

# G.R.E.A.T.

Grand River Environmental Action Team



Website: [www.great-mi.org](http://www.great-mi.org)

517.416.4234

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## Annual Meeting Edition-March 2010

DNR Biologist Will Report on Four-Year Study of Grand River



*Scott Hanshue will speak at GREAT's Annual Meeting.*

Scott Hanshue is a Senior Fisheries Biologist for the Department of Natural Resources with the Southern Lake Michigan Management Unit, located in Plainwell. His management responsibilities include the lakes, rivers and streams within the Grand River watershed. He has been at his current position since early in 2002. Prior to that, he worked for over 10 years as an Aquatic Biologist for the Department of Environmental Quality assigned to the Grand River watershed. These duties have given him an appreciation of and experience in, the technical and legal requirements of stream and lake protection and natural resources management. Prior to his work in Michigan, he worked for the National Marine Fisheries Service of NOAA in Alaska, and the US Fish and Wildlife Service in Michigan and in Utah

Scott has been intensively studying the Grand River as a Michigan Department of Natural Resources

**GREAT Annual Meeting**  
Wednesday, March 24

**Daryl's Downtown Restaurant**  
Light Dinner 6:30, Cost \$12  
RSVP 517-416-4234 or [grand@great-mi.org](mailto:grand@great-mi.org)  
by Friday, March 19  
Meeting begins at 7:00 (free)

biologist for the past four years. As might be expected, he has lots of data on Grand River fish species, aquatic plants and aquatic insects. He can tell you average, low, and peak, flow rates of the river, and he knows what materials make up the bottom of the river's course. But in order to accurately interpret the status the Grand River today, he has also studied the geologic origin of our river, the history of its subsequent alterations, and the hydrology of the streams and seeps that feed the Grand. Scott has studied aquatic species that used to inhabit the river and those that still inhabit it today. He has studied how Native Americans and early Europeans altered the land surrounding the river, and how present-day riparian owners and occupants are using the land. Scott's research on the Grand River, titled the Grand River Assessment, will be released for public comment in the near future. Come hear a preview of his work at the GREAT Annual Meeting, March 24.

# Teachers Receive Training in “Project Wet” Curriculum

By Emily Curry

In early November 2009, GREAT was able to co-sponsor a Project Wet training for area educators. Project Wet is a nationally known water curriculum. It contains 91 lessons for various grade levels, reaching students in K-12. The lessons come complete with background information for teachers, who may not be knowledgeable about water, lesson plans, printable student pages, and additional resources for teachers.

In attendance, at the Dahlem Center that day, were thirteen area teachers and pre-service teachers. Dahlem’s Education Director, Kimberly May,



*Participants create maps of watersheds.*



*Megan Schruauben investigates samples of soil substrates.*

facilitated the workshop. Participants took on the role of students and participated in various Project Wet lessons throughout the day. Annette Friday, a future teacher said, "It was very useful! I appreciate having the opportunity to practice and observe the creative hands-on activities." After participating in the day long training all participants received the Project Wet curriculum manual and resources CD.

The Upper Grand River Implementation Project (UGRIP) Grant Coordinator and Watershed Coordinator for the Jackson County Conservation District, Cecilia Govrik, was also in attendance to educate the participants about the history and current state of our watershed. Alison Rauss, Jackson County’s Adopt-a-Stream Coordinator, was there to teach the participants how to collect macroinvertebrates, as a possible field experiment to conduct with students in the classroom.

Many partners contributed to making this training

possible along with GREAT, The Jackson County Math and Science Center, the Jackson County Conservation District, and the Dahlem Center. GREAT was able to fund the cost of the curriculum manuals, by using funds we have acquired through the UGRIP Grant. As a partner in the grant we have vowed to continue to, “Promote awareness and appreciation for the watershed.” GREAT’s hopes were to educate these teachers on our watershed, so they will in turn educate their students for years to come. Vickey Gorsuch, an elementary teacher stated, "I can't wait to teach these activities to my fellow teachers and students."



*Cecilia Govrik and participants demonstrate middle school lessons.*

# Nancy Lapinski Concludes Twenty-Year Tenure on GREAT Board

When the first stirrings of interest for an organization promoting the Upper Grand River were heard, Nancy Lapinski was part of the conversation. When GREAT was building its fleet of canoes and kayaks in order to show a doubting public the beauty and serenity of Jackson County's many waterways, Nancy was a strong advocate. When too many area youths had died after being swept into Jackson's capped river, Nancy was among the most vocal of community leaders determined to have the cap removed.

