

Happy New Year to the effective changes coming in 2010!

To be alive is to have water. How many ways can we say that water is life? Our hearts pump the water/blood through our bodies and one does not exist without the other. Yet we continue to act as if this were not the bottom line.

My search for 25 years has been to connect or reconnect humans to water, to ignite a powerful passion. If people are informed and educated, then they can act to protect or restore their waters. The journey has over and over again led me to headwaters of rivers, springs, and seeps -- places held sacred for centuries. Last summer I visited a cave where water poured forth, pulsing with a rhythm like a heart beat emanating from the earth. I met the people who live from these waters -- one village who forbid the cutting of trees because they knew the waters would disappear if the forest were cut or the monastery where the replanting of a forest brought back their waters.

Yet, few of the people understood that plastic would not biodegrade, that chemical fertilizers are harmful to water supplies, and that their waters could disappear with the damming and mining of their lands. Global warming is not even mentioned although the glaciers are shrinking fast. They are not prepared for this challenge to their lives. There is no wastewater treatment or rainwater harvesting, education is limited or non-existent, and women in particular have little access to education.

Meanwhile the newspapers in the US report on the deterioration of the drinking water supplies and insufficient pollution controls on chemicals. I cried knowing the large number of people losing their connection to water as their primary source of aliveness. I am confident of humans' ability to come together to protect the very foundation of their lives. It is time to understand that human health and life itself is not negotiable.



Keepers of the Waters is a unique organization. It is inspired by my grass-roots vision of empowering people. It is a free service and our website is invaluable to the 2,300 people who access it each month. And, even though I don't take a salary, we still need \$15,000 each year to run our office and maintain the administrative details of a non-profit organization. We need your help and support to keep this service alive and healthy.

We also fundraise for important projects throughout the year. Currently, Tangjun from the Yak Team, who we partnered with after the earthquake in China, is working deeper in the devastated areas of Sichuan and has asked if we can provide funds for additional clean water sites. This project will potentially reach 20,000 people.

Another project I am working on and actively looking for funding is 'reSources: Saving Living Systems'. In Tibet, a 1,500-year-old culture exists that has ecologically sustained rural water sources (springs, mineral waters, lakes, and headwaters of rivers). This culture remains today, though it, and the water sources -- which are necessary for drinking, washing, religious ritual, and to alleviate the symptoms of disease -- are increasingly threatened by escalating development and are little known to the outside world.

I believe that it is an iconic world model. By looking at cultures that still have a traditional practice that sustains their water sources, we can find innovative approaches to the urgent contemporary global issues of watershed conservation and rural economic development. We are working diligently with the Tibetans to communicate and bring education to their communities about the plight of water sources. You can find more information about this project at our website under 'Our Projects' and, to make your 2009 tax-deductible contribution today, please go to 'Support Us'.

With deepest thanks, Betsy Damon

We are proud to offer a 2010 calendar that highlights amazing images from Betsy's work in China and Tibet. For a donation of \$40, we will send you this gorgeous and inspiring gift.

To make your 2009 tax-deductible donation today, please visit our website and click on 'Support Us'.
www.KeepersoftheWaters.org