



## Screening Toolkit for: The Marion Lake Story: Defeating the Mighty Phragmite

### ABOUT THE FILM

At a time when the world is rethinking its relationship to and with the planet, when problems touching on the environment can seem overwhelming and when community is more often something we belong to online rather than in real life, *The Marion Lake Story: Defeating the Mighty Phragmite* serves as an oasis. The environment is not some other place, but our home - where we work, play and live. The film shows we can build strong communities even where we don't agree on everything. In fact, those are the only kind of communities where things get done.

**Lori Luscher**, longtime resident of East Marion, NY at the center of the film, woke up one day and decided to act. She had watched how slowly but surely the lake outside her home had all but disappeared behind a stifling curtain of reeds. With no background, training or history as an environmental activist, she worked with a Wetlands Biologist to apply for \$100,000 dollar matching grant from the New York State Department of Conservation which she ultimately received. She worked closely with Steve Marino of Tim Miller Associates. Steve holds a degree in biology and has amassed over 20 years in the field. His oversight provided the expertise needed to tackle a project of this scale which was critical to receiving the grant from the state and provided a factual baseline on which the community could both rely as the work was done and use to weigh their options. After yard sales, contentious home owner's association meetings and season upon season of hard work, Lori and her rag-tag gang of volunteers completed one of the largest citizen-led eradication projects in New York State history. The odds may be long, but every one of us can do something.

### DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

#### **Greta Schiller**

Living nearby in Southold, NY, **Greta Schiller** began documenting Lori's eradication project culminating in the short documentary, *The Marion Lake Story*. Creating impact toward a healthy sustainable environment has been a major motivation in her most recent work. The WAVES Campaign is an engagement and outreach campaign that curates the film with additional educational resources, a pledge activity and data collection to ensure that Lori's story is not only shared, but that it also inspires further action everywhere. The WAVES Campaign grows out of the shared political and artistic ideals of the founders and partners behind Jezebel Productions, Greta Schiller and Andrea Weiss. Founded in 1984 as a registered 501(c)(3) nonprofit, Jezebel Productions' work has received two Emmys, dozens of awards from film festivals and has been broadcast in over 25 countries. Greta has been working for the past 25 years to bring to light the extraordinary feats of ordinary people - the types of people whose stories rarely merit notice in the annals of history, but without whose work, perseverance and commitment the world would be a poorer place. Jezebel Productions covers topics from LGBT rights to Civil Rights, to Resistance to Fascism to the Holocaust and, most recently, Science and Society. Her film, *No Dinosaurs in Heaven*, tackling the dilution of science education by the Creationist movement, was screened in 75 cities and is held in over 200 university libraries. The film presentations led to the adoption of a requirement to teach evolution to all science students at CUNY (The City University of New York). The common thread of their quarter century of work has been to recognize the accomplishments of ordinary people in history's great movements and issues, to inspire others to act and to generate a positive impact on the world through educational and compelling storytelling.

Thanks for your commitment to working together towards a sustainable future. And good luck with your screening! Stay in touch and let us know how it goes.

## SCREENING OBJECTIVES

### What are your goals?

We strongly recommend a pre-screening brainstorming session to set realistic goals. Clearly articulating your objectives will make it much easier to plan the event, strategize for useful outcomes, target publicity and evaluate your results. Visit our Resources page (<http://the-waves-campaign.org/resources/>) for links for further reading and organizations that can provide ideas and support. A screening event can be used to channel interest in local water quality issues; it can inspire both individual and collective action; and it can be used to pitch stories about local or national water quality issues to reporters.

- Inspire your local/community group to tackle a long-standing water and/or invasive species related problem in your area.
- Dispel the idea that concern for a healthy environment is just for environmentalists.
- Organize youth for a service learning project/Challenge your community to make WAVES.
- Share and spread information about local policies related to water quality such as fracking, restrictions against invasive species (plant and animal), septic systems, run-off from lawns, proper disposal of prescription drugs, plastic single-use bags, land use and more...

## THE EVENT - PREPARING FOR YOUR SCREENING

### Before Your Event

- Be sure that you've secured THE MARION LAKE STORY's public performance rights license. This license is necessary in order to screen the film publicly. Visit the site of our educational distributor, New Day Films' website <https://www.newday.com/film/marion-lake-story-defeating-mighty-phragmite>.
- Please contact us directly at [thewavescampaign@gmail.com](mailto:thewavescampaign@gmail.com) or <http://the-waves-campaign.org/take-action/host-a-screening/> to register your screening and to contact us with any questions.
- Having nailed down your screening's date, time, and venue, it's time to start preparing for your event. Here's a checklist to get started:

