

G.R.E.A.T.

Grand River Environmental Action Team



Website: www.great-mi.org

517.416.4234

Volume 22 Number 2 June 2012

Stewardship towards water and land

By land or river - we look for opportunities!

The 2012 annual meeting was attended by 44 persons this year at Daryls' Downtown. Our President Kenny Price welcomed everyone and shared his recognitions of persons who have contributed to the past years' successes.

Recognitions included: ***GREAT Board members:*** Don Nelson, V.P.; Jim Seitz, Secretary/Web Master; Jack Ripstra, Treasurer; Kathy Kulchinski, River Master; Emily Curry, Recording Secretary; Jon Hoover, Past President; Helen Burnett will be Newsletter Editor; Mary Lenardson and Kurt LaFrance, members at large.

Past GREAT Board Members present and thanked for their continued support were: Barb Anderson (also new GREAT Historian); Rick Berry; Ken Dodge; Bryon Ennis, Dr. John Hand, and Nancy Lapinski.



Gregg Moore of Senator Nofs office congratulating Bryon Ennis and Jim Seitz



Cecilia Govrik with Kenny Price

The Jackson County Conservation Office was well represented with Cecilia Govrik, Water Project Manager, Upper Grand River Implementation Project (UGRIP); Lori Fitzgibbons, Administrator; Mark Kaczorowski, CTAI Soil Conservationist; Sharon Williams, Calhoun and Jackson County Conservation Office MAEAP Water Steward Technician.

From the MSU Extension Service: Natalie Rector, Manure Nutrient Management Field Specialist.

Government Officials who attended the meeting were Earl Poleski, Michigan House Representative; Jim Spink, Liberty Township Supervisor; Greg Moore, Legislative Aide to Senator Nofs, and Keli Fox, Aide to Debbie Stabenow.

Others whose efforts were recognized were: Paul Rentschler, ASTI Environmental consultant for Upper Grand River Watershed Alliance; Ellen Rathbone, Education Director, Dahlem Environmental Education Center; Travis Fojasek, Jackson County Recycling Board of Directors; and Jack Lapinski, Donation of GREAT Newsletter Printing.

Recognition of Board member spouses for their continued support are: Jan Seitz, Mike Kulchinski, Betty Kay Price, Sue Hoover, Chip Curry, Maryanne Ripstra and Ken Burnett. Behind every dedicated volunteer is another volunteer, in ways not seen but felt.

Financial contribution has also been recently received from TAC - If you know someone who works at that facility, be sure to thank them for the contribution from their employer.

Greg Moore was present to fill us in on the progress of a land trade that has been in progress for some time. Senate Bill 1039 was introduced on the day of our meeting to facilitate a trade of land between GREAT and the DOC along the Grand River. This trade will allow GREAT to have a larger piece of land on one side of the river with future plans to put a storage facility and maybe a put-in there for access to the Grand River. We thank Greg Moore and Senator Nofs for their continued efforts to move this on through. Watch for future news on the completion of this activity.

Keli Fox from Senator Debbie Stabenow's office has been working with the US Secretary of Agriculture to offer funds to clean up Lake Erie. She made the offer that we may call her office at any time should we need assistance or have questions.

Great thanks were shared by Kenny Price for time served by Jon Hoover. Jon served 2 different times for a total of 8 years on the GREAT board. Past President and chair for the clean up on 2 occasions. This is a great feat and he also shared his wonderful organizational skills with us. Most recently, he was the Editor for this newsletter and for that we also thank Jon.

Board Elections took place and the following were voted in: Mary Lenardson, Kenny Price, Don Nelson, Kathy Kulchinski, and Kurt LaFrance. They were voted in for a 2 year term.

Featured Speaker: Joe Kelpinsky - from MAEAP - Michigan Agriculture Environmental Assurance Program shared a program for farmers that facilitates land conservation. The program offers incentives for farmers to improve their operations for sustainability and minimize their impact on the environment. The goal is to verify 5000 farmers - currently at 1500. This is a voluntary proactive program to ensure farmers are engaging in cost effective pollution control and be in compliance with environmental regulations.

3 phases:

- Educational phase (12,000 - 13,000 in this phase)
- Plan of action - with technical support
- Verification - 11,000 are verified

They can be verified in one or all three types of farming: Livestock, Farmstead and/or Cropping systems. Goal: Every farm, Every size, Every commodity. Local dairy farmer, Bruce Weir of Hanover gave examples of changes he made for his farm to become MAEAP certified.

