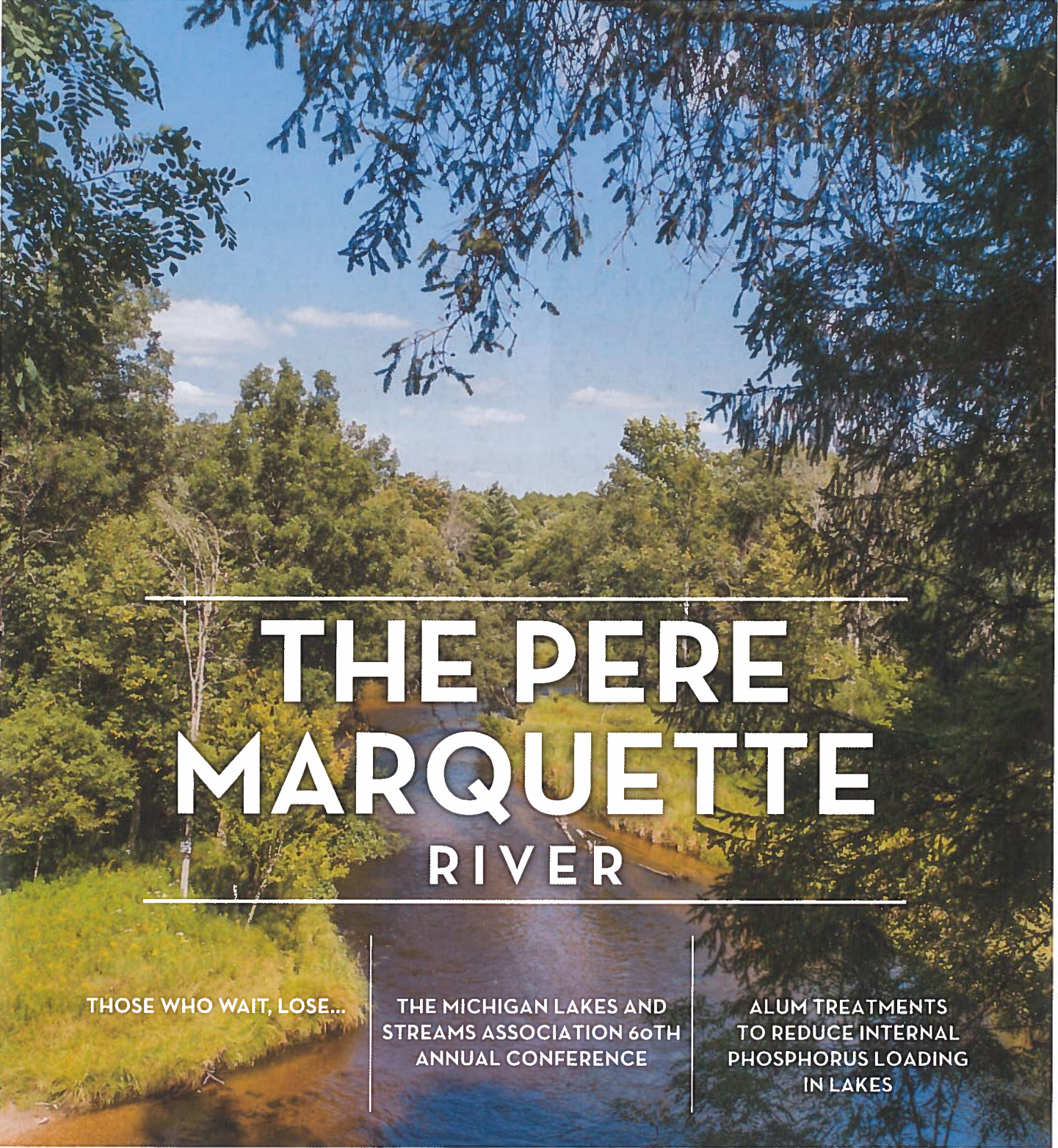


THE MICHIGAN RIPARIAN

SPRING 2021 | VOLUME 56 | NUMBER 2



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THOSE WHO WAIT, LOSE...