### Your goals

- **Host Organization(s):** Do you want to approach other organizations and/or stakeholders to co-sponsor and co-plan your event?
- **Structure of the Event** (Screening plus activities before and after): Decide about the structure of the full screening event. When planning consider how long the pre-screening remarks, the film and the post screening event will take in total as that total time is what you will be promoting. Also, think about who your audience will be to consider if your full screening event plans are appropriate. For instance, if you are screening in a school setting you will have to take into account the timing strictures of the school's schedule. Will there be a post-screening discussion; and, if so, what topics will be covered? Do you want and have access to people for a panel discussion? Do you want a speaker? You may wish to invite the director, Greta Schiller, or to work with the local college or university for access to funds and people who can speak in depth on specific topics. Whom will you invite: Experts? Activists? Religious leaders? Community leaders? State legislators? Other stakeholders? Will you provide an agenda to be followed during the post-screening interaction, or will you let the audience decide the course of the discussion? Post-screening activities don't only have to be discussions. Consider staging an alternative to the traditional post-screening exchange by preparing a field trip if the local area in need of mitigation is near the screening venue. Prepare a "show and tell" or quiz about native and invasive species or alternatives to current inputs stressing your water resources. Find creative ways to engage your audience directly with your issue.
- **Do your own research.** While you don't need to be an expert on all topics related to water policy, it is very helpful to come prepared with the basics to keep the discussion on track and be alert to misstatements of fact. Review the film and research your area of water policy in your community before the screening. For a national overview, check out the Environmental Protection Agency's "Water: What You Can Do" resource at <http://water.epa.gov/action/>.

- **Resources:** Check out the Resources section of The WAVES Campaign website at <http://the-waves-campaign.org/resources/> to see if there are any major developments worth addressing in the post-screening discussion.
- **Anticipate your audience.** Consider the potential range of people in your audience and your goals in constructing your post-screening activities. Don't assume people from similar organizations will agree with your proposals and practice ways to respectfully respond to provocation if you know your issues incite strong reactions. Those who disagree may have important perspectives and suggestions despite your overall differences.
- **Provide Literature:** Create a hand-out of action steps. Whether you opt for a traditional panel/Q&A/speaker event or if you have opted for a more hands-on post-screening happening, be sure to leave your audience with information and a set of actions from low to medium to high levels of involvement so that they can carry what they've gained from the screening into their daily lives.

## **PUBLICITY AND INVITATIONS**

- It's a great idea to issue a press release to let local newspapers, bloggers, and radio stations know about your event. The WAVES Campaign provides The Marion Lake Story's Screening Toolkit with a Press Release Template and Stills at <http://the-waves-campaign.org/screening-toolkit/> so that you can create your own customized event release and flyer.
- Add The Marion Lake Story's trailer to your blog or website by visiting <https://vimeo.com/102478131> to embed it.
- Use all the online and conventional media channels you can to invite guests, such as email, Evite, listserve, Facebook and phone.
- Use all the online and conventional channels you can to reach potential audience beyond your immediate circle. Post on Facebook, tweet on Twitter; pitch your story to print, online and radio media. Please use the tag, *The Marion Lake Story*, for all Facebook postings. Be sure to include the website for the film and the WAVES Campaign in all your materials: [www.the-waves-campaign.org](http://www.the-waves-campaign.org).
- Don't forget to remind your contacts the day prior to the screening!

## **TIPS FOR A SATISFYING SCREENING**

- Test-run your equipment at least one week prior to the event. Make sure the DVD plays all the way through without a glitch. Make sure the sound experience will be comfortable for everyone in the room no matter where seated. Investing in your sound equipment will pay dividends as you do not want to have people at the back of the room unable to hear clearly while those in the front experience the sound as too loud or distorted.
- Check to make sure your venue can be made dark enough to clearly see the projected images. Ask if you can mask off windows with black paper if need be. Are there obstacles for the sightlines of your audience? Again, testing a week in advance will give you time to troubleshoot and find workarounds.

## **SCREENING DAY CHECKLIST**

- Consider bringing a sign-in sheet to collect email addresses from the audience in case you want to follow up or add them to your mailing list.
- If applicable, bring literature about your organization or from those whose work you will be highlighting as part of your post-screening event.
- When you introduce *The Marion Lake Story* be sure to mention why you found the film personally compelling. This is your community, use the film to strengthen your connection with them rather than treating the film as a lesson they must sit through. Use your introduction to tie themes from the film to the goals you hope to achieve or to entice people to remain for the post-screening session for those activities.

- Allow ample time, at least 30 minutes depending on the post-screening activity, after the film. Inform your audience of The WAVES Campaign pledge to map all the projects, individual or group-led that positively impact water resources. Visit The WAVES Campaign site ([www.the-waves-campaign.org](http://www.the-waves-campaign.org)) to check out pledges already taken in your area.
- Provide a range of options for post screening participation. Everyone can contribute; everyone can make WAVES of action to improve our shared water resources.
- Remember to take photos from beginning to end of the event and tag them with The Marion Lake Story.