From the first informal exploratory meetings in 1990 until today, Nancy has served GREAT in almost every capacity imaginable. Although she has never been president, Nancy has filled every office from vice president to treasurer, to recording secretary, and membership chairperson, and she has often been at the "point of the spear" on issues which have defined what GREAT stands for. Two of the most noteworthy causes Nancy participated in were organizing citizens to push for removal of the cement cap over the Grand River in downtown Jackson, and standing against construction of a roadway corridor from U.S. 127 through nearly pristine wetlands, to the present JCC campus on Emmons Road.

Helping to found and maintain, GREAT has not been Nancy's sole environmental endeavor. Until recently Nancy also served on the Jackson Audubon board where among other duties, she was the steward of the Kate Palmer Sanctuary in Sandstone Township. Nancy was also an active defender of a

south Jackson neighborhood from encroachment by a sprawling apartment complex. In this instance Nancy was able to convince the developer to drop his plans for additional buildings and instead leave a generous green zone for the neighborhood residents.

When asked how she became such an ardent supporter and defender of the environment, Nancy credits long walks with her father through the Cleveland Metroparks system, and after her family had moved to Jackson, through biology courses and birding tours with local Audubon patriarch Bob Whiting. Nancy has an abiding love and concern for the plants and animals we must coexist with. One of her fondest wishes for the future is that GREAT's Blackman Township land along the Grand River will officially become a natural preserve. GREAT wishes to thank Nancy and her husband Jack for their many years of personal commitment and financial support to local and state environmental organizations.



## From the GREAT archives:

June 26, 1991 Minutes

"Establishment of the first 'guided' GREAT Canoe Trip. Set date of July 20 at 10 a.m. Meet at Loomis Road and end at Vandercook Park for a picnic. Input. We need a naturalist (Nancy or Jodi or John?) a canoe expert (Jim, Terry or Roger?), Could we provide canoes for interested parties? Main reason is exposure to the river.

# Small Boat Production Still Part of

By Bryon Ennis

Unlikely as it may seem when one considers the state of manufacturing in Michigan, five well-known brands of small watercraft are in production at Adrian, Michigan. Have you heard of Walden kayaks? All eight of GREAT's fleet of kayaks are Waldens. Five Walden models are assembled in Michigan. You likely have seen Michicraft aluminum canoes--very popular with livery operations due to their rugged construction. Just about every part of Michicraft canoes is fabricated and assembled Adrian, starting as rolls of sheet aluminum. How about those zippy little light-weight Snark sailboats? They are fabricated in the Adrian, Michigan, factory from Styrofoam beads and thin rectangular sheets of colored plastic. Even the internal aluminum structure in the larger Snark models is fabricated there. In addition to these three brands of watercraft, the Meyers aluminum V-hulled runabout, the square-bowed aluminum jon boat, and the pedal-powered Sea Cycle and Water Bike are all made in Adrian.

Surprisingly, none of these watercraft brands were developed by the current Meyers Boat Corporation. Instead, using capital from a successful metalworking business, Jim Brown first purchased financially troubled Meyers Boats in 1991, then the Michicraft brand in 1993. Both of these small watercraft serendipitously involved the working of metal which Jim Brown knew well, only this time it wasn't steel, but aluminum. Jim bought all the forms and equipment and moved them to his Adrian factory where he and his production crew tweaked the processes, and once again began turning out these classic boats and canoes.

Once Jim had a system of pleasure craft distribution established, he believed it could be feasible to move into the production of watercraft made of other materials—namely plastics. In 1996, Jim purchased the name and the molds for Snark sailboats, then in 1997, he purchased the name and moulds for the pedal powered Sea Cycle and Water Bike. Both companies had been experiencing economic difficulties, but Jim believed both products were functional and desirable to the public, but more importantly, that he could produce them profitably in his Adrian complex.

Most recently in 2005, Jim bought the molds for five models of popular Walden Kayaks. Once again, Jim, and his son Bill studied the manufacturing process, made important improvements and began



# the Economic Picture for Our Region



to build five models of Walden kayaks. Though the hulls are formed near Cleveland, Ohio, the kayaks are assembled and detailed in Adrian.

Jim's son, Bill Brown, is now the general manager of a sprawling facility in Adrian that covers 390,000 square feet of production and warehouse space. Strategic foresight and the willingness to take on financial risk convinced Jim Brown to purchase these abandoned buildings from the Hoover spring and ball bearing company that had gone out of business. Now they are mostly back in use, and contribute to the relatively low overhead necessary for the Meyers Boat Corporation to prosper.