Thank you, Joe, for sharing with us the work you do to help farmers maximize their stewardship to the conservation of land and protection of our water.

Helen Burnett



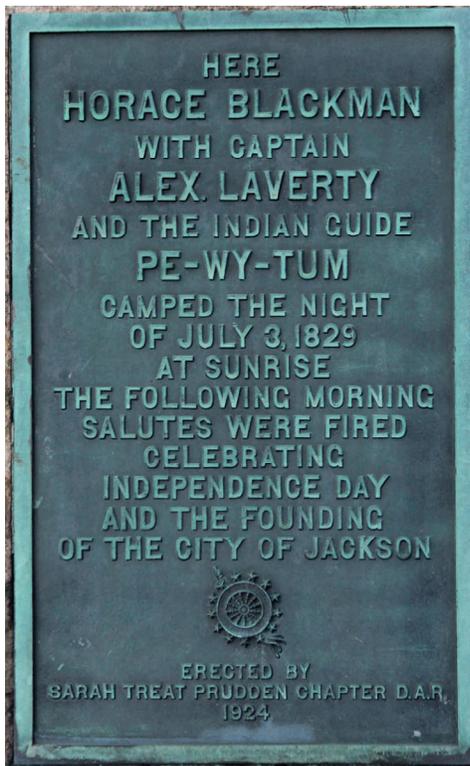
Jon Hoover has been of GREAT service for many years



GREAT Members sharing tales of the river

A Bit of Jackson's History

When you are paddling the Grand River through downtown Jackson you will come to the Trail Street bridge. If you get out of your boat and walk about three or four rods, you will come to the intersection of Trail and Jackson Streets. On the north corner of Trail is a big rock with an old plaque. It marks the spot where, on July 3, 1829, Horace Blackman, the first Anglo settler of Jackson County, spent his first night in the county.



The following day Blackman, Capt. Alex Laverty and Pe-Wy-Tum held the first Fourth of July celebration in Jackson County. There were no fireworks, but there was a lot of hooting and a hollering going on. They shot off their muskets so many times, some nearby Indians came over to investigate what the noise was all about. History tells they joined in on the fun and had a big feed of potatoes, corn, fish and wild game. It didn't say whether the wild game was deer or opossum. So your guess is as good as mine.

There is one possible itty bitty mistake on the plaque. Blackman did not name the town of Jackson. Horace knew from friends that the Territory Government was fixin' to open new land for settlers by forming new counties.

Pe-Wy-Tum led Horace to the site where nine Indian trails crossed the Grand River and Horace decided that it would make a good homestead. He and his companions walked the area to find the best site. They decided that the area of Ingram and Trail would be the best to build his house.

Seven days later Horace walked to Monroe, Michigan and bought his homestead. He bought one hundred and sixty acres for two dollars an acre. This is all true but he did not name the area Jackson. In October of 1829, the Territorial Government formed Jackson County and named the county seat Jacksonopolis. In January of 1830, the town of Jacksonopolis was renamed Jacksonburgh; and then in 1838 it was finally renamed Jackson.

Colonel Charles V. Deland, in his *Deland's History of Jackson County* (1903), gave a poetic version of Horace Blackman finding his future homestead on the Grand River. He wrote, "Leaving the last boundaries of civilized life at the little hamlet of Ann Arbor, the adventurous seeker for a new home, attracted hither by the fame of the west, which had just begun to be sounded vaguely and mysteriously at the East, plunges into the weird forests and, guided by the Indian trail, pursues his march with no other object-point than the quest of a good location. At the end of the second day he comes to a lovely valley, and he traverses it and beholds with wonder and delights the manifold charms that it is endowed withal, his further progress is stopped by the barrier of a swift-running river.

Standing upon the banks of this beautiful stream, its thousand eddies and wavelets glistening in the sunlight of a bright July morning like a sheen of myriad spears, he sees upon the opposite banks a range of finely wooded hills, here and there broken by slight ravines, extending to the north and south, glorious in all the freshness of summer's emerald livery, unspoiled by dust and waving free and happy to the music of bird and waterfall. It is a scene of pastoral beauty, such as poets love to weave into verse and painters delight to portray." Here Blackman claimed his future fortune.

Next time you drive to the intersection of Trail and Jackson, stop to see if you can imagine the Grand River as it might have looked, from Deland's description, in 1829.

Kenny Price

Short trips with short (self) shuttles

Sometimes one just has a couple of hours to spare and one just must get out on the water. Sometimes one wants to paddle but there is no one to go with or to help place a vehicle, or to drop off and pick up. Fortunately for us lucky paddlers in southern lower Michigan, the Grand River in southern Jackson County provides a plethora of trips of about an hour's duration with put-in/take-out points of approximately one mile.

