

G.R.E.A.T.



Grand River Environmental Action Team

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Sixty-One GREAT Members Mark Record Support at Annual Meeting

Levels of participation seen at 2007 GREAT events seem to have carried over to 2008. Even a new ten-dollar charge for a Darryl's buffet dinner did not appear to discourage record numbers of members from gathering to kick off this year's calendar of events.

Highlights of this year's annual meeting included ASTI corporation biologist Paul Rentschler who presented an informative and enjoyable talk on the Grand River water monitoring project. Another important part of the evening's program was the announcement of the winning bid for Jean Luck's oil painting of a Grand River nature scene. Many GREAT members also had an opportunity to personally congratulate outgoing board member and River Master, Todd Zeller for his selection as Jackson's Citizen of the Year.

In other business, Kathy Kulchinski was installed as GREAT's new River Master, and Carol Scott was newly elected to a two-year term on the board of directors. All other GREAT offices will continue in



Artist Jean Luck and Betty Desbiens meet following the announcement of Betty's winning bid for Luck's painting.

Can Michigan Hold Its Water?

By Jonathan Hoover

I know, I know. The fate of the Great Lakes is not a humorous subject, but maybe I've succeeded in getting your attention. We Michiganders have always lived in a "water wonderland" and have, perhaps, taken it for granted. It's time to admit that, in any number of ways, our waters are seriously at risk.

The Great Lakes Great Michigan coalition, which GREAT has recently joined, reminds us of serious issues, such as invasive species, declining lake levels, raw sewage flowing into the lakes and persistent toxic chemical contamination. These issues must be addressed on a continuing and vigilant basis, if our children and grandchildren are to live in a clean and healthy environment.

However, another, more immediate threat has crystallized. It's represented by those who would divert, remove or profit from our lakes, rivers, streams and even the groundwater beneath our feet.

The governor of a desert state, New Mexico, recently described Wisconsin as being "awash in water," and has cast covetous eyes in the direction of the Great Lakes. Rep. John Linder, from draught-plagued Georgia, has called for a national commission on water. These kinds of statements are a wake-up call. In the future we could share a sad fate of pipelines draining the Great Lakes for the benefit of other, less blessed, areas.

We already face bottlers, who currently pump Michigan groundwater into containers and sell them across the country for profit. Does this activity damage rivers or lower the level of aquifers? A group in Mecosta County, organized as the Michigan Citizens for Water Conservation, seems to think
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Carol Scott Brings Valuable Talents and Strong Work Ethic to GREAT Board



Raised in the historic Vandercook home in the village of Vandercook Lake, Carol Scott gained an appreciation for preservation which may well have contributed to her current desire to preserve and protect valuable aspects of her natural environment.

Though she spent many summer days on Vandercook Lake itself, a more local and private swimming hole for Carol and her playmates was Mill Creek, the now overgrown and barely noticeable outlet from Vandercook Lake that flows north under Badgely St. It was mostly along the banks of this creek that Carol first became familiar with nature's riparian resident's. (Carol, I would like to include right here, a youthful memory you have of a particular incident involving fish, or frogs, or muskrats etc..along Mill Creek).

When Carol became a member of GREAT, she and her neighbor and close friend, Rayniece Prather, were regular paddlers at every Sunday outing. "I participated in every GREAT function during 2007, except the Annual River Cleanup, and I only missed that one because I have to work on Saturdays," Carol attested.

Carol's committed and tireless work ethic was evident to other GREAT board members at last year's Earth Day observance when she assisted dozens of novice paddlers into floatation vests and then into kayaks or canoes for several hours straight with only one short break and no complaints.

You are likely to see Carol at most of GREAT's

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so; in 2003 it sought and obtained an injunction against Ice Mountain. The result of this suit was a settlement in which the company agreed to reduce, by half, the volume of water pumped.

Beyond the question of how much water should be pumped is the important consideration of *whether* it should be pumped. Who owns Michigan water? Is it a "public trust," held by citizens as many, including environmentalists, believe, or should it be made available as a corporate commodity? How many wells may Ice Mountain drill and use? How many other corporations will be allowed to extract water? Is the practice of extracting water by bottling plant any different than sending it by pipeline to other states? We must be careful not to sell our birthright to this all-important life-giving element.

