

G . R . E . A . T .



Grand River Environmental Action Team

P.O. Box 223, Jackson, Michigan 49204

e-mail: grand@great-mi.org 517-416-4234 Volume 18 Number 1 Spring 2008

GREAT Begins 2008 Activities With Annual Meeting March 19 at Daryl's Downtown Restaurant

Members and friends of GREAT are invited to join the Board of Directors for one of Daryl's famous buffet dinners and a preview of the coming year's paddle activities. On Wednesday, March 19, GREAT president, Jim Seitz, will present a new brochure of paddling events for 2008, and an exciting plan to promote the Grand River. You can meet local artist, Jean Luck, and see her oil painting commissioned by GREAT to render one of the Grand's most scenic locations. Great things are occurring in connection with our river, and you may hear some of the most exciting new ideas at our Annual Meeting. This being an election year it is expected that both State Representative Martin Griffin, and State Senator Mark Schauer will greet you. Join us and visit with our state representatives.



Featured speaker, Paul Rentschler

March 19 Wednesday
6:30 Buffet Dinner, \$10.00

RSVP required.

Leave your name and number of dinner
guests at

517-416-4234 or
grand@great-mi.org.

Pay as you arrive.

7:00 Annual Meeting
Complementary dessert and coffee or
tea

Paul Rentschler, environmental consultant for ASTI corporation, has been working with the Upper Grand River Watershed Implementation Project in Jackson County. He will explain the science and results of the 2007 Adopt-A-Stream Water Monitoring Program, sponsored jointly by the Dahlem Center and the Jackson County Conservation District.

"Volunteers from GREAT were a big part of that effort last fall, and made the start of that program a success. I'm really excited about the partnership between the Watershed Council, Dahlem, JCCD, and GREAT, and I hope we will continue to build that relationship with more activities in the future."

Do We Really Appreciate the Grand River?

Jim Seitz, GREAT President
(seitz.jim@gmail.com and 517 787-7492)

The Grand River is the longest river in the State of Michigan. Its headwaters begin in the southern part and eastern parts of Jackson County. Before emptying into Lake Michigan at Grand Haven it travels 260 miles through the major cities of Lansing and Grand Rapids with a watershed draining 5,572 square miles. In the 1920's, because of the pungent smell from industrial and human waste, the city of Jackson covered the river for several downtown blocks. With the smell long gone, the cap was finally removed in the summer of 2000 through the advocacy of GREAT, but has the local public really come to appreciate the "new" river the way we should?

The answer seems to be, not really. Recently while traveling in Washtenaw County, I came across evidence of how Ann Arbor views the Huron River. The Grand Traverse Pie Company (Zeeb Rd and I-94) displays a beautiful large fall picture of the Huron River on the fireplace mantel and a lovely winter river scene in the next room. I was told that a local photographer takes and sells only Huron River pictures. An Ann Arbor fly fishing shop (Jackson Rd.), sells an informative book about fly fishing for smallmouth bass on the Huron River. Do people in Jackson County know the Grand River also has some great smallmouth and northern pike fishing? The Huron River Watershed Council distributes a calendar featuring Huron River pictures. Would people in Jackson County be interested in such a calendar of the Grand?

To test the "waters" of such questions, GREAT has made arrangements with artist Jean Luck to paint a picture of the Grand River. I took her out in late October on a two day paddle of various Grand River locations where the pristine headwaters flow through beautiful wooded areas. I also took her to Vandercook, Browns, Williams, and the Michigan Center chain of lakes which the Grand River both feeds and empties. Jean took hundreds of pictures, many of which could have been used as the subjects of a fine piece of art, but a selection had to be made. The result is a beautiful 42" by 30" oil painting of a fall scene on the Grand River north of Jackson.

Promoting Grand River Art

Artist Jean Luck has been commissioned by GREAT to create the oil painting of the Grand River seen below. Jean was recently honored by the Ella Sharpe Museum along with eleven regional artists. In addition to having her work in several Michigan Hospitals, restaurants, and private homes, Jean has recently sold several paintings to Foote Hospital. You may view Jean's river painting at Economy Art and Framing through February. On March 1, the painting will be moved to Darryl's Downtown Restaurant where you can place a bid on it. The winning bid will be announced at GREAT's annual meeting, March 19.

Artist Jean Luck works on a fall scene of the Grand River that may be seen and bid on at Darryl's Downtown Restaurant during GREAT's annual meeting.



Giving Back in Your Backyard

By Jonathan Hoover

A backyard habitat, as defined by the National Wildlife Federation, contains (1) food, (2) water and (3) shelter, for birds and other animals. The rewards can be great; nature can bring a parade of thankful creatures to your picture window, and you will have succeeded in replacing some of our county's lost habitat.