Disclaimer: Paddling times vary GREATLY by paddling ability, water levels, river obstructions and weather conditions. These times are all APPROXIMATE! It is always best to paddle with a buddy, for safety's sake. Since this isn't always possible, be sure to leave a float plan with someone who cares. Let them know where you are going, and when you expect to return. Make sure they know what to do if you don't return on time! Carry a cell phone in a dry bag and keep it on your person. It does you no good if you are separated from your boat and your phone is attached to your boat. Always check maps of the area to be sure you know where you are and how to get home if for some reason you must retreat from the river, Google Earth is good for this. Most importantly, always wear your lifejacket! Even though the sections of the Grand that we will be discussing are very shallow, there are often holes and deep spots. A lifejacket is insurance for you that is useless if it isn't worn.



US 127 at Jefferson Road to Reed Rd: Put in on the west side of US 127, on the south side of Jefferson Rd. Just beyond the put in is an old decrepit bridge that must be portaged. It is usually impossible to float under this bridge and the wood is falling apart so use caution. Despite this nasty bridge and some foot bridges that may need to be portaged, this is actually one of the very most picturesque sections of the Grand. There is a covered bridge as well, and depending upon water levels, this also may need to be portaged.

The river meanders here through wetlands and woodlands and residential areas. Take out at Reed Rd., lock your boat to the guard rail and hike west to US127 and then south the mile or so back to your car.

Reed Rd. to US 127 (just north of Reed Rd.): Very scenic meander through mostly wetlands. Amazing birding with a turn around a bend with a menagerie of farm animals, sometimes right down in the water (watch for fencing in the river). This is the trip that is most likely to be free of deadfalls and obstacles (no promises!). Take out at US 127, once again, lock your boat, walk south to Reed Rd. then east to put in.

US 127 (just north of Reed Rd) to Loomis Rd: Pretty paddle through maple forest. Generally, this section hosts lots of wildlife. During high water, areas can flood and river channel may be difficult to discern. This is the trip most likely to be clogged with deadfall and obstacles; it can easily change a one hour paddle to a multiple hour challenge. Be aware and be prepared i.e. wear shoes that are durable and fit your feet so they don't get sucked off in mud during a climb-over. Don't do this paddle if you are on a time deadline. Recommend placing your boat at the put-in, either side of the river on the east side of the highway, lock it to the guard rail and take your car north on US127 to Loomis Rd then west to the bridge. Parking is prohibited on US 127. Hike back to the put in and enjoy!



Vandercook Lake to Hague Avenue and back: This requires no shuttling or hiking at all. Put in at the boat launch at Vandercook Lake County Park and paddle south (upstream) on the Grand. Wetlands; teeming with wildlife and plant life. Depending upon your speed, about an hour up and 45 minutes back.

These are just a sampling of some "quickie" paddles on the southern portion of the Grand in Jackson County. Paddle on and be smart!

Kathy Kulchinski, Rivermaster

Spring Events “Weather” the Obstacles

GREAT’s first paddle event, April 15th, had 44 paddlers show up at Culver Rd. to paddle to Jefferson/US 127 in Liberty Township. They carefully unloaded their boats and gear, and used the shuttle to place their vehicles at the take-out. However, at noon, just as the group meeting was to begin prior to the actual put-in, dark clouds appeared with thunder getting ever louder and a few distant lightening flashes. President Kenny Price’s smart phone showed an approaching storm stretching back to Niles. GREAT trip leaders and officers met and decided for safety, the trip had to be called off. That met shuttling back to the take-out to retrieve the vehicles and loading up boats and gear. Of course by the time this was done, most of the storm had shifted north around us. GREAT’s policy for any trip and the annual Clean-up is, if called off because of weather, the event will be made-up the following week same time and place. However, as GREAT was participating in the popular JAOC Earth Day events the following Sunday, the April paddle event make-up was delayed for two weeks.

A beautiful sunny day, the April make-up, had 36 paddlers. While the route was the second shortest distance wise of any GREAT public trip, paddlers were challenged by the narrow width of the river and the constant bends to navigate around. Some said this gave them an opportunity to improve their maneuvering skills. Most did the trip in only two hours. The route is very pristine as the put-in was less than a three hour paddle from the beginning of the Grand River at Grand Lake which is near the Jackson and Hillsdale County line. Three of us spent a total of eight hours during two trips using the chain saws and other tools to make the river more passable for the paddle. One of the cutting crew, Rod Monasmith, quipped, “after all that work, it would have been a real shame to not have people experience the beauty of paddling the route”.