## HOW DID IT GO?

- Please email us at [thewavescampaign@gmail.com](mailto:thewavescampaign@gmail.com) with feedback from your screening.
- Share photos and comments on Facebook.
- Don't forget to thank your partners and audience members who made the event possible after the screening.

## DISCUSSION POINTS

1. Did anything you learned in The Marion Lake Story surprise you? Before the film had you heard about invasive species?
2. What do you think sustainable water policy should include? Are you aware of the source of your local drinking water?
3. In the film, the community surrounding Marion Lake is skeptical that this eradication effort will succeed. Why do you think it did this time? Can Lori's example inform other campaigns in your area?
4. The biologist in the film, Steve Marino, discusses why bio-diversity is so important. Can you recall some of the specific problems due to the phragmite invasion? Are invasive species, plant or animal, a problem in your community? What are the problems with mono-species even if they are not classed as invasive? What are the problems associated with non-native species? What might work (and what might not work) in your community?
5. Observing norms as well as homeowners' covenants and restrictions and zoning laws plays a big part in getting along in a community. Many neighborhoods require either by law or social norms that lawns be green and "weed free." What norms about plant species are positive or negative for the health of surface waters and groundwater for the people and other species that depend on them? For instance, how important is having a green lawn to being considered a good neighbor? Nutrient run-off from lawns negatively impacts surface water life-forms such as clams, mussels and other edible shellfish. In August of 2014, the municipal drinking water in Toledo, Ohio was declared toxic due to algae contamination in Lake Erie. Run-off from residential and industrial nitrate fertilizers introduced more nutrients into surface and groundwater at a time than can be absorbed to maintain a chemical balance healthy for humans and sport fish. Beaches are routinely closed due to algae blooms. Do your neighbors see the connections between their individual actions and the aggregate results?
6. While action is useful at any level, what is the best strategy for your community's issue(s)? Will you focus on the neighborhood level? Local government? State government? National government? Will you focus on a particular demographic such as youth, or will you try for a multi-generational approach? What will you say to critics who point to too much regulation, or a sense of hostility towards potential negative economic impacts? Support for solar energy appears to be crossing partisan lines in states such Oklahoma, Alabama and Arizona. Are there points of agreement regarding your community's water quality issues?
7. Water quality is a big issue with many sub-issues feeding into it. Do you feel that it is a better strategy to tackle a sub-issue, such as educating your community about septic and waste water concerns and organizing support for alternatives, or are you more interested in tackling the meta issue of achieving healthier water quality through an approach which seeks to balance and integrate human activity into an environment that functions well for all the species that depend upon it? Or, something in the middle?

8. What groups and organizations in your community might – or should – be interested in a local level? Are there other organizations that might be interested in learning more about water policy issues more broadly? What strategies could be considered to get them more involved?

## **GETTING INVOLVED**

### **What can I do to improve the health and sustainability of our shared water resources?**

After your screening, be sure to visit The WAVES Campaign, make a pledge and investigate the resources and partner organizations for the campaign. We have ideas, our partners have ideas and you and your audience have ideas – please share them with us!

#### **ACTION 1: Make Your Voice Heard**

You may have an action or a policy to introduce or specific legislation to support or oppose. Bring sample letters to the editor or to elected officials as a model with the reminder that for news outlets, the letters must be written in their own words. Be sure to provide addresses for your audience. Also provide any relevant research materials. Remind your audience that they can be firm without being disrespectful or attacking an opponent's character. Weaving facts into a personal story with concrete details is a powerful means of connecting with and persuading others.

#### **ACTION 2: Form A Coalition/Join A Movement**

Is your goal in your screening event to either start or add to your organization's work? Be aware of the level of commitment you are asking from your audience. Not everyone will be able to come to every meeting, so be sure to have a variety of contributions people can make according to their circumstances. Prepare your audience at the outset of the screening by sharing, in brief, your mission and goals. Think through prior to your event the various "jobs" people could take on to better make use of everyone's talents, social networks and time constraints. Don't discount reaching out to existing organizations for resources, support and guidance.

#### **ACTION 3: Embrace Your Civic Duties**

Research the voting records of your elected officials on land use, infrastructure, chemical regulation and other policy areas that impact the health and sustainability of your community's water source. Contact your local, state and federal officials to express your opinion. Thank local leaders for their support or engage them in a response to your questions about their position on specific initiatives. Share a testimonial or personal experience and be sure to be respectful and include concrete details. Attend local and state planning meetings and open legislative sessions. Wear a button or t-shirt or cap that identifies you as part of a larger group. Money and special interests may be powerful, but letting your representatives know you and your group are paying attention to particular issues and are willing to vote accordingly is also powerful.