THE MICHIGAN LAKES AND
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ALUM TREATMENTS
TO REDUCE INTERNAL
PHOSPHORUS LOADING
IN LAKES

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REPUTABLE SOURCES: WHERE TO LOOK AND HOW TO USE THEM

SHIKHA SINGH | JLW CISMA COORDINATOR/BIOLOGIST



Folks who live near or recreate in water bodies have likely come across new organisms they couldn't identify, noticed changes in water chemistry, or wanted to make their property more "green". Many turn to Google or some other search engine to help them find answers, which can produce an overwhelming amount of information from a variety of sources. However, not all sources contain information that is factual

or based on science, and other pages allow anyone to edit content. This highlights the need to evaluate the legitimacy of a source, and cross-check the information with other sources! Here we will discuss how to evaluate a source, and suggest places you can look to find helpful information.

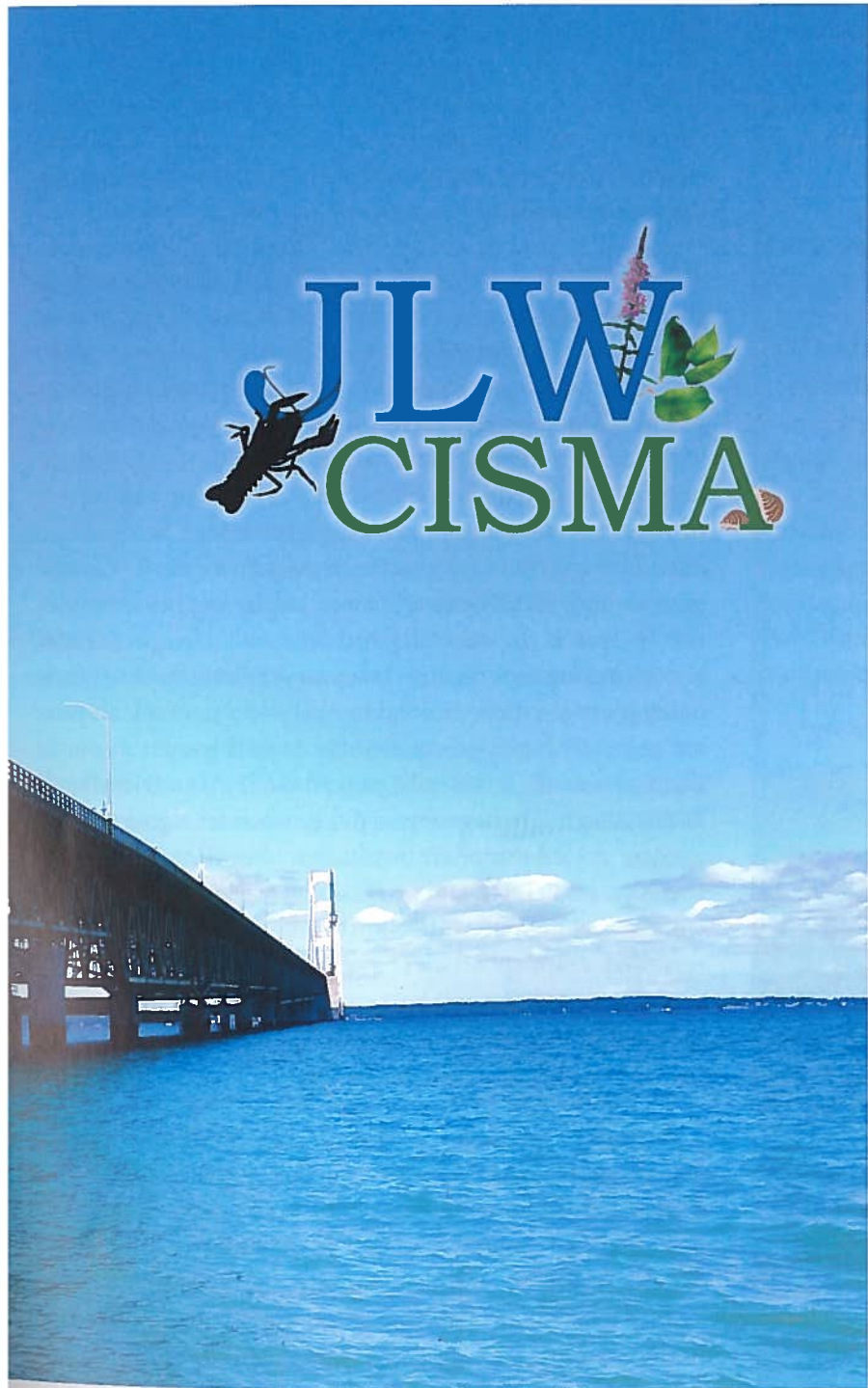
When evaluating a source, one of the first things to assess is an organization's mission and goals. Reputable organizations have their mission and goals clearly identified on their website and/or in their strategic management plan. Sources that have vested interests in furthering a position or trying to sell you a product or service may not provide you with all the information you need to make an informed decision. For example, when trying to control invasive species, if you only look at a place that provides herbicide treatment, you may miss out on other control methods such as hand pulling or biological control, thus limiting your options.

