

Three Women Carry Water From Gulf To Great Lakes

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Sharon Day carries the bucket and eagle feather staff.



Three Native American women are walking across Mississippi on their way to Lake Superior. MPB's Jeffrey Hess reports that they are carrying a bucket of water from the Gulf of Mexico to Wisconsin to raise awareness about clean water.

On a busy stretch of highway 49 near Mendenhall, three women carry a small copper bucket and an Eagle Feather Staff.

69-year old Josephine Mandamin says they are on what is called a water walk, carrying a small bucket of Gulf of Mexico water they collected in Gulfport to Lake Superior.

"We are one of the four that are carrying the salt water from each of the four directions. To raise consciousness, to collect the consciousness of the people and for people to be aware that the water is very precious. And the salt water is what we are carrying now," Mandamin said.

There have been 8 different water walks since 2003. The women raise some money before the water walk, and then rely on good natured strangers for any help along the way.

59-year old Sharon Day says she chose to walk from the Gulf because the Mississippi River has special meaning.

"I live a block from the Mississippi in St. Paul. And I have had water ceremonies at the head waters where the water is so pure and clean you can drink out of it. But even when it gets to St. Paul, nobody would drink it," Day said.

A 2009 review by the New York Times found that the EPA regulates more than 15-hundred facilities around the state and on average, more than of those facilities had some type of Clean water violation.

The EPA doesn't rank state's water quality because each state is so different. Of the 157-thousand miles of Mississippi water tested by the EPA about a quarter registered as impaired water.

Concern for clean water motivated 19-year old Korina Day to join her first Water Walk.

"Because my aunt asked me to and I decided the I needed to help because the water is polluted. No blisters yet," Day said.

The three women are planning to complete their 12-hundred mile journey on June 12 in Bad River, Wisconsin.

Both men and women are welcome to help carry the water. However, women are asked to wear skirts.

When they get there, they will meet with the three other teams, mix the water together and pour it into the lake to symbolically cleanse it.