

# 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 2014



*Left: Ralph Reznick, the speaker at the 2014 GREAT Annual Meeting*

The 2014 GREAT annual dinner is now history, but a great time was had by all who attended. The meeting was well attended with over 60 people attending and enjoying themselves. The dinner was once again at Steve's Ranch House. Cheryl, Cecilia and Fay treated us with tender loving care and saw that all our needs were met. The buffet was full of wonderful foods and I can still see my plate full of wonderful roast beef.

Writers say that you cannot know the future unless you know the past. With that statement in mind, GREAT put a scrapbook on each table and requested that attendees look through the books and find something they did not know or that was interesting to give a short talk about during the meeting. I think everyone enjoyed hearing of how far we have come. The 2013 minutes were read and approved along with the 2014 budget being approved.

Elections of board members are always a part of the Annual meeting and so Kenny Price, Jim Seitz, Kurt LaFrance, and Ellen Rathbone were re-elected to two year

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## Make it Happen Award



*Jack Lapinski accepts the Make it Happen Award on behalf of himself and his wife, Nancy*

Jack and Nancy Lapinski, were named the 2014 recipients of GREAT's annual "Make it Happen Award". Receiving the award at GREAT's Annual Meeting, Jack expressed humble appreciation on behalf of himself and Nancy who have been members of GREAT since its beginning in 1991. GREAT's former president, Andy LaFaive, now of East Lansing, who is the son-law of Jack and Nancy, attended in place of Nancy who was unable to be there.

After the first Grand River Expedition (event started in 1990 to paddle the entire Grand River every 10 years) gave momentum for the beginning of a local Grand River organization, the Lapinskis became involved with the successful effort to prevent JCC's request to build a road from US 127 to their campus through delicate wetlands, which the DNR eventually denied. In the 1960's Nancy was influential with the City of Jackson banning the use of DDT. She was also co-founder of Recycling Jackson and served on the Jackson zoning and planning

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terms. Pam Brown was elected to the board as a first time new member. Pam will be helping Jim with a lot of the secretarial duties using her talents to help with graphics that we need.

Our speaker this year was “the dam guy” Ralph Reznick. Ralph has spent 23 years of his work life with the DNR/DEW/DNRE. Ralph spoke of the issues and problems of removing a dam from a river. Ralph has the unique ability of taking a technical subject and making everyone in the room understand it. He talked about the issues of the removal of the Dimondale dam. His photos of the finished results of the dam removal were fascinating. Putting big boulders back in the river to replace the dam is a very interesting idea.

The “Make It Happen Award” was given to long time members Jack and Nancy Lapinski. They have been members of GREAT since the beginning. Nancy and her husband Jack have been avid supporters of GREAT through the years and paid for every newsletter we have printed. Nancy has also had a huge involvement with the Audubon of Jackson County. We owe a great deal of gratitude to them for all they have done for us and for their great love of the environment.

Kenny Price

*Make it Happen Award—Continued from page 1*

commissions as well as the Ella Sharp Board. She developed a love for nature from walking with her father in the parks of Cleveland, Ohio.

A GREAT board member until 2010, Nancy held every office except President. As the long time secretary of the organization, she wrote personal notes of thanks to all who joined, renewed, and made donations as well as addressing all mailings by hand, including the GREAT Newsletters.

Jack says his interest in the environment began with Nancy. Besides time spent with GREAT, Jack was very active in Audubon. He became president of the Michigan Audubon Society, serving 5 years as president beginning in 1990 and later was president for three years of the Whitefish Point Bird Observatory on Lake Superior. The Lapinskis have been funding all the printing and mailing costs of GREAT’s Newsletter for several years. Since the beginning of GREAT, the efforts of Jack and Nancy Lapinski with GREAT and the local environment have been nothing but outstanding!

Sadly, before press time we received the news that Nancy had passed away on April 23rd.

Jim Seitz

## What Would We Do Without Goals?

Each year the GREAT Board discusses 2-4 goals for the year that will continue our mission “to promote the protection and preservation of the Grand River Watershed through activities and educational programs.” These are actionable goals that we can pursue and in some cases may be asking our membership to contribute in some manner. After discussion at the January, February and March meetings our goals for 2014 and their responsible committees are:

Develop a comprehensive plan for our land.

