

# 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 Grand River Clean Up

The day started early for many GREAT board members and others as it was a bit cool, but as the sun got a little higher in the sky, there was no doubt in my mind that it was going to be a perfect day to get a little dirty. At the first clean-up I attended, there were around 26 people as I recall, and 12 of them were board members. It was a cold and drizzling day and not too much was accomplished. In previous years we had many small crews sent to work around bridges, removing debris and placing it into piles near the road for the City of Jackson's Department of Public Works staff to retrieve and dispose of. We would also have several other crews walking in the water from one bridge to another with canoes that were filled with tires, shopping carts, bicycles, newspaper boxes, scrap metal, 55 gallon drums, etc. That worked well for several years.

The October 2013 clean-up was looking much more promising with a few changes. We had food and transportation lined up for the volunteers. We never truly know how many folks are going to show up for the clean-up. This year the scope of our targeted clean up area and the fact that the City was no longer able to dedicate the man power to picking up our trash piles, forced us to rethink a few things. During the last couple years we had also aggressively pushed the clean up efforts further out from the city's limits and were using more canoes to float down river, as far north as the Maple Grove Bridge. This year we needed to make arrangements for removal of the trash we hauled out of the river, which was different from previous years. We also had to plan for the happy problem of having a big turn out of volunteers. That is never really too much of a problem, is there truly such a thing as 'too many' helpers?

As it turned out this year set several records and we had our largest turn out with 137 people coming out to help. We cleaned up 12 miles of the river from out south of town, through the city and well out to the north of town. We also used 28 canoes and other craft. We place canoes at key points and crews would go down river and

### Clean-Up Sponsors

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Papa John Pizza  
Roly Poly  
Upper Grand River Watershed Alliance  
Virginia Coney Island  
West Texas Barbeque

pull out at predetermined points where they were also able to dump the trash.

This year we were successful in enlisting the aid of both Northwest Refuse and Emmons to provide dumpsters at these sites. This way we were able to have just a few points to retrieve the crews, the canoes, and the trash. I think this worked out rather well. Most important were the people who came out to help. For the past several years we have been fortunate to get just a ton of help from the Junior ROTC. This year there were 62 of them who came out and worked at every job we had available. Their youthful energy and a positive "can do" attitude were impressive and they jumped at the chance to tackle any task, the tougher the better! We also had more non-members this year than GREAT members. There were many people who had heard of the event from the radio or TV or some other source and wanted to come out and help. Many walked the banks to get the trash before it could be blown into the water, helped with getting the food and organizing lunch, while still others helped with sign in, equipment and life vests.

Every year this event attracts more attention and support. This year we had several political representatives come down to lend their support, we had newspaper staff come and interview folks and take photos. Helping with life vests was State Senator Bruce Caswell. He was eagerly sizing and fitting each person getting ready to step into a task that could only lead to fun, sweat and the potential for getting wet. In fact we only had one slip and slide, one of our Junior ROTC volunteers. State Representative Earl Poleski was also present once again to help send the team off for the morning's adventure and treasure hunt. Area newsmen were also there to facilitate publicizing our event. The Jackson Citizen Patriot attended to capture our story and take pictures. Thank you for a very nice article of the day's activities! Also Channel 10 - WILX - took the opportunity to catch some video footage for the evening news. These are wonderful means of sharing our story and efforts to clean the Grand River.

