

G.R.E.A.T.



Grand River Environmental Action Team

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Volume 26 Number 2

June 2015

June paddle trip scheduled for Sunday, June 21



Our June paddle will take us over to the River Raisin, on a section of river that will be new to many of us. The trip will be on June 21st, beginning in Clinton and ending in Tecumseh. Meet in the rear section of Tate Park on US-12 by 11:30 AM for a shuttle to the take-out point at the Community Center near the M-50 bridge in Tecumseh.

This River Raisin route has a steady current along with two or three ponds. All paddlers will have one portage. With a route variation, some may have a second portage to avoid the third pond to experience more river travel. Paddlers will experience travel through woods, wetlands, and a very nice residential section of the city of Tecumseh with some beautiful waterfront homes and properties.

The picturesque Dutch Colonial architectural style Tecumseh Community Center at the take-out is a mill built in 1898. In 1938, Henry Ford converted the building, keeping its architectural origins, into a factory to process locally grown soybeans for auto part production, which continued until 1951. Also located here is the J. Trees Winery, which also features sandwiches. After the paddle participants will have the option to gather here to eat, drink, and socialize.

The Grand River Environmental Team's mission is to protect the Upper Grand River Watershed and create awareness of the river and its impact to our community. To that end, our public paddle offering for July will be on a portion of the river on the southwest side of Jackson.

All of GREAT canoe and kayaks have been reserved. However, contact the Tecumseh Paddling Company (517 423-2700) to use their canoes (\$30) and kayaks (\$20). They will shuttle their boats and customers.

JULY PADDLE continued on pg. 2



July paddle trip scheduled for Sunday, July 19

The July paddle will take place Sunday July 19th. The trip will begin at the Vandercook County Park boat launch on C Avenue and end in Ella Sharp Park. A shuttle will be available to get your vehicle to the takeout point. Please arrive prior to 11:45 AM.

The trip starts by paddling across or around Vandercook Lake. From here you will paddle through two more lakes, Brown and Williams, each smaller and more remote than the one before. Exiting Williams Lake will start the river portion of the trip. The river winds through wetlands and woods. These are interspersed with some nice homes with manicured lawns adjacent the riverbank. You will also

pass by the radio towers of WKHM. There are a couple low dams on this trip, which may require exiting the boat to pass over, depending upon water levels. Shortly after passing under Probert Road, we will take out along Maplewood Drive in Ella Sharp Park.

As a reminder, GREAT requires that a personal flotation device (PFD) be worn at all times while paddling for your safety. GREAT has a limited number of canoes and kayaks (along with PFDs) available to those who wish to participate in any of GREAT's paddles, but do not have their own boats. Call GREAT at 517-416-4234 for more information about the upcoming paddles or to reserve a boat.

We look forward to seeing you on the river!

GREAT board adopts Land Master Plan

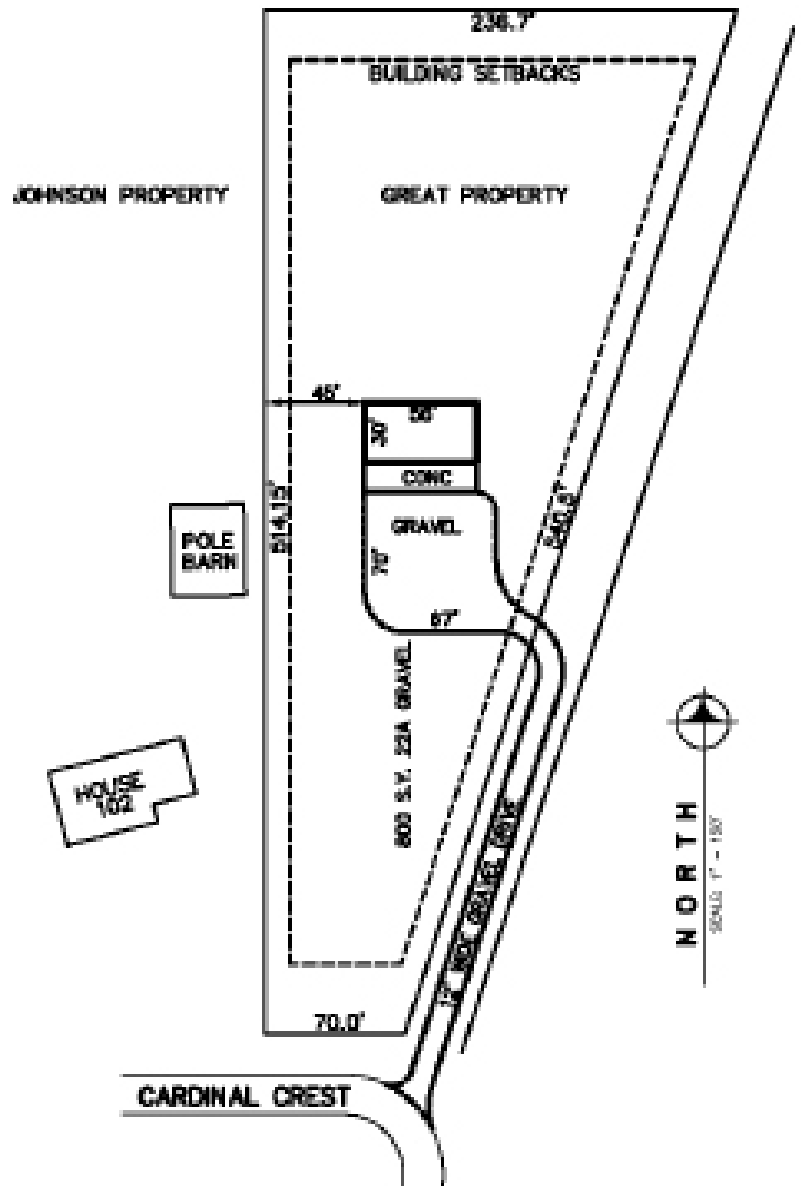
The GREAT Board in April adopted a master plan for GREAT's recently acquired land on the Grand River north of the City of Jackson. The plan will take several years to implement, but many important steps have already been taken and others are underway.