Other water use issues are a part of current legislation on the floors of both state houses. Large amounts are used by farmers for irrigation and by animal factories to remove waste. Will they be asked to apply for permits for their water use and what are reasonable threshold levels for those permits?

The package of bills being considered is "tied" to the approval of the Great Lakes Basin Compact; a regional agreement by many states and Canadian provinces. Once passed by the various participating states, the Compact must be approved by Congress. The aim is conservation and protection of Great Lakes waters. Cooperation is paramount; else any single Great Lakes state would be in violation of interstate commerce regulations.

The Compact would pass easily. It's the package of water bills currently *tied* to the Compact that is the source of controversy. In other words, the strategy is to pass the Compact and the supporting legislation in one bundle and at the same time.

Important water bill issues relate to the amount of ground water that can be withdrawn or used for various purposes. When will permits be required? At what level of usage? Will there be provision for citizen input? What percent of river water will be allowed for use? An important distinction seems to be whether the water used will return to our own

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Enthusiastic Earth Day Paddlers Keep GREAT Volunteers Busy

Mother Nature must approve of what Jackson County's environmental organizations are doing. For the second year, Earth Day festivities at Cascades County Park were blessed with warm temperatures and sunshine. GREAT brought out all of its kayaks and canoes and thirteen volunteers in order to provide a paddling experience on the Cascades lagoons. Now that the new Denton St. bridge is complete, many paddlers were drawn to the south lagoon by the Cascades Manor House and got an unusual perspective of the bridge-from beneath.

GREAT members were especially pleased that most of the paddlers had either never paddled a boat or had not paddled one "in years." This was just fine with GREAT board member Ken Dodge and Don Nelson who stayed in the water for three hours helping novice paddlers into boats. "These are the people we want to put into a kayak or canoe to experience what we enjoy so much about this sport," said Ken.

According to statistics compiled by GREAT president, Jim Seitz, more than half of the paddlers were children. Adult paddlers accompanying children in boats were very careful and responsible, as there were thankfully no accidents.

In addition to gaining an experience paddling at the GREAT site, participants received information on invasive aquatic plants and animals from retired JCC biology instructor Libby Warner. Roger Stevens, owner of the Sports Connection, whose booth was set up next to GREAT took the pressure off GREAT volunteers at times by providing basic paddling instructions.



Top: GREAT President Jim Seitz waits for the arrival of Earth Day participants.

Middle: Ken Dodge helps two sisters in their Sunday finest as they prepare for an Earth Day paddle in the Cascades lagoon.

Above: Tom Schindler and son Easton together experience a tandem kayak for the first time.

Woody Debris Management and River Preparation for Paddle Outings

Kathy Kulchinski

As a member of the Grand River Environmental Action Team you may enjoy the scheduled canoe and kayak outings hosted every month throughout the unfrozen months. You aware of the many volunteer hours spent preparing the river to make it as accessible as possible? The Board of Directors and other GREAT members paddle each route, plan improvements and implement the actions necessary to clear logjams and other obstacles so that the trip will be as clear as possible.

The Grand River in Jackson County is a body of water that has been extensively manipulated by mankind. It has been dredged and dammed, straightened and rerouted, capped and uncapped all in the name of progress and for the benefit of those who utilize it.

Nature is not one to be outdone, however, and she throws her weight around by tossing a few trees in the stream here and there along with branches and other debris. She does this to remind us who indeed the boss is, and to keep us on our toes. Every trip down the same stretch of stream will show even the casual observer something new and different.

Rick Berry clears an opening for boats by only cutting the lower limb of this sweeper.



Downed tree completely blocks passage on river.

It is a rare and fortunate few who truly understand the logistics involved in preparing our Grand River for the monthly paddle outings we all enjoy. Some stretches of the river are naturally clear of logjams and debris that can impede the downstream progression of canoes and kayaks. Much more of the river is unfortunately clogged with logs, limbs and downed trees. It takes many man-hours in scouting, planning, and physically re-placing and removing woody debris from the water in order to make our outings pleasurable rather than expeditions in tree climbing.