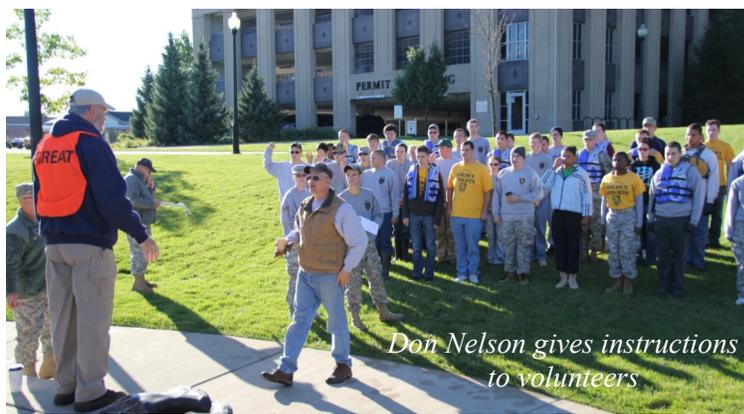
I can not express just how happy I am with how smoothly everything went, but that is because of the hard work of so many key people taking on specific tasks and doing them well. The logistics of moving the volunteers to their work areas, picking them up and getting them back for lunch, not to mention placing and retrieving all of the boats and then at the end of the day packing everything up and getting it back to where it belongs...well, no small task, but this year it was done in record time.

Thank you all for a job well done!

Don Nelson

## GREAT Sponsors

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Michigan Automotive Compressor, Inc.  
Quiet World Sports  
Steve Rick (Marcoux Allen)  
Jack and Mary Ann Ripstra  
Kurt & Lisa Rudolph  
Jim and Jan Seitz  
TAC Manufacturing  
Phil & Pat Willis (Willis & Jurasek, PC CPAs)



# Mini Clean Up Nets More Than Expected



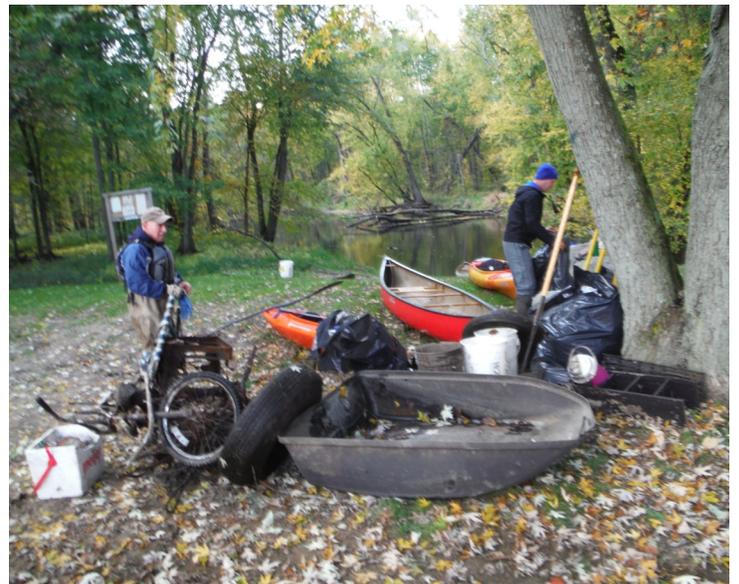
*Volunteers included: B.J. Ward, Jim Seitz, Kurt Lafrance, Rick Berry, Connie Ross, Lori Fitzgibbons, Don Lynd, Rod Monasmith. Not pictured: Kenny Price, Kandice Karll, and Jack Ripstra.*

On October 20<sup>th</sup>, 2013, GREAT partnered with the Jackson County Conservation District to assist with their 319 grant project, the Upper Grand River Bacteria Reduction Project Department of Environmental Quality Grant ID 2012-0024. The Cleanup was a great success cleaning the Grand River from State Road North to Dixon Road. This was the same route of GREAT's last paddle of the 2013 season. The Cleanup was originally scheduled for October 19th but was postponed due to rain. On October 20th, ten people braved the cold temperatures to clean the river. About 45 tires and several bags of trash were pulled from the river. Near the take out several bikes were pulled from the river. Some of the trash was picked up by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, but the majority of the tires were picked up by Jack Ripstra and Jim Seitz. The cleanup took longer than expected as the crews found more trash than first anticipated.

