

G.R.E.A.T.

Grand River Environmental Action Team



Website: www.great-mi.org

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ANNUAL GRAND RIVER CLEAN UP

The morning of September 13, 2014 started out at 47° with a light sprinkle warming up to a windy 55° at 2:00 p.m. This weather did not dampen the spirits and enthusiasm of our 120 volunteers, which included 6 board members, 3 of their spouses, 1 granddaughter, 39 from CMS Energy, and 49 from the Junior ROTC.

Warm donuts from Hinkley Bakery and hot coffee from the Jackson Coffee House were ready for the volunteers as they arrived at the CMS Energy band shell for registration and team assignments. Three teams consisting of trailers with eight canoes each and junior ROTC members for unloading the canoes and gear were sent out to spot the canoes and gear at seven different locations along the Grand River.

At 9:00 a.m. seven teams were formed, assigned personal flotation devices, and transported with their team leader to the canoe drop off locations thanks to the buses and drivers provided by the Dahlem Center, Jackson Career Center and the Jackson Area Transportation Authority. Depending upon water depths in the river, these teams would wade in river using the canoes as garbage barges or paddle the canoes while placing the collected trash around themselves in the canoes.

A team formed by many of the CMS Energy Volunteers walked the banks of the Grand River, from Washington Street to Trail Street and the back, placing and carrying the debris they picked up in burlap bags and then taking this debris in their own vehicles to a roll off container at Morrell Street.

Roll off containers generously donated by Emmons Service Inc. and Granger were placed at Morrell Street, Monroe Street and the City of Jackson Waste Water Treatment Plant, where trash and debris picked up by the teams were deposited. The following week Emmons Service Inc. and Granger picked up the roll off

Colonel Lapham with Cadets



containers and recycled what trash they were able.

Over 12 miles of the Grand River were cleaned from Michigan Center to downstream of where the Portage River outlets into the Grand River in Northern Blackman Township with 27 canoes, 1 kayak and many walkers. Even with low water levels, for the third year in a row we have seen a decrease in the amount trash collected from the Grand River.

The type of trash collected from the Grand River included automobile parts, bikes, blankets, bottles, cans, clothes, furniture, glass, highway barrels, plastic, safe, shopping carts, siding, styrofoam, tires, and a large wire spool.

Lunch was provided at 1:00 p.m. for all the hard workers from Fazolis (bread sticks), Little Caesars (pizza), Los Tres Amigos (tacos), Marino's (Pizza), Papa Johns (pizza), Roly Poly (sandwiches) and Virginia Coney Island (coney dogs).

We had live coverage of this year's Grand River Clean Up from Mlive, Channel 6 News and Channel 10 News. Thanks to our Grand River Clean Up volunteers, and the efforts of the Grand River Environmental Action Team, we are making an impact in the quality of the headwaters of the Grand River in Jackson County.

Jack L. Ripstra

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Roly Poly
Upper Grand River Watershed Alliance
Virginia Coney Island



Volunteers signing in at the GREAT booth at the annual clean up

River Chain Saw Logistics with Awareness of the Environment, Law, and Safety



Jim Seitz hard at work

In the last five years, GREAT has averaged over 120 manpower hours annually of chain saw work on the Grand River in Jackson County to make it possible to paddle the scheduled routes of GREAT's monthly paddles and to open up the needed river sections for our Annual Clean-up. Yearly, we are chain saw cutting about 25 miles of the river. Since we are now rotating three monthly paddles on the Grand River each year, in four years we will have cut the entire 65 miles of the river in Jackson County at least once. A 12-14 mile section of the clean-up will be cut annually.

The work is usually done in pairs who travel a section of the river in a canoe, cutting a path through the fallen trees and log jams as they work their way down the river. Because there are always multiple trees and logs to be cut on any given route and there is no access through the dense privately and publicly owned woods and wetlands, canoe access is the best method. As it is more difficult and dangerous, we seldom cut from the canoe, but instead try to find the locations that are not too deep to firmly stand in the river to safely operate the saw. The brake is always applied to the running saw anytime we wade, even if it is only a foot, because it is very easy to trip on the hidden debris under the surface.

