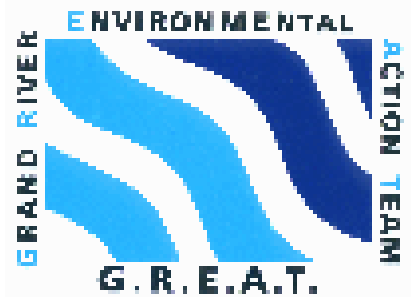


G.R.E.A.T.

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New Directions for GREAT

By Jim Seitz, President

The GREAT Board of Directors has adopted five major Goals to achieve for 2007. While this is a very ambitious undertaking, the board strongly feels it is necessary to effectively pursue our mission “to promote, through activities and educational programs, public awareness for the need to protect and preserve the Grand River, including its watershed and surrounding wetlands in Jackson County, Michigan.” *To help accomplish this we have reorganized the board with both standing and ad-hoc subcommittees, each charged with specific responsibilities. We have ranked the following goals in order of priorities:*

1. Implementation of UGRIP Grant

GREAT is a major partner with other local groups in Upper Grand River Implementation Project (UGRIP-<http://www.theugrip.org/>). The project is focused on rehabilitation of one of the Grand River’s major tributaries, the Portage River, located in northeastern Jackson County. The river is suffering excessive non point source pollution resulting largely from the surrounding present and previous agricultural land. GREAT is committed over three years with an in kind match support of \$10,400 for 340 volunteer hours. Volunteers will help create stream bank stabilization and buffer strips. An educational program will be developed to make public presentations to local units of government. GREAT has designated our 2007 annual clean-up to be the Portage River, Saturday morning, September 15th. Under consideration is planting trees and removal of debris at designated bridge locations. Details are to be worked out, but will be promptly posted as developed to GREAT’s web site (http://www.great-mi.org/annual_cleanup2.htm) and just prior to the date in local newspapers.

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Exceptional Weather, Appealing Events Combine to Promote Record Participation

The last two weekends of April 2007 will be remembered as record setters for GREAT. The weather “perfect,” “beautiful,” “unbelievable,” coaxed many people out-of-doors, to GREAT events after a miserably cold, rainy, and snowy early April. But weather was not the only factor. The first event, the 2007 Earth Day Celebration, held Sunday, April 22, was in conjunction with seven other outdoor, and environmental groups at the popular Cascades County Park in the city of Jackson. One hundred participants took turns paddling GREAT canoes and kayaks around the lagoons of Cascades Park.

The second event, held the following weekend, Sunday, April 29, was exclusively sponsored by GREAT. Forty-eight participants paddled upriver from the Snyder County Park Millpond in Horton. The round trip through nearly pristine river country on the Kalamazoo River almost reached Reynolds Road before turning around and coasting with the river current back to the millpond.

It is difficult to say what forces beyond the excellent weather contributed to these record turnouts. There are several important factors that could be considered. First would be the well-planned media coverage of the Earth Day Celebration primarily by Dahlem Environmental Conservancy Director Brad Whaley. The second media factor may be GREAT’s enhanced website, beautifully revised by GREAT president Jim Seitz.



Season's First GREAT Outing is a Family Affair

Many of the participants in GREAT's April 29, paddle outing were families. Twelve of the forty-six participants represented three families. The Ferris family was represented by three children and two parents all in one canoe and one kayak, while the Bellew family consisting of two parents and a son and daughter each had their own kayak. Linda McMullen did all the paddling in a canoe with her two grandsons. An additional ten participants were husbands and wives, either getting along with each other in the same canoe, or paddling parallel with each other in kayaks.

Tressa Ferris said the trip was a stress reliever for her. "I was in such a grouchy mood when we began the outing, but during the trip, I laughed so much at my eleven year old daughter, Haley, getting into and out of jams along the way, that by the end of the trip I was back in a good mood...It was so much fun for the whole family."

The Bellew family had previous experience paddling on rivers, but Cynthia Bellew, said, "It was helpful to have guides from GREAT preview what we would see and experience on this trip." Cynthia also said that the beginning stretch of the outing was a challenge for her children, Brady and Madelyn, but she was pleased to see how well they both handled the obstacles. "We'll definitely be on more of GREAT's outings this summer.

Don Nelson, who recently joined GREAT with a family membership, was on this outing as a solo kayaker. He thought this paddle on the Kalamazoo was beautiful and very enjoyable, but due to it being a three hour round trip up and down the river, it might have been a bit long and technically challenging for his wife Renee. "I expect that Renee will join the group for a one-way down stream outing later this summer."



Two New GREAT Board Members Seated



Rick Berry

Rick first came to the GREAT board's attention when he showed up at a regular monthly meeting to simply observe and show his sincere interest in our

activities and organization. Rick had a natural interest in "quiet water sports" and had explored the chain of lakes on the east side of Jackson County on his own. He subsequently joined GREAT on several summer paddle outings, and the 2006 clean-up of Lime Lake.

Rick traces his interest in paddle sports to youth camp at Camp Iroquois at Sand Lake and Camp Torenta near Caddillac, plus group canoe trips on the Manistee and Au Sable Rivers. When Rick's family moved to Jackson before his ninth grade school year he became familiar with the lakes and rivers in our area. While attending CMU, Rick continued his connection to water sports by serving as the Waterfront director at Camp Rotary north of Clare, MI.

One can clearly see the interpersonal skills Rick has cultured in his previous ten years of work experience at Florida's Disney World, Sea World, Busch Gardens, Kennedy Space Center and the Merritt Island Wildlife Refuge. He is observant of people's needs, conscious of varied levels of understanding, and yet meticulous in his own preparation for physical or intellectual responsibilities. It is a reassuring to all of Rick's colleagues on the GREAT board that when he says he will do something, it will be done.