*Right: Tires collected during the mini clean up in October in conjunction with the Jackson County Conservation District. Thank you to Huco Metal Recycling Service for taking the tires.*



*An amazing bicycle collection was found near the trestle!*



# Jackson History

## The Dam and Dramatic Incidents of 1835-36

The below article is from DeLands's History of Jackson County. I found it interesting because of the information about the first Dam on the Upper Grand River. But now I have to do more research or get help from someone. I now know the Dam was built in 1836 and called Ford's Dam. In 1936 in the making of the "CAP" the Dam was torn down, but it was then called the Holton Dam. I need to find out when and how the Dam was changed over to "Holton Dam." Also in this article it talks about how bad the roads were. I found an article how a "Tolled PLANK Road" that was built in Jackson County. I will put that in next issue. If YOU have an interest or have knowledge of OLD Jackson County, please share it with me.

Up to this time there was little to encourage the idea that a city would ever exist at the location of Jackson. A large portion of what is now the business district and is now the most valuable property was then a swamp. It was nearly thirty years before a good road was opened through the swamp. On the east, Leoni village, and on the West Barry Village (now Sandstone) claimed and seemed to have every right to expect that theirs was the place for the future city. The following incidents were the deciding factors as to where the new business center would be.

In April, 1835 William Ford, Jerry Ford and William Ford Jr. bought lands along both the east and west side of the Grand river. Up until then all activities were west of the river. They acquired the saw mill and water power rights from Jeremiah Marvin who had successfully operated a saw mill for several years. Then, in the winter of 1835-36 Daniel Coleman, George B. Cooper and Jerry Ford were given power to construct a dam in the river. In the spring of 1836, the Fords put a large force of men to work building the dam and also, erecting a building east of the river that was known for many years as "Ford's Flouring Mill". Considering the really tremendous difficulty of bringing in material and machinery in the then state of roads (or rather, the absence of roads) it is remarkable that the flour mill was completed and in operation that fall.

Up to the opening of this mill, everybody had to depend upon mills located at distance that called from four days to more than a week's time to make the trip out and back. When the Ford's mill started that one fact immediately settled the question where the business center was to be, because the place where Millings was done was also the place where trading was done. Later on, other things contributed to make Jackson, but the supplying of the primary need of a mill closer at home was the real cause. The State Prison was not begun until 1838. The railroad did not come until December 29, 1841.

Honor is due to the Ford's and the business men and politicians Coleman and Cooper who had the foresight and the business ability and necessary strength of purpose to put this thing through.

The Ford's gave further evidence of their confidence in Jackson by recording the plat of Ford's Extension on February 5, 1836. This was east of the river and it provided locations for the homes of men employed on the dam and the buildings. This was the beginning of the "East Side". The first frame building east of the river was a store built by Wm. Ford and occupied by Ford & Buddington. Two other frame buildings were also erected in 1836. That same year Andrew Shaver built the "Grand River House" to accommodate boarders from the men employed by the Fords. In 1836, Ganson, Clark & Munroe built a foundry and machine shop east of the river and began making plows. The Eastsiders had their July 4<sup>th</sup> celebration in 1836. That occasion was marred by the fatal injury of Daniel Chapin when the "Liberty pole" fell as he was striving to untangle the flag halyards.

Kenny Price



# The Kalamazoo River

In July 2013, Jack Ripstra and I pre-paddled the Kalamazoo River from Saylor's Landing, west of Marshall to Historic Bridge Park, east of Battle Creek, including the portage around Ceresco Dam. We were testing the waters to see if they would be navigable and safe for our group to use for our August regular paddle event. The river looked very good at first, but as we were approaching the Ceresco Dam, we started to notice small globules of dark slippery material. The globules got bigger and bigger as we got closer to the dam. As we were portaging around the dam, we found a posting that told us about parts of the Kalamazoo River that were scheduled to be closed for Enbridge Energy Partners, LLC to do more EPA-mandated dredging and cleaning of the river. The first half of the river section we were hoping to use in our GREAT August paddling event was going to be closed right after our pre-paddle. The closed period of time was planned to extend through the end of the year and potentially longer.



*A fair amount of trash was found by volunteers during the pre-paddle.*

Below the dam we didn't find any noticeable oil. This is all a beautiful part of the Kalamazoo River.