Another key factor in Meyers Boats economic viability, according to Bill Brown, is the flexibility of their production workers. When we visited the facility, workers were busy building Michicraft aluminum boats and canoes. At another time, this same crew will build Snark sailboats, and perhaps a month afterward they will be assembling Walden kayaks. Obviously, the diverse skills of these workers are essential to the viability of Meyers Boats. Keeping these same workers happy over the years is a credit to Jim and Bill Brown.

Because some of their dealers operate online, Meyers is able to sell boats anywhere in the world. We saw boats packaged up in large protective cardboard boxes bound for California and Florida. Bill Brown said they had recently sent a shipment to the Netherlands.

Though the operation is profitable it is still relatively small. Bill Brown estimates they sell between 1000 and 1200 boats a year. Bill says he is willing to sell a boat right out of their warehouse, but don't expect a discount. They are obligated to sell their boats at retail prices, otherwise they would destroy their carefully built system of Meyers Boats dealers.



*Bryon Ennis discusses with Bill Brown the structure of the popular Sports Pal canoe made by Meyers Boats.*

**Top:** One of the moulds used in the production of Snark sailboats. **Center:** Various models and colors of Walden kayaks await shipment in a Meyers warehouse. **Bottom:** Part of the versatile production crew builds a Meyers jon boat.



*The 2010 Executive Committee will consist of Kenny Price, Jon Hoover and Jim Seitz.*

## Orderly Progression of Executive Officers Will Provide Continuity for GREAT

The promise of administrative stability for GREAT in future years has been enhanced by the commitment of several current board members to a three-staged progression of leadership. The leadership commitment involves board members, Jim Seitz, Jon Hoover, and Kenny Price, and the progression will begin in March 2010. Current GREAT president Jim Seitz will move to “past president” an advisory position with administrative responsibilities, while vice president Jon Hoover will become president, and Kenny Price will become vice president. Each office will now last for a duration of one year, and each officer will move up one office with a different vice president tapped each year.

This orderly progression has been a vision of Jim Seitz since early in his three-year tenure as GREAT president. “This progression establishes both a reasonable period of time for a person to be in the demanding office of president, and an opportunity for the vice president to become familiar with the less obvious responsibilities of the president.” says Seitz. The new office of “past president” also gives the president an experienced human resource. Adds Seitz, “It is important to recognize that each administrative team will be different, but the fact that there is a system of progression in place helps assure the long-term stability of the organization.”

## John Hoover Looks Forward to Serving as GREAT President

It will be a privilege for me to serve as GREAT President in the spring of 2010, the 20th anniversary of the founding of our organization by concerned and caring citizens. I am inspired by the activism and love for the environment that those founders demonstrated as they met together in August of 1990 and made their plans to successfully challenge a project which would have denigrated a wetland; a part of the Grand River drainage basin. GREAT is in wonderful shape this year, thanks to the hard work of Jim Seitz, President for the past several years, and thanks to the dedication of my fellow board members, all of whom lend their particular talents and enthusiasm to our common cause.

--Jon Hoover

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## Brown’s Lake Association Joins GREAT as a Sponsor

Acknowledging their status as riparian landowners on the Upper Grand River, Brown’s Lake homeowners have become the first lake association to join GREAT. Brown’s Lake Improvement and Protective Association trustee, Ron Shankland said, “It made sense that since the Grand River flows through Brown’s Lake, we should be part of an organization that is active in protecting the river.”

Board trustee and treasurer Lynn Frederick said, “The Brown’s Lake Association had been discussing the idea of joining GREAT for about two years.” Recording secretary Theresa Fifelski added, “The vote to join GREAT as a sponsor was unanimous.” Sponsors support GREAT with contributions of \$100 or more.

# Jim Seitz Presidency a Success by Any Measure

The influence of Jim Seitz three-year GREAT presidency will be noted for many years to come, not because he intended to leave his personal mark on the organization, but because changes he helped to implement in the organization's operations and structure are likely to last through many future leadership changes. "Based upon my work on other boards, I knew soon after taking office it was time for several important new procedures to be established and for some established procedures to be reexamined," said Seitz.

Like many all-volunteer organizations, the work of GREAT was being carried out by relatively few, and leadership duties were not fully understood or evenly distributed. So Jim's first order of business was to organize the GREAT board into a system of standing and ad hoc committees with clearly defined duties, the responsibility to work independently, and then to report their progress or problems at monthly meetings.

Necessary for providing the manpower to accomplish the newly defined duties was the addition of several new board members to fill vacant seats. Fortunately Jon Hoover returned to the board after an absence of two years, Kathy Kulchinski moved into the river master's position, and Don Nelson, with solid connections to Jackson City government became the Annual River Clean-up chair. For other new board members, Jim instituted an informal orientation and lunch.