Woody debris management is an art that requires significant planning in order to minimize disruptions to the surrounding habitat and optimize the channel flow. It is not just a case of going in and hauling trees and branches out of the river. That debris provides habitat for aquatic life and helps regulate the flow of water through the river channel. It also helps decrease effects of flooding and erosion and traps and filters sediment. It is one of nature's ways to heal herself.

It is the mission of GREAT to promote the protection and preservation of the Grand River Watershed through activities and educational programs. Because of our mission it is

important that we use conservative methods in our woody debris management in order to least negatively impact our river environment. We strive to remove the least possible amount of tree or log in order to preserve the natural habitat it represents to both aquatic and land creatures. We try to follow the “Clean and Open Method of Woody Debris Management” devised by a group in southeastern Michigan, the Riparian Corridor Management Technical Advisory Committee.

The first step is planning. After a route is determined, the route is scouted and improvements



to Ella Sharp Park paddle took several afternoons and a Saturday with your President Jim Seitz in the cold April river in waders sawing and chopping away valiantly. Bryon Ennis spent a Saturday morning by wielding a chainsaw in the Probert Rd. area as the trees were numerous and reasonably accessible. Your faithful Rivermaster and author of this article supervised, photographed all of this activity and helping to maneuver the flotsam about as well as making a last minute paddle of the trip to assure the best possible event. Unfortunately, we were unable to remove the two dams on the route, but many “shot” right over them and the rest portaged around.

The “Team” at GREAT hopes that this insight to our trip preparation will give you an even greater appreciation for the care that we bring to caring for our river.

Sometimes you have to get in the water to make a cut, as Jim Seitz demonstrates in this photo.

Paddlers enjoy an unobstructed trip after clearing crews have done their work.

are suggested. Next with permission of the neighboring landowner, the debris removal team goes to the site(s) and using the necessary equipment (hand saws, axes, come-alongs, chainsaws) moves or cuts loose the offending limbs and branches, also removing trash and other debris as necessary, to allow passage of water and boats. Woody debris that is embedded in the bank or bottom of the stream is left undisturbed. This is why one will oftentimes find branches sticking up in a river previously prepared for a paddle trip. If one can scoot over or around an obstacle it will be left to benefit the overall health of the stream.

Preparation for the Vandercook Lake



On the River . . .In Winter!

While most of Jackson's inhabitants were throwing another log on the fire and watching their favorite college teams close in on March Madness, or relaxing with a good book, Kathiy Kulchinski and Don Nelson were donning polypropylene long underwear, nylon pants and polar fleece tops, and neoprene boots and gloves for a paddle down the Grand River.

To say that Don and Kathy are enthusiastic kayakers might be an understatement. Their fondness for the quiet water sports and the environment has led both to accept seats on the GREAT board. Kathy has recently taken over the duties of River Master from Todd Zeller, while Don is in charge of organizing the Annual Grand River Cleanup for GREAT. But on March 3, 2008, with six inches of snow still on the ground they were eager to get back on the river and experience a float which until recently had been impossible - a ride through Downtown Jackson where the detested and deadly cap used to reside.

Normally, from April through November, both take to a lake or stream weekly to paddle their kayaks and explore places which few Jacksonians have ever seen, despite the fact that these places may be within a mile, or only blocks of their homes. But it had been several months since either had gotten their kayaks



The Grand is picturesque even in the throes of winter.

wet, and as Kathy said, "Being off the water for three months, I was overdue for a float."

The pair put in near the Morrell Street (formerly Bridge Street) bridge and paddled up river to try a fast-water sluice created by old railroad bridge piers. Don ran the sluice several times, but Kathy found her arms were out of shape from the winter layoff from paddling, and she did not have the necessary strength to overcome the current through the sluice. They turned back toward Downtown Jackson and enjoyed a spirited ride down the Grand which was enhanced by

the waters of late-winter snow melt. As they passed under downtown bridges and through the stretch where the old cap had been, they hailed surprised pedestrians. Don had to duck low to clear the second RR trestle by the Farmer's Market, then made a fast run through the rapids next to the Toy House.

As the river widened north of Trail St, the current slacked somewhat but was still a potent force.