At Historic Bridge Park, where we took out, there was an amazing place to land. It was a ramp with rollers, handles and support systems to help anyone get in and out on their own. It would accommodate many kinds of people who need assistance to get in and out of their craft. I found out, the creative way, that you have to hit the ramp at just the right angle while you're navigating a strong current. Luckily, it was summer and was not uncomfortable to get wet.

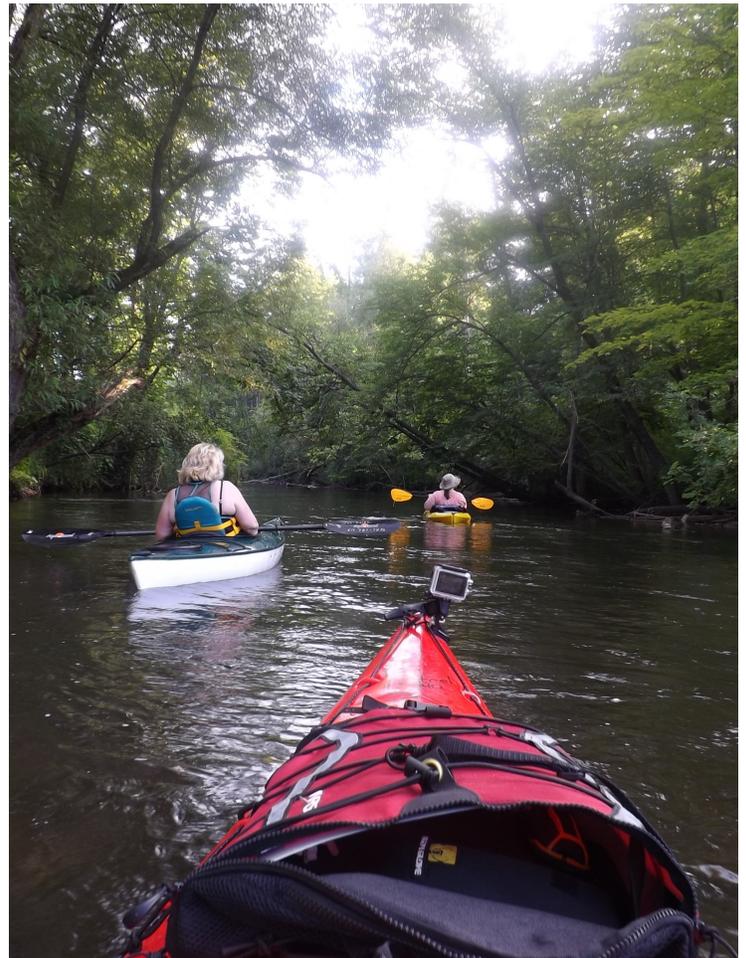
I look forward to the river being all back open again so GREAT can choose this route for a future paddling event.

More recent news about the Ceresco Dam is that the MDEQ has approved Enbridge to begin removing the dam by notching it. The speculation is that the dam may be removed by Spring 2014. This would allow a 16-mile navigable stretch between Marshall dam and Battle Creek dam.

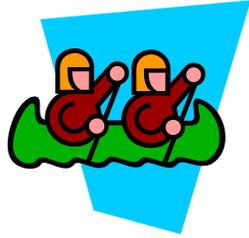
For more information from both sides, go to these websites: [epa.gov/enbridgespill](http://epa.gov/enbridgespill)  
[response.enbridgeus.com](http://response.enbridgeus.com)  
[advisor-chronicle.com/ceresco-dam-removal-to-be-completed-by-spring-if-approved-p1782-1.htm](http://advisor-chronicle.com/ceresco-dam-removal-to-be-completed-by-spring-if-approved-p1782-1.htm)

Additional information is also available at [www.michigan.gov/oilspill](http://www.michigan.gov/oilspill) by clicking on the "Part 301 Mitigation: River Restoration at Ceresco" link.

