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## Lakes' problems starting to get the funds they need

Thursday, January 4, 2001

For some years now, this newspaper has pleaded for more federal funding of Great Lakes research into the problems wreaked by a continual onslaught of biological "invaders" like the zebra mussel.

To our wondering eyes, it appears someone may have been listening. Or at least, the newly approved \$44.4 billion federal budget earmarks enough money to indicate that the lakes' problems are starting to attract some attention.

Muskegon has a good friend in Sen. Carl Levin, D-Detroit, who as co-chairman of the Senate Great Lakes Task Force says that, "To be good stewards of the Great Lakes, we must support a variety of programs to meet a variety of needs." And he adds, "These initiatives do just that."

The newly budget appropriations start with a 30 percent increasing in funding to fight the granddaddy of the invaders, the sea lamprey. This hideous parasite directly attacks trout and salmon; others play havoc on the eco-system on which these and other gamefish live. Potentially, zebra mussels and alien fish species that have migrated to the lakes via freighters' ballast tanks, could have devastating effects.

Of somewhat more local interest, there is a net \$175,000 increase in funding for the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration. Its

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Great Lakes Environmental Research Lab, which includes a field station on the Muskegon Channel, is considered the nation's top research facility on the Great Lakes.

Additional spending will bolster the National Sea Grant Program to the tune of a \$3 million increase. The program is a cooperative endeavor between the federal government and the state's main universities to educate the public about issues affecting the lakes, and this new spending level will assure that the program's Grand Haven sea grant station will remain alive and well.

For those who worry about rapidly falling lake levels, the U.S.-Canada International Joint Commission will receive added funds to study water level controls.

And there are provisions for coastal restoration and site cleanups, wetland restoration and other projects designed to control pollution runoff that poses another whole set of problems for the lakes.

This is a good start for the year, but many more problems remain, which will take years and many, many dollars to solve. We're hoping that president-elect George W. Bush, despite a record of being no great friend of the environment as governor of Texas, will make them a high priority of his administration for the next four years.

Restored fountains will light city's past, present

It was a pleasure to see Hackley Park's long-neglected statuary restored several years ago. It's equally good to see the city will further burnish the legacy of the city's greatest lumber baron by getting the water flowing again at two near-downtown fountains.

The fountains at tiny Root Park at Muskegon and Apple avenues, and at Kearny Park near Sanford and Hartford, have been dry so long that no one can remember when they were last in use.

Yet it is the little things that outsiders notice like whether water actually flows at the city's fountains. Such things lend the impression among visitors that this is a community that takes pride in itself and in

its legacy. Getting the water flowing at Root Park would perfectly augment the attractive flower plantings done by the West Michigan Herb Society.

Earlier this month, city commissioners agreed to apply for a \$45,000 grant through a nonprofit organization called Save Our Sculptures. That would pay for about half the cost of restoring the two fountains. It has funded an \$8,000 study of the two fountains, which found both to be in pretty dismal condition due to many decades of neglect.

The Kearny fountain was donated in 1901 to the city by Charles E. Hackley himself, in honor of a fallen Civil War general who commanded troops from Muskegon. Root Park was given to the city the following year by businesswoman Annie Galbreath Miller in memory of her daughter, Byrd Miller Root. Both of their stories are woven into the city's past, of which these dilapidated fountains are the only remaining symbol.

Thus, a city that takes its both its history and Hackley's gifts seriously which Muskegon clearly does could hardly afford not to take the steps needed to ensure that these long-neglected treasures from another era be preserved as a link between its past and future, and beautify the present.

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