Just north of North St. a fallen tree almost completely obstructed passage on the river. There was a small passage on the right side where the smaller

Don Nelson prepares to slip his kayak into the frigid Grand River in early March.



limbs left an opening, and Kathy accurately judged her passage through. However when Don attempted to follow, a slight hesitation or his longer kayak stern was exposed to the current for just a second too long. The current quickly whipped Don's stern to the left, bringing it in contact with a limb at water level. Now the limb and Don's kayak responded to each other like greased ball bearings with the limb forcing the left side up, while the current was pushing the right side down. In less than the blink of an eye, Don was capsized.

Instead of this tale turning dangerous or tragic at this point, it continued with more composure and routine than one might guess. Both Don and Kathy had prepared for just such an eventuality long before the day's float. Don had practiced many times exiting underwater from an intentionally capsized kayak. They had both secured in waterproof containers essential items such as car keys and cell telephones, had donned lightweight modern clothing which would hold the water close to their skin without dragging them down, and perhaps most importantly, both wore high flotation personal safety vests. Don said, "As soon as I capsized I automatically exited my kayak under water and I felt my vest pulling me to the surface." Kathy, having passed safely through the deadfall, watched all this from her kayak and was amazed to see Don immediately rise to the surface and stand up in the river still wearing his hat and holding the tether to his boat. "I couldn't believe that he didn't even swear."

Don walked his boat to the shore and pushed it up on the bank where he could roll the water out. Then he climbed back in, and the pair continued their trip a short way downstream to where their cars were parked. "By the time we reached our cars," Don said, "the water in my clothing had become warmed, especially under my PFD (life vest). I was really quite comfortable and felt that if we had to paddle for another hour, I could have."

Bruce Clevenger, an American Canoe Association certified instructor, agreed that winter paddling need not be dangerous if precautions such as those taken by Kathy and Don are followed. Bruce said, "I would not paddle on big water during cold weather, but in a river where the shoreline is always relatively close, yes, I might paddle too."

Bryon Ennis

Retired Auto Worker Retraces Historic Canoe Route Across Michigan

Retired auto worker, Charlie Parmalee has met the challenge — the Hugh Heward Challenge that is. Few of us would have ever heard of Hugh Heward if it had not been for long-time canoeing enthusiast and GREAT member James Woodruff.

Years ago James ran across the journal of Heward, an early French explorer and trader in Michigan long before it was even a U. S. territory. Heward had learned from the Native Americans around what is now Detroit, that it was possible to paddle a canoe from Lake Erie to Lake Michigan completely across the lower peninsula of Michigan. So on April 24, 1790, Heward and a small party set out up the Huron River in two birch bark canoes, and he began his epic journal. At present day Hell, Michigan or there about, the Heward party crossed from the Huron River watershed into the Grand River watershed (or the Washtenong as it was then known). This put them into the Portage River which they paddled southwest until it met the Grand River. From this point they followed the Grand north until it turned abruptly west, at present day Lyons, then all the way to Lake Michigan.

James Woodruff, now 86 and long passed his canoeing days, has been intrigued by the idea of retracing Heward's historic trip. Early this March, partly in celebration of his new-found freedom from daily work, Charlie Parmalee took up took up the Hugh Heward Challenge, and started up the Huron River in a modern day lake-to-lake adventure. Finally after several restarts due to severe weather and resupply delays, Charlie nearly reached Lake Michigan. Ironically after surmounting numerous natural obstacles, Charlie was halted just short of Lake Michigan by an oil spill in Grand Haven, Michigan.

During Charlie's long journey, supporters along the way and sporadic traveling companions sent reports and photos to James Woodruff who duly forwarded them in daily emails to dozens of well-wishers and canoe enthusiasts, including yours truly

Second Canadian Province Bans Sale of Lawn Chemicals

Following a similar ban passed in Quebec Province in 2006, Ontario recently passed a law banning the sale of cosmetic lawn chemicals. Thirty-two Canadian municipalities had passed earlier bans on using chemical pesticides and herbicides, but it was deemed too difficult to enforce. “We didn’t feel able to stop a store from selling—all we could do was try to stop people within the municipality (Kingston, Ontario) from using,” said Kingston city councillor



Two of the most commonly invasive plants found in our lawns are dandelions and violets.