Mary Lenardson



## Calling any 8mm Video Camera



July 1990 was the inaugural Grand River Expedition. Those game for an adventure on the GRAND paddled from Jackson to Lake Michigan. This event is repeated every ten years. John Minar (GREAT member and board member) has several cassettes of the **Inaugural Grand River Expedition**. As an archiving project he would like to view and condense the footage to a DVD and prime still photos for our historian. GREAT is in need of borrowing an 8mm video camera to complete this project. It is a wonderful event to preserve. Please contact John at 734-293-0660 or [j.minar@methods-equipment.com](mailto:j.minar@methods-equipment.com) if you have a video camera you are willing to lend or donate to GREAT.

Thank you in advance for your consideration.

John Minar

## A Satisfying Close to a GREAT Year!

The last paddle of the year was enjoyed by 41 paddlers who made their way 6 miles downstream from State Road to Trestle Bridge Access on Dixon Road on October 13, 2013. The weather could not have been much nicer for an October paddle, with temperatures in the lower 60's. In spite of the fall timing, the trees had yet to show their full color.

The trees did, however, conspire to make the pre-trip work a bit challenging, taking our clearing team 16 hours on the river across three different days to clear the path we enjoyed. Even with the extensive clearing, several back and forth maneuvers were required to complete the trip. Stream flow worked in our favor as the river was higher than expected, providing adequate clearance over the submerged obstacles.

Everyone stayed dry on this trip with no known additions to the GREAT Swimmers Club.

After the completion of the paddle, about half of the participants headed to the Roadhouse to enjoy a late lunch and friendly banter.

Don Lynd

## Thank You Sports Connection and Quiet World Sports!

From time to time, GREAT needs parts and/or advice to repair one of our kayaks or canoes which we store at the Dahlem Nature Center, just down the road from The Sports Connection located at Horton Road near the South Jackson intersection. Roger Stevens who started his business over 25 years ago, carries an inventory of parts for Walden kayaks, Novacraft and Oscoda canoes, brands which make up a majority of GREAT's boat fleet. Many of these parts could be hard to come by from other sources, but Roger often gives these parts to GREAT along with detailed advice on how to do the repair. However, with more involved repairs, Roger does the job himself, charging GREAT only material costs as he has on many of our purchases of boats and paddling accessories.

Board member, Kathy Kulchinski, is GREAT's River-master. She also is owner of Quiet World Sports, which

provides kayak instruction as well as kayak rentals at her Vandercook Lake business. Even though she has only owned Quiet World Sports for two years, Kathy has used her business to help GREAT in many ways. Most recently, Quiet World Sports paid the \$5.00/car admission fee for parking of GREAT participant vehicles at our Burchfield Park take-out at GREAT's July Grand River trip starting at Eaton Rapids. Last year Quiet World Sports employees did a river clean-up from Loomis Bridge to Vandercook Lake removing a pick-up truck load of trash.

A big thank you to Roger and Kathy for helping our non-profit!



Jim Seitz

# All you ever wanted to know and understand about Muskrats from the Department of Natural Resources

Muskrats (*Ondatra zibethicus*) are easily recognized by their moderate size, their blunt head, and small non-descript ears and eyes. Adult muskrat weigh between 2.5 and 4 pounds, and total length may range from 23-26 inches, with a tail length of 8-11 inches. A scaly, laterally compressed tail with a fringe of coarse hair along the underside of the tail is a feature muskrats share with no other Michigan mammal. They possess large hind feet with partial webbing in between their toes with a row of coarse hairs along the outer edge of each foot. Their fur can vary in shades of brown and in some cases black and consists of a soft, dense undercoat with an interspersion of longer, coarse guard hairs.