It is an all too common experience for us, these days, to drive past an area which is under development. We



The author's 15' pond serves as a home to aquatic creatures while providing drinks for many others

become concerned when wooded areas are transformed into subdivisions or commercial buildings, often with surprising speed. What about the creatures which used to live in those places? How will these abrupt changes affect them?

We can help by viewing our own back yards as potential habitat. Even renters with only a balcony deck can do this on a modest scale.

Food can be offered from feeders, but can also be provided from native trees, shrubs and plants. If a yard is to be landscaped, why not make choices for the benefit of wildlife? As trees or shrubs need replacing in an



A monarch butterfly feeds from the nectar of a butterfly bush blossom.

established yard, why not make a habitat choice?

Countless books are available on this topic; a quick on-line resource is: www.nwf.org/backyard/index.cfm.

Water, according to this National Wildlife Federation website, can be in the form of a birdbath, puddling area, installed pond, or rain garden.

Shelter offers wildlife places to hide in order to feel safe from people, predators and inclement weather, and to raise their offspring. Trees, thickets, brush piles, rocky areas or ponds can be godsend. A little research will quickly provide good choices of landscaping schemes and plantings available from local nurseries.

According to Gary Siegrist, of the Dahlem Center, a backyard habitat demonstration area is being constructed at 7117 S. Jackson Rd. This area will have native plants and local genotypes, as well as bird feeding stations. The Dahlem Center holds habitat workshops. (Ph. 782-3453, www.dahlemcenter.org)

My wife and I, retired teachers, have been amply rewarded for our own efforts, which began about 12 years ago. Thanks to our habitat, which includes a small pond and a brush pile, we have observed Cooper's hawks, Sandhill cranes, raccoons, rabbits, opossums, many species of butterfly and birds such as Baltimore orioles, cedar waxwings, red-bellied woodpeckers, flickers, hummingbirds, bluebirds and juncos.

We all work in your yards; this is one way to make that work more interesting and rewarding. Let's face it; we need animals in our lives and they definitely need us.

Will You Paddle a Kayak or Canoe?



Roger Stevens, owner of the Sports Connection

During the depths of winter, GREAT visited two of Jackson's best known dealers of paddle craft., The Sports Connection, at 1908 Horton Road, and X Riders, at 3019 E. Michigan Avenue. Our mission was to learn from Roger Stevens, owner of the Sports Connection, and Natasha Stearns, manager of X Riders, why customers tend to choose a kayak or a canoe. What we learned was both surprising and informative, and we hope our interviews with these retail experts can help GREAT members better understand the characteristics of both types of watercraft.

The surprises came immediately upon asking Natasha Stearns what the ratio of kayak sales to canoe sales were. Natasha said X Riders has decided not to carry any more canoes for the foreseeable future. "We had three canoes in stock last year and ended up selling them at cost." Roger Stevens continues to display a variety of brands and models of canoes at the Sports Connection, but he also acknowledges that he sells twenty kayaks for every canoe.

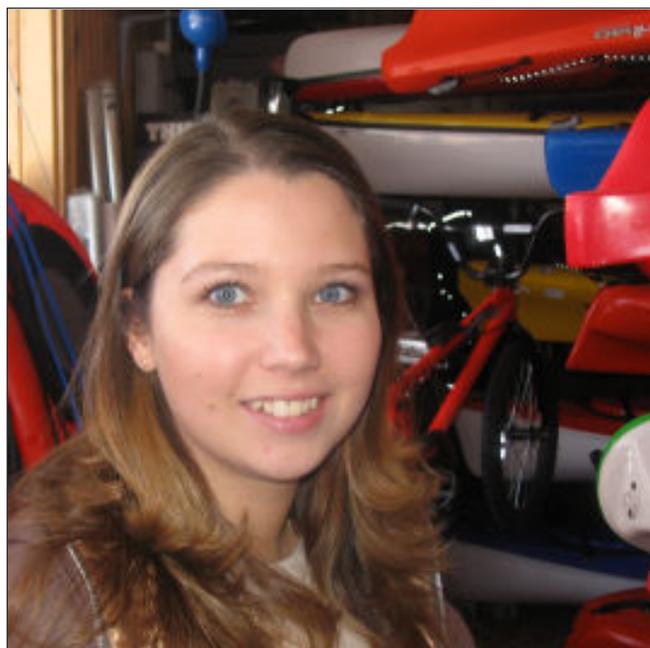
Both Natasha and Roger provided similar reasons for the clear dominance of kayak preference over canoes. A customer can get into a fairly decent kayak for about one third the cost of a canoe. X Rider's lowest priced kayak runs about \$350, though Natasha Stearns believed most of her customers spent about \$500 on

their first boat. The Sports Connection's lowest cost kayaks start in the same economical range. Both dealers also carry high-end kayaks made of especially durable materials and with use-specific accessories that can run in the \$2000-\$3000 range.