Legally, we are permitted to remove debris blocking boat passage, but we are not permitted to disturb the bottom and the bank. Woody debris in the river provides habitat for fish and other wildlife. Therefore in addition to the extra time it would require, it is also better environmentally to NOT remove the entire tree or log(s) spread across the river, but instead cut a big enough gap for

canoes or kayaks to easily navigate and wide enough to prevent future re-jamming of floating logs from future storms. However, sometimes we cannot cut the path wide as we would like as the river depths prevent us from standing in the needed locations. Because of time constraints and possible complaints by private landowners, typically we do not place cut debris on the banks, but instead try to cut logs into 6 to 3 foot lengths which will likely not cause any serious re-jamming in the river downstream. Over time, the river seems to naturally do a good job of redistributing the debris during high water surges. Due to the recent destruction of ash trees by the emerald ash borer, the number of fallen trees in the river has greatly increased in the last five years. On many routes, ash trees account for about 80% of the trees cut.

Because we are usually very isolated on our river cutting routes, we take a variety of equipment to deal with most situations: three chain saws, extra chains, wedges and small sledge hammer to free a jammed saw, a log roller, axe, hand saws, loppers, and plenty of mixed gasoline and bar chain oil. We use a vegetable based bar chain oil which is much better for the environment than the traditional petroleum product. This product (Stihl Bio-Plus) costs a little more and is only available in Jackson County at Napoleon Lawn & Leisure on M-50, who sell it in quart quantities. Superior Saw in Mason (Cedar Street towards Holt) also sells it in gallons which is more cost efficient. A smart phone is taken for any emergencies, to find our location on the river, and weather tracking. As we sometimes have to cut through poison ivy vines, a special soap is carried to quickly use after.

Without these efforts, it would be horrible to paddle on any of GREAT's Jackson County Grand River trips given the amount of wooded debris which falls into our narrow river, often blocking the entire width which would require constant portaging and/or dragging boats through nearly constant blockages. Please contact us if you are willing to assist next year.

Jim Seitz

Tim Laning working on the monster tree



August Kalamazoo River Paddle Event

At the August 2014 GREAT paddling trip, we had good weather and there were 53 people in attendance for this event on the Kalamazoo River, 27 of whom were current members. The put-in was on B. Drive South, just West of 23 Mile Rd. There were many birds seen, including eagles. We had an approximately, 800 ft. portage from River St., at the end of the Marshall Mill Pond, just before the City's Electric Generating Dam, across S. Marshall Avenue, South past the City's Public Works Department and back into the river. Everyone helped one other along that portage and some had even brought their own set of wheels for their boat which they then loaned to others. The trip took us past where Rice Creek, East of S. Kalamazoo Avenue, and Talmadge Creek, just East of 15 Mile Road, enter the river.

Talmadge Creek was where the infamous July 2010 Enbridge Oil Spill entered the Kalamazoo River. One could definitely tell where the clean-up had started just upstream of Talmadge Creek. The difference in foliage and still-present water monitoring equipment were our indicators. The take-out was at the new, created by Enbridge, Saylor's Landing, on 15 Mile Rd., just North of A. Drive North. Beyond Saylor's Landing, the river was barricaded and monitored by an Enbridge staff person. The staff person told us that there is still active river clean-up and restoration work going on between there and Ceresco Dam. The dam has been removed and the new banks and landscaping look very nice from the bridge on 12 Mile Road. The river is open again West of 12 Mile Road. A nice group of attendees and Board members gathered after the paddling event at Dark Horse Brewery in Marshall.

Mary Lenardson, Trip Leader.



How many birds can we watch?

The August trip on the Kalamazoo River from 15 mile Rd. to Wattles Bridge in Calhoun County was a great show for bird watchers. I felt like my head was on a pedestal turning to catch the next sighting.

Along with the usual many sparrows, cardinals, and an occasional sound of a woodpecker there were also a couple of other episodes of excitement. There was a juvenile Bald Eagle on an electrical tower, soon followed by the sighting of a mature Eagle in flight. About the same time we paddled alongside 4-5 Sandhill Cranes. They are not skittish like the Great Blue Heron - the Sandhill Crane stood their ground in the shallow water - but let us know they were greatly annoyed with our presence.



*Adult and juvenile
Bald Eagles*

A little further in the pond we came across the Cormorant. They are a matte-black bird with a long neck, almost pre-historic in appearance. They look like a cross between a loon and a goose. They were perched in trees and we also had the opportunity to watch them go diving for fish. When sitting on a dock or rocks, they spread their wings to dry with a span of 44 - 48 inches.



*A Cormorant drying
its wings*

The most frequent bird sighting had us perplexed and did not identify it until after the paddle with the assistance of Gary Siegrist of the Dahlem Center. It was a Cedar Waxwing. The identification confusion was that we saw more of a light red head, Greenish grey body, a black 'mask' and a tail that looked like it was dipped in yellow paint. According to Gary, in different light the head that is typically shades of tan, can appear to have a reddish tint.