GREAT Land Committee - Chair: Jim Seitz

Investigate the process to create a local Grand River paddling trail.

Activities Committee - Chair: Kenny Price

Assemble a set of informative maps for paddlers of the local Grand River, which may include local flora and fauna.

Environmental Educational and Advocacy Committee - Chair: Mary Lendarson

If you have any questions or might be interested in one of these goals we encourage our membership to join in on the planning. You can contact us at: [grand@great-mi.org](mailto:grand@great-mi.org), 517-416-4234 or GREAT PO Box 223, Jackson, MI 49204.

We hope to see you at our events this summer and the clean-up in the fall. If you have any questions during the year, please contact us. Enjoy the outdoors, preserve our environment and remember to live, love and laugh.

Helen Burnett

## Earth Day

GREAT President, Kenny Price, and Jessica Spagnuolo, CMS Energy Coordinator of Environmental Sustainability at the CMS Energy's Parnell Complex's Earth Day celebration where GREAT had a table. Over 80 signed our list expressing an interest in getting involved with GREAT's Annual Clean-up and/or public paddles! Thanks to CMS Energy for this opportunity. GREAT members Jim Seitz, Don Lynd, Helen Burnett and GREAT Member and Consumers Retiree Kenneth Burnett also hosted the same informational table at the Downtown CMS Energy building on April 24 as well.

Helen Burnett

# Welcome Pam Brown—New GREAT Board Member



*Pam Brown with granddaughter Kierra and brother Dennie*

Loving the outdoors and being on the water is not a prerequisite to being on the board of GREAT but it sure seems to be a common thread. Pam is right in that vein and is sharing it with her granddaughter, Kierra. She also enjoys kayaking with her brother Dennie on their own as well as on GREAT paddles.

Pam began to paddle with GREAT and brought Kierra with her 3 years ago. When you see them, you can see they are having great fun. Even at the clean-ups, there is a commitment that means a lot to GREAT running well.

Pam's life experiences will also help to continue the flexibility and vast areas of expertise amongst the members. She has spent 28 years as a graphic designer for various daily papers and most recently The Salesman. She continues to do freelance graphic design, while taking her design skills to a new job at Arbor Oaks Living Center as their Activity Director. This is a means of service she has desired to be involved in for some time. Keeping a variety of events scheduled for the residents is a big challenge and we can see Pam filling those needs nicely.

Her family life is also very full. Mother of three and Grandmother of five. Kierra is the oldest grandchild at 15 and her youngest, Brianne, was recently born in mid-March. Time with her grandchildren is her first priority when any spare moment comes about.

Always adventurous, she also is on her third year of bee-keeping and hopes to expand to 10 hives this year. That is great since the news keeps telling us our bee population is at risk and to make choices for your garden flowers towards those that will feed and draw our bees.

Thank you Pam for taking on this adventure, preparing to take on the role of Corresponding Secretary as Jim Seitz looks towards other opportunities in the next two years.

Helen Burnett



# Conservation District Gets Update on the Ceresco Dam



*The pictures show the progression of work on the dam*

Jay Wesley, a representative from the Michigan Department of Natural Resources Fisheries Department, was one of several

speakers who addressed the annual meeting of the Calhoun Conservation District held on Feb. 27 at the Firekeeper Casino's hotel. He presented information regarding the current condition of the Ceresco Dam and Kalamazoo River at the dam site and offered some insights as to what to expect of the river's condition in the immediate future.

In his presentation, he said that although a large part of the visible dam has already been removed, the spillway and the apron are still in place, resulting in the river bed remaining six feet above its natural elevation downstream. As the rest of the dam is removed, the upstream riverbed's elevation will be lowered through a controlled release of the water flow above from the dam. This will lower the upstream river depth by six inches each day.