A second reason today's paddle customers are choosing kayaks over canoes is that they satisfy our desire for individualism. Natasha relates how couples who initially come to their demo paddles at Clark Lake intending to purchase a tandem, or two-person kayak almost invariably end up purchasing two solo kayaks. "It doesn't take couples long to realize that coordinating their effort isn't going to be as easy as they may have thought." Solo kayaks are also usually light enough for most women to manage by themselves, even from car to water.

Roger Stevens offers another catchy saying that helps explain the popularity of kayaks over canoes. "All the thrills without the skills." In even simpler language, anyone can paddle a kayak with little or no instruction. That is not to say instruction is not beneficial and wise, for once out on the water, a pure novice paddler can easily find himself in a dire situation. But when most people try out a kayak for the first time, they usually have no trouble making it go, which is not true of a

Natasha Stearns, manager of X Riders



--two Jackson paddle-craft retailers share their insights into the quiet water sports

canoe. Also, because a kayak paddler's bottom is at or below the water line, there is a comforting sense of stability. For those who desire the thrills of running rapids or white water, a closed top kayak with a spray skirt is unequalled.

So, do all these advantages of kayaks over canoes point to the eventual total demise of canoes? "Absolutely not," says Roger Stevens. "Seven of my kayak customers have traded their solo kayaks for solo canoes." Their major complaint about kayaks was the difficulty of getting out of and back into a kayak while negotiating obstructions like downed trees on a river.

Although both canoes and kayaks can be paddled leisurely on both lakes and rivers, canoes have different characteristics that are preferable in a given set of circumstances. Without question the carrying capacity of a canoe is greater than a kayak of equal size, in fact, the more cargo you load into canoes of certain designs, the more stable they become. For wilderness camping, such as in the Minnesota Boundary Waters, or Upper Michigan's Sylvania Wilderness, it is hard to beat a canoe for hauling cooking equipment, tents, and sleeping gear.

The customary methods of paddling a canoe, some say, have distinct advantages over paddling a kayak. As a canoe paddler regularly shifts his paddle from the right to the left side of the boat, he also shifts the position of his hands on the paddle, causing the arm, shoulder, and back muscles to perform different functions, thereby causing less repetitive motion strain. In a kayak, the stroke is always essentially the same for both arms.

Some highly skilled canoeists even admire that craft for giving them a lifelong opportunity to hone their paddling skills. "You can always advance your canoe paddling skills in little ways," says Roger Stevens.

A recent paddle on the headwaters of the Grand River with my son-in-law, Tom, illustrated this possibility to me. Tom, being by far the younger, was gracious enough to allow me the stern position which is the steering position in a canoe. This headwaters stretch of the Grand has many sharp turns exceeding 90 degrees, and I expected to have trouble negotiating my seventeen foot Sawyer canoe through these spots until I recognized Tom applying his skills of bow ruddering. If the paddler

in the bow of a canoe can coordinate his efforts with the stern paddler by using his paddle not only for power but for steering, a canoe can be made twice as maneuverable as you might expect. We made it through the entire stretch without hardly bumping a bank, and I learned a new canoe paddling technique.

If you are contemplating the purchase of a new kayak or canoe, or if you only want to see what is new in the

paddle boat market, both Natasha and Roger will welcome you to their respective stores and provide you with helpful, honest information. Consider taking advantage also of the product demos X Riders puts on each Tuesday evening 5:30-7:30 during the summer at the east end of Clark Lake. Roger Stevens at The Sports Connection can also arrange a test paddle in any canoe or kayak that interests you.

By Bryon Ennis



Looking more like a canoe than the kayaks on the right of the photo, is the open fishing kayak sold by both the Sports Connection and X Riders.

John Hand—Still a Committed Conservationist



The original barn, built by Frederick Kennedy who homesteaded the farm during Martin Van Buren's presidency and became one of Michigan's first legislators, graces the landscape.

In early 2005 both John and Nancy Hand were ready to take seats on the GREAT Board of Directors, when Nancy unexpectedly died. John, committed conservationist that he was, accepted a two-year term, partly to honor Nancy's devotion to environmental efforts. Though John did carry out his full two-year term on the GREAT board, much of his time away from his work as a licensed psychologist was spent maintaining the horses, cats, dogs and gardens, which had previously been under Nancy's care on their 86-acre Bibbins Lake Farm.

John and Nancy had been pursuing conservation easement on their land with the Washtenaw Land Trust. Ironically, the final draft of the easement arrived in the mail the day after Nancy's death. Now an added concern for John was the many estate issues that had to be settled before the land conservancy could be finalized.

Two years have passed since Nancy's death. John has developed his own routine of care for the many animals that Nancy had taken in as strays, filling the bird feeders surrounding the house and maintaining Nancy's gardens. The conservation easement to protect the

land is in place, and John is slowly recovering his equilibrium and his health. John finds philosophical wisdom in taking the long view of life and our existence on earth. "Perpetuity is about what has been and what will be. Our lives, our individual existences don't compare on the scale of time."