Next, you will want to look at where their funding comes from. Funding sources may have stipulations and restrictions that the page must follow, thus information may be biased or represent a conflict of interest.

Another question to ask is whether the author of the article is qualified, or has the expertise that allows them to interpret or write about the topic. It is not uncommon for journalists or writers to interpret or summarize technical data in a manner that leaves out important caveats or context due to word limitations or lack of training on the subject matter. If the author of the article is not the one who did the research, they should provide information or references to the original source/researcher so one can verify the information. Un-verifiable information, social media screenshots without sources, or unsubstantiated opinions may lead to costly mistakes, introduction of invasive species, and/or other environmental mishaps.

Being familiar with key domain names can allow you to prioritize reputable sources

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 8)



REPUTABLE SOURCES

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 7)

when presented with many options. Domains such as .gov, .edu, or .org respectively denote government, educational institutions, and advocacy organizations. Note that not all countries use .gov. Examples of countries that use an alternate domain name include Canada (.ca) and Sweden (.se). Government websites contain information such as rules and regulations, species information, press releases, alerts on emerging environmental threats, learning modules, educational materials, and contact information for relevant personnel. Government sources are considered credible as materials are created by those with relevant experience and training, must undergo quality control, and be authorized for release by managers before they can be posted on the website or carry the official department logo.

Educational and advocacy domains need to be examined carefully as they contain a mix of personal, professional, and academic sites. Every state has a “land grant” university with an extension office which operates as a partner with the federal government (mainly United States Department of Agriculture), county, and local governments. Extension articles are written by a specialist in the field, and are geared towards a variety of audiences. Individual student and staff pages are not reviewed by the university, and information should be assessed on a case by case basis. Advocacy organizations generally tend to be non-profit organizations, but you should assess their credibility to determine their legitimacy as some could be special interest groups or have



ANYTIME YOU TAKE WATER SAMPLES OR SEE ANYTHING OUT OF THE ORDINARY, LIKE AN INVASIVE SPECIES, DOCUMENT YOUR FINDINGS AND INCLUDE RELEVANT PICTURES IF POSSIBLE.

