



January 16, 2015

### Mississippi River Voyage

When many people retire, they talk of travel, relaxation and not being on a schedule. When Gary De Kock retired from the City of Grand Rapids, the long-time LGROW Board Member had travel in his plans as well.

Gary and his wife Linda decided to kayak the entire length of the of the Mississippi River. Leaving from Lake Itasca, Minnesota they traveled by kayak 2,291 miles to the Zero Mile Post, ten miles south of Venice, Louisiana. It was a journey that lasted 70 days.

Their voyage was a high profile, national project that was planned by the Water for People Committee of the Michigan Water Environment Association.

According to Gary, "Our days on the water were long and difficult and the mosquitoes in Minnesota were insatiable". For nine of our ten weeks, we were on constant lookout for public supplies of drinking water to refill our water bottles".

Gary also talks about the incredible challenge of navigating through the huge volumes of ship traffic in the southern part of the Mississippi River. A significant challenge given the size differences between freighters and a small kayak.

If you or your service group would like to learn more, contact Wendy our Director of Environmental Programs. Wendy can put you in touch with Gary and Linda or give you more information about this exciting and difficult journey. We really appreciate Gary for his service to LGROW.

*Last year we printed a few stories about our member communities. Those stories were well received with several suggestions that we continue to publish community profiles from time to time.*

### The City of Walker

The City of Walker started out in 1837 as Walker Township, initially including the land west of the Grand River in Kent County in what is now most of Sparta and Alpine Townships. The township first met on property where the Gerald R. Ford Museum is located. It was the second township organized in Kent County with Canadian immigrants Samuel and Lydia White credited as its first settlers. Early pioneers found agricultural conditions especially favorable for orchards including peach and apple trees.

Eventually portions of the Township of Walker broke away or were annexed to adjacent jurisdictions. To protect its territory from further appropriation, the City of Walker was established in 1962 with an area of 26 sq. miles.

Today, the City of Walker is a thriving commercial and residential center with a population of 24,000. In addition to its agriculture heritage, Walker is known as a vibrant industrial and manufacturing center which includes Meijer Corporate Headquarters, Bissell, Betz Foundry and many other light, heavy industrial and high technology firms.



Mayor Mark Huizenga

*It is my privilege to serve as the Mayor of the City of Walker. The city is comprised of diverse industries from agricultural, light and heavy manufacturing to corporate headquarters for regional and international companies. Our neighborhoods and parks are equally diverse providing access to bike trails, neighborhood parks and even the Kent County Millennium Park.*

*As the economy continues to rebound, we see new neighborhoods and plots being developed and even old legacy factories that once stood empty being revitalized into thriving businesses.*

*Our city faces many of the same challenges as other municipalities from long term liabilities and road funding issues. The management team at the City works diligently with the commission to continue to be creative with the resources we have and deliver services to our residents in a very efficient manner.*

*Mark Huizenga, Mayor  
City of Walker*

### **Next Board Meeting**

**February 5, 2015**

**8:30 am**

**Kent County Building**