"Once the dam is completely removed, the river will increase in width from 70 ft. [width previously dredged by the DNR as a pilot channel] to 110 to 130 ft. [it's new normal width] above the dam site," said Wesley. Enbridge Energy has already dredged the center of the river above the dam. As the lake area narrows and the

newly exposed stream banks dry out, Enbridge will begin an excavation of an additional 216,000 yards of the former lake bed.

When the additional excavation process is complete, 224,000 yards of fill will be brought in to stabilize the new river banks and habitat improvement will begin. The banks will be built up with a combination of rocks, logs,

root wads and other woody material. "The Ceresco Dam removal will create faster flow above the dam with very slight changes in the upper stretches near Marshall," Wesley continued.



Sediment accumulated over the decades in the impoundment lake will flow downstream over the next three to five years. The sediments will be deposited on the river banks as part of the river's natural flow, with the current gravel river bed remaining. In answer to a question about whether the removal of the dam will increase flooding problems, Wesley said that rivers have an average flow rate with or without the presence of most Michigan dams.

"The Ceresco Dam wasn't built to be a flood control dam in the first place. During the high water period during the oil spill, the river flooded when the dam was in place."

For more information about the changes to be expected in the river system, call Wesley at [269-685-6851 ext. 117](tel:269-685-6851).

Donna Daines, ad-visor&chronicle Staff Writer

## Paddle Jackson County Award

GREAT has created an award for members who have paddled the entire Grand River within the borders of Jackson County. To qualify for the "Jackson County Paddle Award", the required routes paddled must be done as part of a GREAT: public paddle, clean-up, chain saw preparation, or a pre-paddle scheduled by the trip leader to scout the river. Also, sections paddled for any of the every ten year Grand River Expeditions will count (1990, 2000, 2010, 2020 and etc.).

To facilitate the award annually, GREAT's paddle event calendar will have one of the routes for each of the three following segments of the county: South of the City of Jackson; City of Jackson Metro area, and North of the City of Jackson. Each of these segments has four (4) identified routes which will be rotated every year. Therefore, after four years, all 12 trips needed to qualify will be scheduled. In the last five years, GREAT has had public paddles on each of the 12 except one, which GREAT last paddled in the year 2000.

We are in the process of creating a sticker for this award which can be mounted to your canoe or kayak. A form has been developed listing all the required routes. Look for more information about this at GREAT's upcoming public paddles and in the Newsletter.

Jim Seitz

## Don't Miss Out on the Fun!

The First GREAT paddle is done and the second one is just around the corner (May 18<sup>th</sup>). Four more to go as well as the Annual Clean-up.

Those dates are:

June 8<sup>th</sup> - One Mile Lake Chain: River Raisin Source

July 20<sup>th</sup> - Grand River: CMS Band Shell to RA Greene Park (Joint with Dahlem- Lunch prior to launch)

August 17<sup>th</sup> - Kalamazoo River: 15 mile Road to Wattles Rd.

October 12<sup>th</sup> - Grand River: Trestle Park DNR Access - Dixon Rd. to Tompkins DNR Access - Tompkins Rd.

Annual Clean-up: September 13<sup>th</sup> - The Day begins at the CMS Energy Bandshell.

RSVP 2 weeks in advance if you are reserving a canoe or kayak by calling (517) 416-4234. If you have reserved boats and cannot make it, please call to cancel as we usually have a waiting list for boats. For more information including maps and route attributes, please visit

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

## Changing of the Board Kat -We Will Miss You!

We all make changes from time to time and Kat will be missed as she steps down from her position on the board for GREAT.

Kat Kulchinski has been a member/board member of GREAT for greater than 10 years. She has been it's Rivermaster for the last 6 years. Safety first is her motto. She is experienced and trained as an instructor in kayaking and personal water safety. That is a definite asset to our activities on the water. When we had a tough passing point, she would take lead and stay at those spots to be sure all of our paddle participants made it through the rapids, over the passes and under tough bridges. She supported GREAT in a variety of ways - offering extra boats on busy paddles, paid the park entry on one of our paddles and offered board members training in water rescue. She has plenty to keep her busy - during the school year she has her job as a dental hygienist traveling to various Michigan schools where they offer dental programs. She always found time for winter escapes for ocean kayaking in warmer climates. Her alternate job and true love is Quiet Water Sports, which she operates Spring through Fall. As a supporter of GREAT we would like to ask you to support Quiet Water Sports. We can never know enough and can always learn more in paddling techniques and water safety. Kat is currently serving as a board member for the Jackson Fitness Council and the Quiet Water Symposium. They will benefit from her involvement. She goes so far as to participate in the fundraiser "Amazing Race Jackson" coming in with most points last year and has great goals for this years competition scheduled to on August 16, 2014.