The roots and stems of aquatic vegetation are the muskrats' dietary staple. Animal matter is also consumed in times of vegetation shortages or peaks in abundance of invertebrate species. They have been known to eat mollusks, fish, various invertebrates and even turtles. Classic signs of the presence of muskrat are well-matted resting and feeding platforms such as the bare edges of stream banks, the tops of tussock grass clumps, or nestled within aquatic plants. These are often littered with piles of vegetative debris and occasionally crayfish or mussel remains, as well as droppings. Muskrat foods will vary with the type of habitat. Marsh dwellers may eat aquatic plants such as cattails almost exclusively, whereas animals in large bodies of water such as lakes and ponds



may be more opportunistic, thus accounting for a more omnivorous diet.

Den construction is dependent upon the type of habitat occupied. When in a stream habitat, muskrat burrow into the banks to create dens. One or more entrances are hidden underwater and lead to chambers located above the waterline. They excavate channels or runways in shallow water leading from den entrances for ease of mobility. In marshy habitats, a dome-shaped hut is constructed on a firm substrate using emergent vegetation in the immediate area. Regardless of den type, muskrat activity may be destructive to the banks of waterways and plant communities in the immediate area of a den site.

During winter months, another type of structure created by muskrats is referred to as 'push-ups' or 'breathers'. These are masses of vegetation collected from underwater and pushed up through cracks or holes in the ice. Ultimately, these freeze solid and serve as resting places and are maintained as breathing holes.

When muskrats manipulate vegetation during feeding or while constructing dens, they impact many other species that share these habitats. Some species, such as turtles, use muskrat houses as winter hibernacula. Canada geese and mallards will nest on top of muskrat huts. A unique ecological situation occurs in western New York that includes muskrat, bur-reed, and the state endangered black tern. As muskrat consume the bur-reed, a primary food item, they create open matted areas on the water surface that black terns can use as courtship and nesting areas, thereby increasing tern reproductive success.

From the Catholic Service, this helpful story to those who want to eat meat during Lent next year.

There's an alternative to fish for some Michigan Catholics abstaining from meat on Fridays in Lent -- muskrat.

The custom of eating muskrat on Ash Wednesday and Fridays in Lent apparently goes back to the early 1800s, the time of Father Gabriel Richard, an early missionary in Michigan whose flock included French-Canadian trappers.

*Continued on page 8*

# Muskrats

*Continued from page 7*

Legend has it that because trappers and their families were going hungry not eating flesh during Lent, he allowed them to eat muskrat, with the reasoning that the mammal lives in the water.

The story varies on just where in Michigan the dispensation extends. Among areas mentioned are along the Raisin River, along the Rouge River, both of which flow into Lake Erie south of Detroit, Monroe County in the southeast corner of Michigan, or all of southeast Michigan.

The Detroit archdiocesan communications department said there is a standing dispensation for Catholics downriver -- in Detroit's southern suburbs and below -- to eat muskrat on Fridays, although no documentation of the original dispensation could be found.

A 2002 archdiocesan document on Lenten observances, in addition to outlining the general laws of fast and abstinence, says, "There is a long-standing permission -- dating back to our missionary origins in the 1700s -- to permit the consumption of muskrat on days of abstinence, including Fridays of Lent."

## **GREAT Newsletter**

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Grand River Environmental Action Team

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## **Welcome New Members!**

Sandy and Dave Carpenter

Dan Hovator and Mary Minney

Dan Kaser

Tim Laning

## **Board Meetings**

The GREAT board meets on the second Wednesday of each month, with the exception of December, at 7:00 PM at the Summit Township Hall, 2121 Ferguson Road (across from Knights Restaurant, near the Intersection of South Jackson and Horton Roads).

Meetings are open and visitors are welcome. To be on the agenda, please contact us prior to the meeting.

## **GREAT Board**

Kenny Price, President  
Don Nelson, Vice President  
Jim Seitz, Secretary  
Jack Ripstra, Treasurer  
Kathy Kulchinski, Rivermaster  
Helen Burnett, Director  
Kurt LaFrance, Director  
Mary Lenardson, Director  
Don Lynd, Director  
John Minar, Director  
Ellen Rathbone, Director  
Special Assignments:  
Louise Hefka, Publicity  
Jeff Grund, Tax Statements  
Barb Anderson, Historian