GREAT had 152 participants paddle its boats at the Jackson Area Outdoor Coalition annual Earth Day Celebration, Sparks Foundation County Park (Cascades). GREAT traditionally has had one of the most popular events of the twenty five participating outdoor/environmental organizations. In fact, other than park rentals, this event is the only time canoes and kayaks are permitted on the Cascade Park lagoons. The event is a big draw for local families, which is why two thirds of those in GREAT’s kayaks and canoes were youth ranging from toddlers to older teenagers. GREAT’s tent booth is set-up to educate the public about the water environment with many displays and handouts. One young woman, Corinna Hovater removed several bags of trash from the water, even though this was not GREAT’s focus at this event.

Over eight miles, the May paddle is the second longest GREAT public paddle route distance wise, but with a wide river and a steady flow, most of the 55 paddlers completed the route in three hours (the range was 2.5 to 4 hours). Some time was taken to portage around a small dam (3 foot drop), which a few decided to make a fast paddle run over and were successful. (Be careful deciding to paddle over dams as some unlike this one, can be very dangerous!). With temperatures in the high 80’s, the cooler river was the place to be. It is reported there is a trout population in this very pristine part of the river. Some were entertained by a young deer who seemed abnormally fascinated by the boats as it swam out more than once to “kiss” canoe and kayak bows. Jan Seitz thought it was going to jump into her kayak, but the deer refused to sign a GREAT waiver and wear a PFD. Afterwards, a very large group went to Casarelli’s in Albion to cool off with food and drink.

Jim Seitz



Earth Day: Board member Jack Ripstra (kneeling) helping father and son in GREAT's tandem kayak at



May Paddle: Friendly deer emerges to kiss bow of one of GREAT's canoes on the S. Br. Kalamazoo River

GREAT Chosen in Top Ten for Love Your Community Contest



Jackson Community Foundation sponsored an on-line FaceBook voting contest for local community projects to receive min-grant funding. Thirty three projects were submitted for the first “Love Your Community” contest, including GREAT’s Annual Clean-up. The top ten could receive up to \$500 in funding. GREAT finished tenth, but only requested \$150 as most of our Annual Clean-up expense is cover by in-kind donations. Because of this, the eleventh place Art Trail Trash removal project was awarded \$350. Actually, as much of the Art Trail runs parallel to the Grand River, removal of trash on the trail also prevents it from entering the Grand River, so according to GREAT President, Kenny Price, “the river is again the real winner!”

The contest, in addition to the granted funds, brought attention to the public about GREAT’s mission and also demonstrates the priority the public places upon keeping the local Grand River clean. Thank you to all of you who took time to vote in this worthy community contest.

Jim Seitz

Application for Love Your Community Mini Grant

Love Your Community Spring 2012 Mini Grant Application Cover Sheet

NAME: Jim Seitz
 TITLE: President
 ORGANIZATION: Grand River Environmental Action Team (GREAT)
 CITY: Jackson, MI
 PHONE: 517-787-7642
 EMAIL: seitz@greatmi.org
 PROJECT: Grand River Clean-up

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Application Deadline: Monday, April 23, 2012 5:00 p.m.

Submit your application to: Love Your Community Spring 2012 Mini Grant, 1000 Jackson Street, Suite 200, Jackson, MI 49201

Application Fee: \$150.00 (refundable)

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Breakfast on the Farm

BREAKFAST ON THE FARM: June 23rd.

http://www.breakfastonthefarm.com/find_a_breakfast/

Breakfast on the farm include breakfast on the Choate’s Belly Acres in Cement City 9am - 1pm with breakfast served 9am - 12N. See the website for locations to pick up your free tickets. Some of the locations are MSU Extension office, Chamber of Commerce, select Jackson Libraries and some Polly’s Markets. Check the weblink for further details. Come learn about life on the farm. Questions? You may also call the MSU extension office: 517 788-4292. Live closer to other counties - check out the website to find other locations as well.



We Thank You So Much...

Emily Curry

Emily Curry, who retired from the Board this past spring, served GREAT ably for the last three years, since March of 2009.

In many ways Emily was like family to the rest of us, as she offered her youthful energy, talents and enthusiasm to an aging group of trustees. She was persuaded to serve by her former J.C.C. professor, Brian Ennis.