Their name "waxwing" comes from the red-tipped secondary wings. The actual function of the red secretion is unknown.

They were flitting about, catching bugs. But their primary food is fruit and berries. If these birds feed on fermented fruits, they have been known to die from alcohol intoxication.

Cedar Waxwings are a medium size bird 6-7 inches in length and a wing span of 8 - 12 inches. Their mating is one of mutual adoration starting with the male hopping towards the female and she reciprocates by hopping towards him. The next step is the male sharing a leaf or berry with her. They pass it back and forth a few times, ending the ceremony with the female eating the morsel.

Nest building is the next step. This takes 5-6 days and approximately 2,500 trips to gather all of the necessary supplies. It is a small nest three inches deep with an opening of about 5 inches. While the female sits on the eggs until they hatch, they both take on the task of feeding the young once they have hatched.

Their habitat is one of open woods, with many berry or fruit producing trees and bushes and ideally near water. That explains seeing so many on the Kalamazoo trip with the woods lined path we traveled that day. They gather in large flocks and you will find clusters of nests upward of a dozen.



*A happy pair of Cedar
Waxwings*

While each trip has wonderful sights, the number of birds on this trip made it exceptionally fun. If you would like to know more about the other birds I mentioned, the link supplied is a great resource on birds, including a sound track for their calls.

<http://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/search>

Helen Burnett

Invasive Phragmites

Phragmites australis (frag-MY-teez), also known as common reed, is a wetland grass that is native to Michigan. Recently, an invasive, non-native type of Phragmites has started growing in our state. It is becoming widespread and endangering the shorelines of our Great Lakes and Michigan wetlands. It grows up to fifteen feet high and quickly takes over marshlands and crowds out native plants blocking the picturesque views of our beautiful state. The high biomass blocks the light to other plants and takes over the immediate subsurface growing space. It has an adverse effect on our hydrology and wildlife. When these grasses dry they become a serious fire hazard. This invasion is becoming both ecologically and financially demanding to Michigan.

Phragmites can be identified in the summer months by its flowers which are purple or golden bushy panicles. As it matures the hairs take on a gray sheen. The root base and rhizomes become very dense and thick. The rhizome runners can grow more than 10 feet deep and up to 60 feet in horizontal layers beneath the surface. Phragmites develops such a high biomass that it blocks light to other plants and thickly occupies the immediate surface and subsurface thus choking out native plants and absorbing water in wetlands very quickly. It appears sparse for the first few years but due to the plant's quick growth rate it will rapidly take over.



You have probably seen Phragmites growing in wetland areas

Controlling this invasive grass is difficult so early detection is very important. Once identified the most effective treatment method is the use of an approved herbicide.

Glyphosate and imazapyr have both been approved. Glyphosate should be used in early to late summer (June - September) or as a mixture as imazapyr is more expensive and in combination these pesticides have been found to be more effective. Adding a surfactant to these pesticides also makes the treatment more effective. At least two weeks after application a mechanical method for removal should be used, such as cutting or mowing, to remove dead stems and promote native regrowth. Tilling and disking are not effective as these methods break the rhizomes and spread their seeds which results in new and continued growth. After treatment burning can also be an effective method for removal for large areas. It should be noted that Phragmites burns very fast and hot, and a burning permit may be required. Continued monitoring and maintenance is pertinent as Phragmites are known to return making them very difficult to eliminate. The Department of Environmental Quality requires Aquatic Nuisance Control permits if there is standing water near Phragmites at the time of treatment. The DEQ Water Resources Division can be contacted at 517-284-5473.

Several programs have been established along with resources available in an attempt to control Phragmites. For more information the following is a list of resources:

Jackson County Conservation District - www.jacksoncd.org

The Great Lakes Phragmites Collaborative (GLPC) was established as a resource and communication center - <http://greatlakesphragmites.net/>

Native vs. non-native Phragmites - <http://www.invasiveplants.net/phragmites/phrag/morph>

MI DNR Invasive Species website - www.Michigan.gov/InvasiveSpecies

MI DEQ Aquatic Species website - www.Michigan.gov/AquaticInvasives

For treatment guidelines described above or any permit requirements can be referenced through [A Guide to the Control and Management of Invasive Phragmites](#)

MI DEQ developed the Phragmites Prioritization Tools which can be accessed at: http://www.michigan.gov/documents/deq/wrd-ais-phragtool_423447_7.pdf http://www.michigan.gov/documents/deq/wrd-ais-phragtool-user-guide_444730_7.pdf

Special thanks to Kevin Walters of the DEQ for information provided at a Jackson Carnegie Library Sierra Club meeting.