We will still see Kat on our paddles.

Helen Burnett

*Kat is a familiar sight on the Grand River*



# Spring Paddle Review



*Paddlers enjoyed getting out on the water after a long winter's wait.*

I just want to thank the Board for hosting a great paddle today. You are one of the most organized groups to paddle with. Prior to the paddle, many of us appreciate the tips on interesting things to look for on the paddle, hazards to avoid and the support of the lead, middle and caboose team members in supporting us along the river. I'm sure some of you would have preferred to be paddling along with us.... but we appreciate your help in making this such a GREAT event! I was smiling the entire drive home. Please go ahead and post my comments. Hopefully it will encourage others to join us in paddling. I would have never found that put-in on my own. Plus, now I am looking forward to biking the Falling Waters Trail, which I did not previously know about.

Susan Harper

The first GREAT paddle of the year was on the North Branch of the Kalamazoo River, with 40 paddlers joining us for the 3.8 mile trip from Cross Road to the Falling Waters Trail in Concord. The weather cooperated against predictions and Kenny Price was excited to have a new member for his swim club, a GREAT Board Member who earned this award twice on the same paddle. Beavers, cranes, ducks, fish, geese, heron, mink, muskrat, swans, and turtles were spotted by paddlers on this beautiful river. Many thanks to the Great Board members and paddlers who made this paddle a success.

Jack L. Ripstra



*Jack Ripstra sending another one out.*





# Is It a Turtle or a Tortoise?

How can you tell the difference?



Several years ago, I researched the difference between turtles and tortoises for an article I wrote for another publication. I was shocked at what I found (online): turtles were land-based and tortoises were aquatic. What?!? This went completely against anything I knew. So, when Helen asked me to write about this topic for the GREAT newsletter, I said sure, since I'd already done some research. Well, it turns out that what I had found out before was wrong (and I was right) - which all just goes to prove that you cannot trust everything you find on the Internet.

So, the burning question is: what is the difference between a turtle and a tortoise? One can look at a really broad definition, which has exceptions, that if it is aquatic, it is a turtle, and if it lives entirely on land, it is a tortoise. But the difference goes beyond that.

First, let's look at the physical nature of these animals, starting with the shell. A turtle, which lives in or near water, has a flat, stream-lined carapace (upper part of its shell), which enables it to swim through the water with little resistance. It is also fairly lightweight - otherwise it would sink rather than swim. Tortoises, on the other hand, have high, domed carapaces and they are heavy.

Next, let's look at the other big physical difference: feet and legs. Turtles, again because they are aquatic, have webbed feet with long claws, which enable them to a) swim and b) climb out on rocks, logs and the like. They also have straight legs that are positioned directly under the body. Tortoises, however, have very short, stubby feet with short claws, and their legs are bent and positioned to the sides of the animal.

Turtles and tortoises both dig nests on land in which they lay their eggs. For turtles, however, that is the extent of parental care. The hatchlings remain in their eggs for three or four months and must dig themselves out of the nest and make their own way in the world. A mother tortoise, however, will protect her hatchlings - they follow her to her burrow after they emerge and she gives them about two and a half months of her time to get them ready to face life.

How about body temperature regulation? Turtles and tortoises are reptiles and as such are what we call "cold-blooded" or "ectothermic." What this means is that they are unable to regulate their body temperature internally - whatever the temperature is around them, that is that same temperature they will be. So, what does a turtle do when it gets too hot?

