



# Ryerson Almanac

A Newsletter from the Friends of Ryerson Woods  Spring 2008

## Great Lakes Water Wars Author To Speak at Smith Nature Symposium

Former *Newsweek* reporter Peter Annin will be the keynote speaker at the Smith Nature Symposium on May 10. After covering domestic terrorism, natural disasters and environmental news for over a decade, Mr. Annin left *Newsweek* to write *The Great Lakes Water Wars*. Published by Island Press in 2006, the book covers the history of disputes and increasing pressure on water in the Great Lakes.

“In 1998, I attended a public meeting of the International Joint Commission when a proposal to ship Lake Superior water to Asia was being considered,” Annin says about the book’s impetus. “Senior citizens, hardhat guys, men in pinstripe suits, all kinds of people went up to the microphone and poured their hearts out on behalf of the Great Lakes. There was such emotion and outrage over the precedent this would set to ship our water all over the world.”

Annin realized that with the Great Lakes basin being so vast, it is difficult to grasp the full range of issues that have confronted the Great Lakes. Understanding past battles will be important to addressing the issues that will undoubtedly confound the Great Lakes community in the future. He saw the need for the book, and the opening to write something that merged well with his own interests. “After spending my childhood going to a family cottage in northern Wisconsin,” Annin says, “I fell in love with the North Woods and the Great Lakes.”

In *The Great Lakes Water Wars*, Annin argues that “the Great Lakes region is entering an era of



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unparalleled water tension.” While we’ve grown accustomed to concerns over water quality the future battles will center more and more on water quantity. Less than one percent of surface water in the world is potable freshwater, and eighteen percent of lies in the Great Lakes.

Annin writes, “Water scarcity throughout the world—and even in parts of the Great Lakes region—will put mounting pressure on one of the most abundant freshwater ecosystems on earth. One could argue that the era of Great Lakes water tension has already begun. The question is, are the forty million Canadians and Americans who live in the Great Lakes Basin prepared for it?”

Participants in the Smith Nature Symposium will be among those better prepared for the Great Lakes future after hearing Annin’s perspective. In 2008, Friends of Ryerson Woods is focusing its programming on the Great Lakes with Annin’s speech as one of the highlights.

Annin is the 25th speaker at the Smith Nature Symposium, which is celebrating a quarter century of bringing major figures in conservation to Lake County. Roger Tory Peterson, David Sibley and Lincoln Brower have been among the many prominent keynote speakers. The Symposium is named for Ellen and Dutch Smith, and was established specifically to bring in national figures to address the citizens of northeastern Illinois.