Important among the essentials Jim identified was determining an activity schedule long in advance of the warm season, naming leaders for each activity, and securing sufficient help from board members and members at large to cover all the necessary duties of the activity. Jim demonstrated the work ethic necessary to fulfill these various duties by placing himself on several committees and assisting in many GREAT activities.

Another area of concern that Jim acted upon within the first year of his presidency, was the apparent disconnect between the board and the membership. He set about improving official communications to the membership. In addition to suggesting important improvements to the quarterly newsletter, Jim took over the GREAT website and made it a first-line information source for members and visitors. In addition Jim initiated frequent phone contacts and emails to board members, regular members and non-members alike.

When Jim took office in 2006, it had been years since the GREAT by laws were revisited. He believed it was

important for board members to be familiar with the by laws that guided the organization, and urged the board to meet one hour before each monthly meeting to examine and revise the by laws where necessary. Month by month, the board worked its way through each section of the by laws, with each trustee contributing his or her perspectives to an updated version. The board also developed GREAT's first written policy manual in the same way.

One result of the changes in policy, organization, and communication was that GREAT's membership doubled during the next three years from 75 members in 2006, to 152 in 2009. This increase in membership has led to more participation in GREAT's activities, especially the annual river clean-up, and it has resulted in less stress on GREAT's budget. Now the board of trustees spends more of its energy promoting and protecting the river rather than fund raising. There has clearly been a positive cascading effect deriving from Jim's leadership.

Hopefully, another result of the improvements realized under Jim's leadership is an organization which can carry out its mission more completely and effectively. Because part of GREAT's mission calls for activities to promote the Grand River, improved safety for paddlers was deemed essential. In this regard, a mandatory life vest rule was implemented, along with the addition of water emergency bags and cell phones now carried in boats by board members on each public paddle outing.

Jim is the first to recognize the devoted efforts of the GREAT board in carrying out the structural and operational changes made during his presidency. "We have accomplished a lot in the last three years, but that was only possible because of the very hard work of the entire board. The word "team" is a part of our name, and that is what we had to become." He also recognizes the special talents and commitment of the general membership. "What I have enjoyed most about being president of GREAT, is all the very fine people I have met who are members, and community leaders in both the public and private sectors, who have been willing to help GREAT in so many ways."

Jim intends to remain on the GREAT board for the foreseeable future, where he will serve in an advisory capacity as the "past president" and will officially become the Member Corresponding Secretary. In addition Jim hopes to wrap up the long anticipated transfer of land between GREAT and the State of Michigan along the Grand River.

--Bryon Ennis



## You're Invited – Next Meeting March 17

Come help plan for the Upper Portion of Grand River Expedition 2010

This coming summer, paddlers, scientists, scouts, elected officials, and other residents of the Grand River Watershed will take to the waterways to paddle the Grand River from its headwaters to Lake Michigan. They'll paddle for a day or sign up for the 13-day trip. They will tell their stories, learn about the river, and share what they know with displays, activities, and events in river towns along the way. We are hoping you will join us then and we hope you will join us now to plan those events.

The Upper Grand River Alliance, the Grand River Environmental Action Team (GREAT), the Upper Grand River Implementation Project (UGRIP), and the Dahlem Conservancy, request your assistance in planning the first 3 days of the trip. We are off to a good start, our 9<sup>th</sup>. Regional planning meeting will take place at:

Blackman Charter  
Township Hall  
1990 W. Parnall Road  
Jackson, MI  
6:30 p.m. Wednesday,  
March 17, 2010

Grand River Expedition 2010 follows similar expeditions in 1990 and 2000. If you are involved in paddle sports, fishing, education, protecting water quality, our local ecology, or our local economy, if you're involved in governance, or just plain interested, we'd love to have you attend this meeting. Please feel free to invite others that may interested as well. For more information about Grand River Expedition 2010, please see <http://www.michigan.sierraclub.org/issues/greatlakes/articles/GRE2010.html> or [www.uppergrandriver.org](http://www.uppergrandriver.org) or email Paul Rentschler at [prentscher@asti-env.com](mailto:prentscher@asti-env.com).

### 2010 GREAT Board

Jonathan Hoover, President  
Kenny Price, VP & Recording Sec.  
Jim Seitz (Past President),  
Membership Secretary  
Kathy Kulchinski, Rivermaster  
Carol Scott, Treasurer  
Emily Curry, Trustee  
Bryon Ennis, Trustee  
DeAnn Monroe, Trustee  
Don Nelson, Trustee  
Ken Dodge, Trustee  
Lee Kettren, Trustee

Special Assignments:  
Louise Hefka, Publicity  
Betty Desbiens, Historian  
Todd Zeller, River Consultant

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