#### **ACTION 4: Never Stop Learning**

Despite everything you know about an issue that may have brought you to this film and this issue, there remains still more to be learned. Beware of becoming too attached to a particular perspective or judgment about best practices that you miss out positive suggestions or policies proposed by people you deem your opponents. Concentrate on achieving the ultimate goal – a healthy sustainable environment for humans, plants and animals alike – rather than insisting on a single set of steps to reach that goal. Remember that government is not a monolith, that different agencies and departments have different perspectives and approaches from one another. Learn more about the impact of various policies and community practices that impact the health and sustainability of your community's water sources. Research and get the facts about how various regulations affect your state and city. Search on government websites or in news outlets to collect information about testing procedures, the age and type of waste water infrastructure and remediation costs versus bans on certain practices. Consider comparative perspectives that discuss the ways some industries (fishing and recreation) may be harmed to protect other industries (developers, industrial agriculture and landscaping). What are the timelines for impact used by local, state and federal entities? What are the alternatives not currently part of "best

practices”? Visit websites with up-to-date news and information about current policy initiatives. Share links with your peer networks through social networking tools and/or email alerts.

### **ACTION 5: Design A Local Service Learning Project**

Protecting the environment is not just for environmentalists. Youth groups such as the Boys and Girls Club and the Scouts are always looking for group and individual projects to learn skills and contribute to their community. High school students looking to build their “resumes” need service learning opportunities to help them apply to the college of their choice or to transition from graduation into the workplace. And don’t forget, many organizations and clubs for adults from the Elks to the Veterans Associations to the Rotary Club and everything in between bring people together to contribute to their communities while strengthening their social and economic networks. Our nation’s armed services’ bases are some of the most polluted areas in the country. The Rotary Club’s stated mission is to bring professional together with the aim of making the world a more peaceful place through the promotion of high ethical standards. The Chamber of Commerce is composed of many key players with political leverage and clearly defined stakes in the local economy. Educating them and encouraging sub-groups such as the “Green Chambers” popping up all over the country may reap greater benefits than writing them off as the enemy. All of the people in these groups live, play, and work in your community. Tap into your shared pride and love of your town or city by designing a project that brings people together across artificial barriers to make friends and understand new perspectives.

### **ACTION 6: Take The Waves Pledge**

Whatever steps you or your group take toward the issues related to water quality, visit the WAVES website at <http://the-waves-campaign.org/take-action/the-pledge/> and register your pledge to act. Place your “pin” on the map we are keeping to show the number and variety of people across the United States taking small, large and every size in between steps to do something positive in their community.

## **RESOURCES**

### **Example of Crossing Partisan Lines:**

How the Tea Party Came to Love Solar Energy

<http://theweek.com/article/index/261091/how-the-tea-party-came-to-love-solar-energy>

### **Example of Invasive Species Resource:**

iMap Invasives Identification Guides

[http://imapinvasives.org/links#id\\_guide](http://imapinvasives.org/links#id_guide)

### **Example of Integrated Land Use, Economic Development and Water Quality:**

Milwaukee Is the New Portland

[http://www.salon.com/2014/08/20/milwaukee\\_is\\_the\\_new\\_portland\\_partner/](http://www.salon.com/2014/08/20/milwaukee_is_the_new_portland_partner/)

### **Primer on Water Sources for Long Island:**

North Fork Environmental Council’s The NFEC Water Basics Guide

<http://nfec1.org/web/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/June2014WaterInsert.pdf>

### **Example of Run-off Deteriorating Water Quality:**

Toledo’s Drinking Water Crisis Traces Bad Trend Line on Algae’s Toxic Blooms

<http://www.minnpost.com/earth-journal/2014/08/toledos-drinking-water-crisis-traces-bad-trend-line-algaes-toxic-blooms>

### **Example of Plastic Bag Impact on Water Quality and Marine Life:**

LA County Government: Plastic Bag Pollution

[http://dpw.lacounty.gov/epd/PlasticBags/Articles/Googobits\\_07-21-05.pdf](http://dpw.lacounty.gov/epd/PlasticBags/Articles/Googobits_07-21-05.pdf)

### **Example of Sources and Types of Water Pollutants:**

Minnesota Pollution Control Agency: How's the Water? Pollutants and Emerging Concerns:

<http://www.pca.state.mn.us/index.php/water/hows-the-water/pollutants-and-emerging-concerns/index.html>

### **An Update on Marion Lake:**

<http://suffolktimes.timesreview.com/2014/08/50903/native-flowers-in-bloom-at-marion-lake-a-first-since-sandy/>