Emily helps with p.f.d.'s on a paddle event

Seeing her on a paddle and remembering her as an exceptional student, Brian encouraged her to join.

She had all of our best wishes as we learned that she and husband, Chip, were expecting, and were gladdened by the birth of their baby boy, Colton, in May of 2010.

It is remarkable that a young high school teacher, married and beginning family life, could find the time to fulfill board responsibilities. Yet Emily has done just that, serving as Education Chair and recording meeting minutes, to name just two of her many contributions.

Emily teaches Biology and Environmental Science at J.H.S. and has had her students make time lines on the history of the Grand River in Jackson. This project was based on Bryon Ennis' research on the Holton Mill Pond, which appeared in GREAT's newsletters.

She recently contributed her own inspiring article concerning student learning in river science, which she conducts on the banks of (and in) the Grand River.

Emily has also used her board knowledge to institute "Project Wet" training on water science for fellow teachers, and was honored as "Jackson High School Teacher of the Year," for the year 2010-11.

Next fall will be Emily's 8th year in teaching. Already earning accolades, networking with environmentalists, making friends and gaining valuable experience, she will be a person to watch.

Emily, thank you for your time with us. We're sad to see you go but also know you have a bright future ahead.

Cecilia Govrik

It is with much pride and more than a little sadness that GREAT members bid goodbye to UGRIP Watershed Project Manager Cecilia Govrik.

We are so very proud of Cecilia, our friend and collaborator on Grand River projects for the last six years.



Cecilia supervises an Adopt-A-Stream activity

We'll miss her cheerful dedication, sense of organization, competence, persistence and leadership; all skills that will stand her in good stead for the future.

Cecilia has accepted a position in communications and public relations for the U.S. Department of Energy in the Chicago area, specifically promoting sustainability programs.

Over the years Cecilia has written, applied for and administered a number of UGRIP grants. GREAT has been happy to partner in these grants, furthering our mission, educating the public, gathering data and conducting clean ups.

In addition to her important role in the UGRIP effort, she is responsible for starting the Adopt-A-Stream program, through which data is collected to evaluate the health of watershed streams.

Moreover, last fall Cecilia implemented a new monitoring effort, by which trained staff gather water chemistry data, further supplementing our knowledge of river health.

Two years ago Cecilia nominated GREAT for the "Friend of Conservation" Award, given annually by the Michigan Association of Conservation Districts. She was on hand to see our leaders receive it and also to receive, herself, the award for Conservation District Technician of the Year.

Her fine efforts have always been complicated by difficult commutes, as she has lived variously in Adrian, Indiana and Toledo. Her discipline, dedication and loyalty to job and friends allowed her to achieve, even triumph, during this period of punishing travel and extended working days.

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Welcome New Members!

Abigail Bentle
Michelle Cherne
Nancy Connell & David Foster
Kim Dellner (Loring)
Jon Dowling
Walt Espie
Anita Fobes
John Hamel
Ken Mangus
John & Nancy Ocwiejajz
Carolyn Seifker
Susan Serafin
Deb Snell
Douglas Swartz
Benjamin Ward
Sheila Wendorf
Sandra Wigent



GREAT Newsletter

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Cecilia recently stated that the best part of these years has been “meeting such wonderful people through partnerships with GREAT and other local organizations.”

Her hope is that our common efforts will lead to “lasting water quality improvements in Michigan’s grandest of rivers. I want to say thank you to GREAT and all of the friends I’ve made during my time in Jackson.”

Those of us who know Cecilia and appreciate what she has done will say “thank you” right back and wish her the best of luck in all of her future endeavors. We will most certainly miss her.

Jonathan Hoover

Upcoming Paddling Events

June 17th (Sun.) 12 Noon

Grand River (North and Main Branches)
Joint Trip with Dahlem as Hosts.

July 15th (Sun.) 12 Noon

Little Goose & Goose Lakes
Cement City (Cement City Hwy)

August 19th (Sun.) 12 Noon

Kent Lake
Lotus plant tour led by Jamie Myles

September 8th (Sat.) 9 AM

Annual Grand River Clean Up

GREAT Board

Kenny Price, President
Don Nelson, Vice President
Jim Seitz, Secretary
Jack Ripstra, Treasurer
Kathy Kulchinski, Rivermaster
Helen Burnett, Trustee
Kurt LaFrance, Trustee
Mary Lenardson, Trustee

Special Assignments:

Louise Hefka, Publicity
Todd Zeller, River Consultant
Bill Kantor, Financial Statements
Jeff Grund, Tax Statements