Jonathan Hoover

After a two-year hiatus from serving on the GREAT board, Jonathan Hoover will return to fill a one-year term. Jon spent his first two year term on the GREAT board



from 2003-2005. Jon and his wife Susan have had a long-time interest in the environment, supporting not only GREAT, but other environmental organizations such as The Wilderness Society, Sierra Club, Environmental Defense and the National Wildlife Federation. While he was a teacher at East Jackson High School, Jon served as advisor to the Environmental Club. One of their activities involved planting trees and shrubs to serve as wildlife habitat and feed.

Beginning in 1994, Jon constructed and maintained a backyard wildlife habitat which is registered with the National Wildlife Federation. This process involves establishing sources of food water and shelter for birds and other creatures. Trees and shrubs have been selected for their wildlife value, and a 6'x 12" pond with a waterfall was installed to serve as a watering hole.

Jon believes the work of GREAT is extremely important, and must be pursued, despite the fact that preserving the integrity of the local environment is such an uphill battle. More over Jon believes we should strive for the increasing involvement of our fellow citizens in the ongoing effort to monitor and improve water quality in the Grand River watershed. Jon's greatest concern is that succeeding generations may not follow in our footsteps. We need to involve more young people in our cause.

Run-off From My Lawn Couldn't Reach the River, Could It?

By Bryon Ennis

For most of the thirty years I have lived in my current home, I figured I was pretty well insulated from the Grand River. It is several miles away at its closest, and the nearest tributary is at least a mile away. As far as I knew, there were no official drainage ditches nearby. Then one day, while gathering information in the Drain Commissioner's office, I asked Commissioner Geoff Snyder about a culvert that crossed under King Road (in my neighborhood) and dropped into a little ditch on the north side of the pavement. Geoff casually answered, "That would be the Salzgeber Drain." I said, "You mean it actually has a name?" "Sure," Geoff said. "It used to drain fields that were part of the Salzgeber Farm out there by Spring Arbor."

Reference to the Drain Commissioner's large wall maps, showed that the Salzgeber Drain ran almost directly north for less than a mile, eventually leading to a natural waterway named Indian Brook. That meant storm water and whatever else was on my lawn and driveway and the street in front of my house could be augmenting the flow of Indian Brook. As I followed the course of Indian Brook on the wall map I saw that it wound its way northeast through Sandstone Township, adding a dozen unnamed tributaries to its volume along the way. Hmmm, I wondered. What lay along those tributaries? Eventually, Indian Brook merges with Sandstone Creek just south of Michigan Avenue, near Indian Brook Farms. So, my contribution of storm water and whatever else might be on my lawn and driveway now ran in Sandstone Creek. Sandstone Creek is actually never a little stream like Indian Creek. The volume, even at its origin, Lime Lakes, is large owing to the considerable flow of natural springs in SPRING Arbor Township. Sandstone Creek meanders its way widely east and west while maintaining a general northerly trend toward Tompkins Center where at last it meets the Grand River.

So I had been ignorant of an important aspect of local hydrology. I was not so isolated from the Grand River after all. From the benign looking roadside ditch along King Road, to the Salzgeber Drain, to the Indian Brook, to Sandstone Creek, my lawn's runoff was ultimately headed to the Grand River. Even more intriguing than the adventurous story of the flow of water from my neighborhood to the Grand River is the fact that if I lived just one "country block" to the west, water from my yard would instead flow to the Kalamazoo River.



Environmentally Sound Lawn Care Practices

1. **Think less lawn.** Ground covers and enlarged flower beds add variety and color. Birds are more likely to visit yards with diverse plant species. Wild flower meadows and prairies with indigenous species of plants do not have to be large, yet once-a-year mowing is sufficient for maintenance.
2. **Grow longer grass.** A minimum height of 2.5 inches is recommended and 3.5 inches is even better. Measure 2.5 inches on a tongue depressor or other wooded stick and check your grass after cutting.
3. **Leave the clippings.** If you cut fairly often and with sharp mower blades, you can avoid the unsightly clumps of clippings. Grass clippings break down quickly and return nutrients to the soil. They are not the thatch which forms at the base of grass blades.

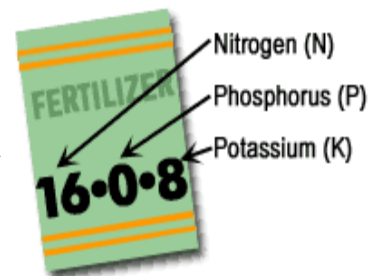
A CLIPPING ON CLIPPINGS

William Dest, Ph.D., associate professor emeritus of turf grass studies at the University of Connecticut, compared lawns where the clippings had been left behind with lawns where they had been removed. He found that the lawns with the clippings had:

- 45% less crabgrass
- up to 66% less disease
- up to 45% more earthworms
- 60% more water reaching plant roots
- 25% greater root mass
- 50% reduced need for nitrogen fertilizer

SOURCE: [A Healthy Lawn, A Beautiful Lawn](#) from *Organic Gardening* magazine.

4. **Fertilize less and avoid using phosphorous (the middle number on fertilizer bags).** In many lake communities phosphorous is banned. At any rate, test soil conditions before applying fertilizer.
5. **Reduce your use of herbicides.** For most lawns it is unnecessary to make a general application of herbicide. Spot treatment of weeds is often sufficient.
6. **Water deep, but not often.** Generally, healthy lawns require only one inch of water per week.



Consider Letting clover grow in your lawn. The benefits are many.

