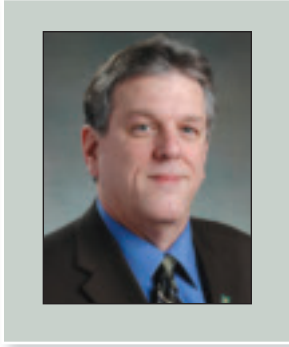


► PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Keith L. Krinn,
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AuSable River Musings

After our Annual Educational Conference & Exhibition in Albuquerque, I traveled back to Columbus to work for three days—just enough time to barely get caught up in the city health department where I'm employed. I had already scheduled a short vacation for the third week in June as I always do. I take that time annually to coincide with the hatch of a particular mayfly, *Hexigenia limbata*, also widely known as the Michigan Giant Mayfly and also as simply "the Hex." The prolific hatch and subsequent "spinner fall" begin just after dark and last, in the best-case scenarios, until the wee hours of the morning. Although I live in the Columbus area now, I have a cottage on Big Creek, a tributary of northern Michigan's AuSable River. So I now drive 360 miles to go fly-fishing. You see, northern Michigan is home to two rivers that are considered the two best trout streams east of the Rockies: the AuSable, flowing east to Lake Huron, and the Manistee, flowing westward to Lake Michigan. And I am always in pursuit of that 27-inch brown trout caught in the dark on a fly.

As soon as I arrived after the seven-hour drive, it was time to go fishing. I met my buddy Carl and we got our new one-man pontoon boats ready for the first of five nightly floats. As I put on my waders and eased my craft into the river's stream, it was just before dusk. We floated downstream to the first place we stop to await signs of the anticipated arrival of the insects—and the huge brown trout that rise from their underwater lairs to feed on the passing numerous delicacies provided by the hex hatch.

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Sitting there as night began to fall, I couldn't help but think—a loud whippoorwill beginning his serenade in the north woods behind us—about how lucky I was to be in such a pristine, unspoiled environment. The AuSable's waters, clean and pure, were flowing past, not yet with any sign of the hex fly floating on top, although lesser mayflies and caddis flies were beginning to appear. The clean, fresh pine scent of the woods filled our lungs and all was right with the world. My thoughts then drifted to our colleagues along the gulf coast and how important the word "unspoiled" is to me. To think that the beautiful place where I sat, where I have enjoyed my sportsman's pursuit for some 30 years, could ever be spoiled by human activity in a similar fashion is just beyond me. And yet my thoughts drifted to the tragedy that was still unfolding along down there. The enormity of the event has been slowly resonating with us all as through the summer months we have seen the national news broad-

casts every evening. The marshlands that are the foundation of the coast's ecological system have been encroached by the crude oil invader and hurricanes or tropical storms threaten to drive the oil further inland spoiling even more of our estuaries. All summer long one failed attempt to stem the flow of oil from the depths followed another failed attempt as the slick grew on the surface. Perhaps even worse, the oil spread out unseen in the deep, in plumes miles across and totally devoid of oxygen. By the time my message is printed in the *Journal*, a relief well scheduled for completion in August could have finally stemmed the flow. We can only keep our fingers crossed.

This is the second consecutive month I have raised this topic, and that's because I think it's really important that we grasp the magnitude of what this event means to us as environmental health practitioners, and even more importantly, what the event may mean to our society as a watershed event. We are at a place in history when looking back we can say this was the defining event that drove home the realization that we need a long-term solution to move away from energy sources that threaten our environment, economy, and national security. Petroleum is a nonrenewable resource and eventually we will exhaust it. Before we can transition away from fossil fuels, we must advocate making retrieving oil safe and environmentally sound, and advise against continuing to drill in great depths through the ocean floor before we have the technology to do it safely, responsibly, and with contingency plans in place that are viable should the worst happen. NEHA has long recognized the

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President's Message*continued from page 4*

importance of sustaining our earth's environment for future generations and stands for the belief that protecting our natural environment is critical to the health and prosperity of our communities locally, nationally, and worldwide. We as environmental health practitioners must embrace ecological issues as our own, since they are precursors to human health problems. We are now hearing reports of concerns about illnesses from exposure to oil in the workers who have been hired by BP to clean oil from the gulf and from its beaches. The havoc visited upon the local economy from this environmental debacle, in addition to the Great Recession and Hurricane Katrina, in lost jobs, lost industries, and lost tourism, is taking a heavy toll in human health, both physical and emotional.

The National Contingency Plan (NCP) for oil spills dictates that the federal government responds to the Deepwater Horizon oil spill using a multitiered and coordinated national

response strategy. The NCP places ultimate authority to ensure the oil spill is abated and effectively cleaned up with the United States Coast Guard (USCG). The NCP has empowered the USCG to direct and coordinate all response and recovery activities of federal, state, and local government as well as private entities, which includes the responsible party. I think we also need to look very hard at the federal regulatory mechanisms in place—from several administrations including the current one—that had oversight of the oil drilling industry. Larry Gordon, my colleague from New Mexico, advocates that Minerals Management Services, currently in the Department of the Interior, should be reorganized and transferred to improve regulation by separating safety oversight from the governmental entity that collects royalties from oil and gas companies. The regulatory functions should not be in the Department of the Interior, he points out, which has a mission of environmental utilization and development, rather than environmental health and protection. He suggests that

authority be vested with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. I couldn't agree with him more. On July 12, 2010, your NEHA board of directors passed a resolution that established a position paper about offshore oil drilling. That position paper may be viewed on the NEHA Web site at http://www.neha.org/position_papers/index.shtml and in this issue on page 5.

As the sky turned darker, the air chilled a bit, and billions of stars began to shine over the old AuSable, my mind again returned to the business at hand: hooking into a massive brown trout so I could then release it back into the river. Again, I felt so fortunate to breathe in the forest aroma and hear the AuSable's waters all around me, knowing I truly was in unspoiled nature. But I felt very sad that far to my south another natural environment with its own particular cherished attributes was dying a slow death. 🐟


NEHA Position on Offshore Oil Drilling*continued from page 5*

- Advocate for the establishment of guidelines by the FDA on seafood and shellfish harvested from oil spill affected waters to ensure a safe food supply.
- Support the requirement that all cleanup personnel (employees and volunteer) follow OSHA requirements and NIOSH guidelines to protect health and safety both onshore and offshore.
- Support and encourage acceleration of research and advancement of technologies that result in a sustainable environment using renewable resources whenever possible.
- Support legislation that will increase funding for renewable energy research and provide tax incentives to energy companies that switch from carbon based extraction to production of renewable energy.
- Support measures applied to improve the conditions of affected people, ecological systems and businesses, both environmentally and economically, with a goal to restore conditions as close as possible to pre-contamination conditions.

- Advocate legislation and regulations that establish strict environmental responsibility, stewardship and liability. These laws and regulations need to address accountability and negligence for both government and industry as both have shared responsibilities associated with the prevention, response and remediation of oil spills and releases.

Method of Implementation

Upon adoption, NEHA should disseminate this paper as widely as possible by release to the membership, publication in the Journal of Environmental Health, provision of copies of this paper to affiliates to share with their members, and provision of copies of this paper to similar professional associations for their review. Affiliates and members should be encouraged to provide comments to legislators based upon the information contained herein, or to provide a copy of this document as augmentation to their own comments. 🐟

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