Vicki Schmolka. “The provincial law will make it more difficult for people to get the products, and it will really make them think twice.” Supporters of the law believed that kids shouldn’t have to think about rolling in the grass. “Children will be able to play in the grass without ever being exposed to harmful chemicals which could lead to a variety of health problems later in life.”

Representatives of the pesticide industry felt the move was too drastic without relying on science to prove which pesticides were okay to use and which were not. However the Premier of Ontario stated that no studies could ever determine the outcome of chronic exposure to various products containing several chemicals at once.

The new ban is set to take effect by the spring of 2009. Home Depot has already agreed to stop selling pesticides in Canada by the end of 2008.

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watersheds (farming and some industries) or leave the state for good (bottles sold outside of Michigan or water used in exported products).

As these issues have come to a head in the last decade, regulatory agencies such as the D.E.Q. have been scrambling to assemble enough hard data to allow reasonable judgments on such matters as the effects of withdrawal. Software has been written to gauge usage and establish baseline levels, but it is new and has yet to prove itself for regulatory purposes.

The task is a daunting one; that of protecting our waters from harmful diversion while still allowing use of them for all legitimate purposes.

At this moment, our pressing responsibility is to contact state legislators and let them know we support both the Compact and strong water protections for our state. GREAT recommends support for the stronger bills in the House (HB 6065-5073) and opposition to SB 212 & 860.

The time is right for these laws to be enacted; let’s weigh in on behalf of a reasonable, safe and healthy future for Michigan waters.

For more information, visit GLGM’s website: www.greatlakesgreatmichigan.org

For an easy way to contact your legislator with a prepared letter, visit:

www.michiganwaternotforsale.com

To locate your legislator contact information:

<http://www.senate.michigan.gov/>

http://www.house.michigan.gov/find_a_rep.asp

GREAT is eager to know what our members and friends think about this complex issue of water withdrawal in Michigan.

In order to share your thoughts, go to the GREAT website at www.great-mi.org .

Below the main page color photograph look for the words GREAT blog. Click on blog and it will take you to a place where you can add your comments. Don’t worry about your ability to write. We just want to hear from you..

April Outing Takes GREAT Paddlers Through Three Lakes and Uncommon Stretches of River

By Kenny Price

All week long the weather promised a cold windy wet day. Sunday arrived and the weather became perfect. The sun was bright and warm and the wind laid down to just a small and persistent breeze. I expected only a few people to show up, but about 40 people showed up.

The trip started across Vandercook Lake on the south side to avoid the wind. Rivermaster Kathy Kulchinski took the lead and we went through the passage into Browns Lake. There were, as usual, the fast paddlers, and the ones who took their time to enjoy the sights, and those getting used to the boats and the water. We had a father and son who shared the father's kidney. There was some concern if the son could make the whole trip, but he finished in front of his father. We went across the north part of Browns Lake into Williams Lake, then entered into the Grand River. We had three dams to cross. Most people crossed the first easily but some got caught in the second. Rick saved at least one person from taking a swim in the river. I know for sure since I was that person. At the third dam most decided to portage around.

I was amazed at how long the river was, when the land distance is so short. We passed by some shacks and we passed many mansions. People out for the day working in their yards, seemed impressed that the GREAT group was out riding the river. A lot of us saw a mother goose sitting on her eggs, with a look on her face to not come any closer. We saw a few deer and lot of geese and ducks flying overhead. I think most people were sad to see the trip end, but were glad to walk on the land again.

The Schwade family, Joe, Morgan, and Sally, enter Browns Lake near the start of GREAT's April paddle outing.



Kayakers face the challenge of running this dam sluice near Probert Road.

Voices of Youth

Six-year-old Morgan Schwade's Impressions of the April 27 Outing:

"It was awesome! It was my first time being on a canoe trip and I loved it so much. I loved the canoe. It had a seat. I loved the tunnels. I loved the part where we didn't have to live on Brown's Lake to *BE* on Brown's Lake. I loved the way that I could feel the canoe going over the rocks. The rocks felt smooth. What I didn't like about it is that we dropped the camera [into the lake]."

What animals did you see?

"A dog. We saw Mallard ducks and Canada geese. We did not see any turtles or fish. I want to see turtles."

Would you like to go on another canoe trip?

"YES!! And I want to paddle."



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Rivermaster

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

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