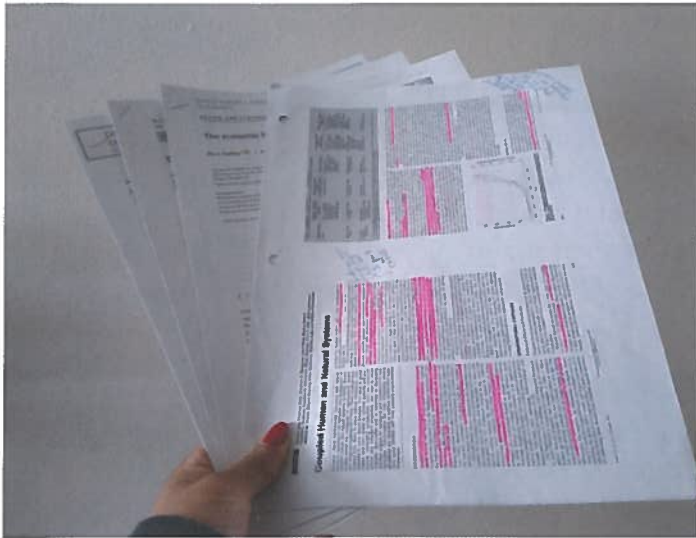


THERE ARE A VARIETY OF WAYS ONE CAN SEARCH FOR INFORMATION, HOWEVER, ONE MUST TAKE THE TIME TO ENSURE THE SOURCES ARE FACTUAL, VERIFIABLE, AND HAVE QUALIFIED PERSONS DRAWING CONCLUSIONS.

biases you may not have known about. Websites with the domain .com or .net should not be dismissed outright. Domains can be expensive to maintain, thus legitimate smaller non-profit organizations/associations may opt for these free or affordable options.

Peer-reviewed journal articles are a great source for cutting edge information and new advancements in all fields. They are submitted by scholars to be reviewed by experts in the field prior to being published to ensure that the conclusions reached are accurate, methods used are logical, and the work meets accepted standards of the field. In addition to original research data, published articles include a summary of what has been found to date, methodology, and results, and they conclude by placing results in context. Google scholar and JSTOR.org are some search engines you can use to search for scholarly articles, with Google Scholar also returning reports, case law, and scholarly books. While many journal articles are hidden behind a paywall, authors are generally happy to email you a copy if you reach out to them personally. If that fails, you can quarry your friends and family who might have access if they work for a government agency or educational institution. Royal and national societies, academies, and professional organizations also are worth checking out as they host conferences, publish peer-reviewed research articles, and proceedings that may be useful to you. Some will host conferences and webinars that are open for members of the public to attend, however some may have expensive registration fees.

Technical reports, journal articles, and government documents can be complex and sometimes confusing to read. Do not hesitate to reach out to the authors, relevant governmental employees, the conservation district, and extension staff for clarification. They can either assist you, or help direct your questions to the right people. After you have your questions answered, some scenarios may require



PEER-REVIEWED ARTICLES ARE GREAT PRIMARY SOURCES FOR RESEARCH DATA, LITERATURE REVIEWS, AND IMAGES.

some sort of action be taken. If you think you have found an invasive species, you can report it to the state or your local cooperative invasive species management area. If regulatory action needs to be taken, you can summarize your research in a short report that also includes any evidence that you have compiled (references to reputable sources, water quality reports, pictures, etc.). Keep a paper or electronic trail of all communications in case you need to refer back to them at a later date.

With the internet (especially social media platforms) being a hub of information, organizations, companies, bloggers, and individuals now have an extended reach in who consumes their materials. Ultimately, it is in your best interest to ensure you are consuming accurate and factual material. To learn more about scholarly sources, information on water related issues, and invasive species, please contact the JLW Cisma Coordinator Dr. Shikha Singh via email (shikha.singh@macd.org) or by phone at (517) 432-2089. Or visit our website at www.jlwcisma.weebly.com. R



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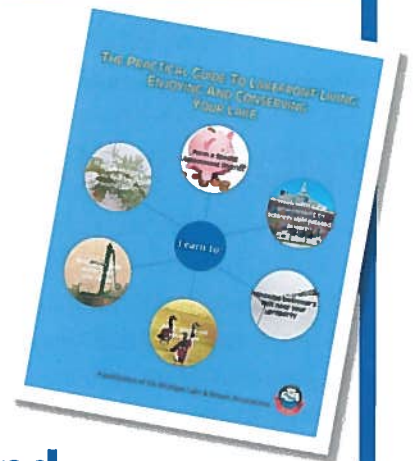


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The Practical Guide to Lakefront Living: Enjoying and Conserving Your Lake



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