



**The Death and Life of the Great Lakes** by Dan Egan (published April, 2018 by W. W. Norton & Company)

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Being an environmentalist and living within 20 miles of two of the Great Lakes, I couldn't not read this book. Not being a scientist, I was glad that the book was a mix of anecdotal and researched material. The stories from the everyday people, as well as those in the policy making positions, made this an easy and informative read.

The history of the St Lawrence Seaway and the opening of the Great Lakes to ocean traffic in the 1950's was enlightening. Of course, this is one of the two man made actions that have changed the ecosystem of the Great Lakes. The other, is the Chicago Ship Canal, which has connected the Great Lakes with the Mississippi River system. The ocean vessels brought the first two waves of invasive species (sea lampreys & alewives and the zebra/quagga mussels). The Ship Canal is barely holding back the third, several varieties of Asian Carp (including the "flying" carp) which have outcompeted native species throughout the Mississippi River basin.

There are tales of burning rivers (that spurred passage of the Clean Water Act), toxic algae blooms (due to fertilizer runoff - shutting down water supply to Toledo, OH), water rights issues (including a tanker ready to fill up with Lake Superior water and ship it to China). When published, this book was considered for a Pulitzer Prize, and the issues haven't changed much to this day. The Great Lakes watershed is a microcosm of how humans have spoiled the work of nature. Will man allow the Great Lakes to recover?

Additional Information: This book was featured on NPR's Science Friday in their book club. They have a recording of the show (broken down into segments) that are available through this link.

<https://www.sciencefriday.com/spotlights/book-club-death-life-great-lakes/>