It seeks out either water or shade in which to cool off. A tortoise will seek shade, too, but it is more likely to head for the cool shelter of a burrow instead of the shelter of a tree or rock. When it comes to warming up, though, all herptofauna (reptiles and amphibians) seek the sunshine and will bask in its warmth.

There are even geographic differences between turtles and tortoises. Turtles are primarily found in Africa and the Americas, while tortoises are primarily found in Asia and Africa. Is there some overlap, of course, which is why we speak in generalities.

Turtles and tortoises have been around for millennia. They evolved over 200 million years ago, according to the fossil record. What does this mean? It means that they are ancient, that they are creatures who are "entitled to regard the brontosaur and mastodon as brief zoological fads," as B. Gilbert wrote in an article in Smithsonian magazine in 1993. I love that!

Will turtles and tortoises really live to be hundreds of years old? There is some debate about this. Turtles have an average lifespan of about 20-40 years. Sea turtles, however, require 40-50 years just to reach maturity, often living only to 60 or 70 years total. Tortoises have a lifespan about the same as people, although some have been known to reach 150 years. The oldest one on record was 188 years young. Reports of tortoises reaching the impressive ages of 100-250 years are usually questionable; these have all been captive animals and many of their records indicate suspicious changes in sex over the years.

So, the next time you are out paddling, and you see a critter with its home on its back, you can rest assured that it is most likely going to be a turtle. As for *which* turtle it might be, well, you will have to do some research on that! Michigan is home to ten species of turtles: Blanding's, common map, common musk, common snapping, Eastern box, painted, red-eared slider, spiny soft-shelled, spotted and wood. That's not too many to learn - and each is quite distinctive (unlike sparrows, or warblers)! Why not make it a family project this year to learn the ten species and then find each one?

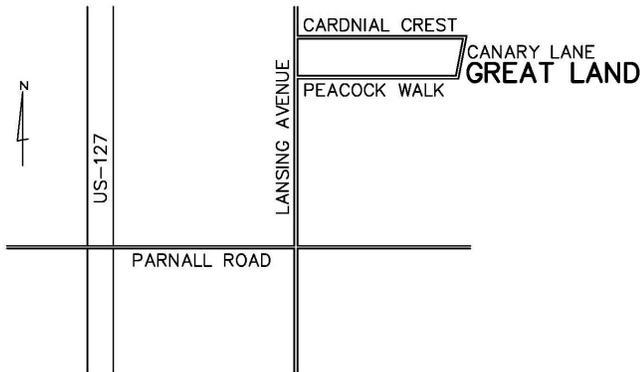
And one last note: if you find a turtle in the wild, even if it is a cute little baby turtle, just leave it there! Turtles are not "easy" pets - having seen a lot of photos of pet turtles whose needs were not met, I implore everyone to think twice about taking turtles home. Mother Nature knows best - let her take care of the turtles.

Ellen Rathbone

# GREAT Land Clean Up

There will be a cleanup of the GREAT Land located on the east side of Canary Lane in Blackman Township (See Map) on Saturday, May 31, 2014 at 9:00 a.m. The makeup day due to bad weather will be Sunday, June 1, 2014 at 9:00 a.m. Please bring work gloves and long pants due to briars and some poison ivy in the area. We will be cleaning up an accumulation of bottles, cans, plastic and other debris from our 30 acre parcel.

Contact Jack Ripstra at [grand@great-mi.org](mailto:grand@great-mi.org) or 517 416-4234 to let him know if you can help out.



GREAT LAND CLEANUP MAP

## GREAT Newsletter

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Grand River Environmental Action Team

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## Welcome New Members!

Mark DeZwart

MACI Jeans for a Cause

Bill and Laura Schlecte

Marcia Wiersma

## 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 Lynd, Vice President  
Jim Seitz, Secretary  
Jack Ripstra, Treasurer  
Don Nelson, Rivermaster  
Helen Burnett, Director  
Kurt LaFrance, Director  
Mary Lenardson, Director  
John Minar, Director  
Ellen Rathbone, Director  
Special Assignments:

Louise Hefka, Publicity  
Jeff Grund, Tax Statements  
Barb Anderson, Historian