John appears to take great comfort in the knowledge that this parcel of land and Bibbins Lake are under perpetual protection from man's encroachment. "Trees will grow, trees will fall, other things will grow. There could be fires or other calamities, but nature will have the opportunity for renewal." The farm will eventually pass on to new owners, but whoever purchases it in the decades, hopefully in the centuries to come will be bound by the stipulations of the conservation easement.

With these documents in place, John has been able to return some of his attention back to the environmental organizations whose honors and citations line the walls of his office. One of those organizations is GREAT, and we are pleased to welcome his support to carry our mission to the public.

Property owners who are interested in learning more about conservation options are encouraged to contact the Land Trust at info@washtenawlandtrust.org or 734-302-LAND(5263).

An historic stone wall lends a sense of permanence to the Bibbins Lake farm.



Ada Township Pays Large Price to Protect Small Grand River Parcel

According to a report in the December 3, *Grand Rapids Press*, Ada Township has agreed to pay Michigan Legislator, Kevin Green, \$329,000 for a 6.87 acre parcel of land along the Grand River. The controversial deal, approved by the Ada Township Board of Trustees on a 4-3 vote, allowed Ada to block Green's plans to erect a billboard on a wedge of wooded land between M-21 and the Grand River.

Green purchased the parcel in May 2007 for \$67,000, and though Ada township records show the land was valued at \$16,600 for tax purposes, Green claimed that income from the billboard could have produced \$50,000-\$60,000 dollars a year, hence the final negotiated price. \$150,000 of the purchase price will come from the township's "open space" fund, approved by voters to preserve open land. The remaining \$179,000 will come from Ada Township's general fund.

Sometimes the Great Conflagrations

By Mary Oliver

Sometimes the Great Conflagrations
make no sound.

They come, softer than a paw on snow,
they come shapeless as heat.

The greed that fuels them is so far away.
Who can make sense of it,
who dwells in the imperiled distance?
He who has eyes to see, let him look.

In the Arctic spring, in the Arctic night,
the white bear
is hard hit now,
and not a gun in sight.

From *On Earth Magazine*
National Resources Defense Council

Great Lakes Paddlers Offers Plan for Shuttle Etiquette

Many of GREAT's paddle outings require cars to be shuttled from the put-in spot on a river to the take-out. **Sandie Schulze**, in the Winter GLP issue of *Eddy Lines*, offers the following suggestions for safe, low stress shuttling of cars for river paddle outings.

SHUTTLE ETIQUETTE: If you are the lead driver in a shuttle, speak to every person who will be following you so that you will all leave at the same time. As the lead driver, keep an eye on your rear view mirror.

If you see someone who is not familiar with the route drop out of your line of vision, slow down and pull over at the next safe spot and wait until they've caught up to you. If you are going to pull off the road, give a turn signal in advance so the drivers immediately behind you know you are going to pull over. It is your responsibility as the lead driver to make sure that everyone makes it to the destination without being left behind or getting a ticket trying to catch up.

If there are any problems, advise the drivers to flash their lights and you will pull the entire group over and solve the issue. Something to consider: There is no reason for high anxiety about having to leave one's vehicle at the put in. There will always be someone who has to take the shuttle driver back to their vehicle at the put-in.

Great Lakes Basin Water Compact Making Slow Progress

From the *Great Lakes Aquatic Habitat Newsletter*

Considering how important to Michigan the Great Lakes are, one would expect our state to be out front in ratification of the Compact to keep Great Lakes water from being exported out of the basin. However Minnesota and Illinois legislatures have already endorsed it and New York is about to. For updates on the progress of the Compact through the Michigan Legislature go to www.greatlakesgreatmichigan.org. A note to your state representative and state senator might help move it along also.

GREAT Board Members

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Betty Desbiens
Historian

Louise Hefka
Bookkeeper

The GREAT board meets on the second Wednesday of each month, at 7:00 p.m. at the Summit Township Hall, 2121 Ferguson Road. Meetings are open and visitors are welcome. If you would like to have an item placed on the agenda, please notify Nancy Lapinski at 783-3661.

GREAT,
P.O. Box 223
Jackson MI 49204
517-416-4234

New members:

Tami Buchholtz
Debra Buchholtz
Phil Conley
Steve Everett
Brad Whaley

Welcome!

The GREAT Newsletter editor is Bryon Ennis.
bryon_ennis@sbcglobal.net

Printing and mailing costs of GREAT newsletters are sponsored by a generous contribution from the MBTM Company, Nancy and Jack Lapinski, proprietors.



This flowering crab and the red cedar tree behind it are both useful to birds. See more about backyard habitat on page 3.