Jill Shaughnessy

Kenny Price Recognized by Michigan Association of Conservation Districts

Kenny Price, president of GREAT, also serves as Chairman of the Jackson County Conservation District. Being the leader of both organizations has the benefit of having both groups jointly working for the environment and conservation in Jackson County. GREAT and JCCD work jointly on Adopt-A-Stream, River Clean Ups and other projects.

EAST LANSING—November 3, 2014. The Michigan Association of Conservation Districts (MACD) honored Kenny Price, Chairman of the Jackson Conservation District, with the 2014 Director of the Year Award on Tuesday, October 28th. The award, presented during the MACD Annual Convention held in Bellaire, honored Kenny Price for his outstanding support, advocacy and leadership in natural resource conservation at the local level.

The Director of the Year is named annually by MACD to recognize the outstanding contributions of a Conservation District director. As local, special purpose units of government, each Conservation District is governed by a locally elected, five-member board of directors. These programs and activities. Michigan's 78 Conservation Districts are local special purpose units of state government which provide resource management services and assistance to help our citizens conserve their lands and our environment for a cleaner, healthier, economically stronger Michigan.

"MACD is pleased to honor Kenny Price with the 2014 Director of the Year Award," said Lori Phalen, Executive Director of the Michigan Association of Conservation Districts. "Kenny is an enthusiastic director, dedicated to the mission of Conservation Districts. He is willing to share his knowledge and benefits of District programs with county officials, or cleaning local rivers. Kenny is a true steward of our environment and an integral part of Michigan's conservation community and we are pleased to honor him with this award."

Kenny Price was elected to the Jackson Conservation District Board in January of 2012 and voted in as Chairman in 2013. With Kenny's dedication to the mission of the Conservation District and his knowledge and willingness to help, wherever and whenever needed, he has been a true asset to the Jackson Conservation District. Kenny has cleaned highways and rivers, volunteered to work at District events, spoken at outreach events, and



Left to Right: Lori Phalen, Ex. Director MACD; Lori Fitzgibbons, Jackson County Conservation District Manager; Kenny Price, Jackson County CD Board Chair; Kandice Karll, Jackson County CD Watershed Manager; Art Pelon, MACD President and Mike Krcmarik, Jackson County CD CTAI Engineer

has consistently attended board, regional and state meetings. Kenny also serves as the President of the Grand River Environmental Action Team and is a member of the Upper Grand River Watershed Alliance.

Congratulations Kenny, and thank you for your hard work and dedication to the Jackson County Conservation District!

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About Michigan Conservation Districts

Michigan's 78 Conservation Districts are the local providers of natural resource management services that help our citizens conserve their lands and our environment for a cleaner, healthier, economically stronger Michigan.

As local, special purpose units of government, each Conservation District is governed by a locally elected, five-member board of directors. The guiding philosophy of Michigan Conservation Districts is that local people should make decisions on conservation issues at the local level, with technical assistance provided by government.

For more information about Michigan Conservation Districts and to connect to your local Conservation District, visit the Michigan Association of Conservation Districts (MACD) website www.macd.org or contact MACD at 517 324-5274.

Last paddle of the season



The last paddle of the year was enjoyed by 52 paddlers, including 5 kids, who made their way 4.2 miles downstream from Trestle Bridge Access on Dixon Road to the Tompkins Access. Although, the temps were on the cool side, participants were rewarded with a clear sunny day. In spite of the fall timing, the trees were just beginning to show their colors. To support this paddle, our clearing team spent 14 hours cutting and trimming trees so that no portages were necessary. This segment of the river is a small section of near wilderness as there are no bridge crossings or homes visible from the river. The only signs of civilization are a few structures and deer blinds. Sandstone Creek joins this section of river about one-half mile upstream of the Tompkins Bridge. Water entering here is much colder than the river and is quite clear. After the completion of the paddle, about half of the participants headed to the Klavon's to enjoy a late lunch and friendly banter.

Don Lynd

GREAT Newsletter

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Grand River Environmental Action Team

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Welcome New Members!

Patricia Bastien

William Foster

Jackson Audubon

Jean Shekter

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

Pam Brown, Director

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