The plan has four major components: 1.) a pole barn design structure to store GREAT boat trailers, canoes, kayaks, river debris and clean-up equipment, PFD's, and display items; 2.) public river access to launch non-motorized boats; 3.) trails for public access with signage of descriptions of flora, fauna, and history of the river in this which was unfortunately straighten in this section 90 years ago; 4.) rechannelization to restore part of the river to its original oxbow, creating an island.

The first priority is to build the storage building. Drawings have been created, material and construction cost quotes have been obtained (\$42,000), and Blackman Township has approved the zoning variance. Volunteer labor will be used as much as possible. Grading and gravel fill for the building's long access road, parking, and building site is expected to be done this summer. While GREAT has been prudently saving project money for last five years, we will need to raise funds targeted to start and complete the building's construction. This effort will soon begin.

Because rechannelization of the river will not only improve the river environmentally, but will also give the opportunity for a much better boat launch access. GREAT's river rechannelization project will be one of two proposed major local projects applied for in August under the Section 319 Clean Water Act by the Upper Grand River Watershed Alliance through the Jackson Conservation District. If obtained, a study will be initially be completed with final approval required by the Army Corp of Engineers before project implementation. Public hearings are a part of the process. Because of possible changes to the land and river, trails, and boat access would be completed later.

PROPOSED POLE BARN FOR GREAT
ON PARCEL 000-08-14-105-001-02



Last year, GREAT volunteers removed decades old rubbish from the land and Gary Siegrist and GREAT Board member, Ellen Rathbone both of the Dahlem Nature Center did a flora and fauna evaluation of the property. Therefore, this November, plans are being made for a weekend date of volunteers to begin to removal of invasive species. As our plans are implemented, GREAT will need both additional financial and volunteer labor help to turn our unique property into a useable asset for GREAT to pursue its public mission to improve the environment of the local Grand River and increase its educational and recreational opportunities.

Jim Seitz

Lynd named new president at annual dinner

Barb Anderson takes home Make It Happen award

G.R.E.A.T.'S 2015 ANNUAL DINNER on March 18, sixty five great people came to the G.R.E.A.T. Annual dinner at Steve's Ranch House.

The people attending once again enjoyed a delicious meal and received fantastic service at Steve's. A lot of the people came to hear Dan Wymer talk on the "Native American History of Local Grand River", but they had to sit through a short business meeting first.

We sadly had one of our board members go off the board to search for greener pastures. Helen Burnett's absence from the board will be truly missed. She and husband Ken gave a lot of their time to G.R.E.A.T. getting the newsletter sent out and helping with the paddles. Helen scored big marks in publishing the newsletter even with all the naughty people who were late getting their articles to her.

Sharon Clark was honored and given a certificate for her service in putting together the G.R.E.A.T. Newsletter. Sharon and Helen were a great team in getting out the fantastic newsletter. They will both greatly missed.

The 2015 "Make it Happen" award was given to Barbara Anderson. Barbara has been a member since almost the beginning. She was a proud member of the 1990 Grand Expedition going down the Grand River from Liberty to Grand Haven. She has given a lot of time and effort in working on and maintaining the History books of our group. She also received the first Jackson County Paddle sticker. Barbara is the first person to paddle the entire Grand River in Jackson County.

Kenny Price, after four years as President, finally stepped down to allow a native Michigan son to take over the helm. Don Lynd became the new voice and look of G.R.E.A.T. at the end of the meeting.

Dan Wymer who is the supervisor at Napoleon Township, gave his talk on the



Kenny Price officially hands over the reigns to Don Lynd as President of GREAT.



Barb Anderson (center) received the Make It Happen Award as well as the inaugural Jackson County Paddle sticker.



Kenny Price (left) presented outgoing board member Helen Burnett (right) with a plaque thanking her for all her endless work with GREAT.

Grand River and the Native Americans who were around the river way before Horace Blackman came to Jackson County. Dan showed many of the artifacts he has found and spoke of their uses

Annual Meeting sets near record attendance



Sharon Clark (left) was honored with a plaque for her service in putting together the GREAT newsletter by Helen Burnett (right).



Dan Wymer gave a very interesting presentation on the Grand River and the Native Americans who lived near it.

along the river. He talked about the "Old Indian Bridge" on the Grand River south of Berry Road that turned out just to be old but not Indian. Everyone was full of wows by the time Dan ended his talk

Creatures we've encountered on our paddles



**Keep your eyes open
when you're on the
water!**



The Grand River “O-Wash-Ta-Nog”



The following article was written by Nellie Blair Greene for the Jackson Tribune and published Dec. 6, 1929. It talks of the beginning of the river and what civilization had done to river by 1929

“The Grand River “O-Wash-Ta-Nog”

Grand River, the great northern and western trail of the Chippewas, Ottawas, and Pottawattamies of Michigan, the historic Washtenongeseepie of Jackson County legend, was first seen at its source in 1815, when government surveyors came through this county to map the new regions of Michigan Territory.

Baptiste, the Indian trader of Henrietta, was the next white man to see it, and fourteen years later, in 1829 Horace Blackman and Captain Laverty stood upon its bank and dreamed of the settlement that is now Jackson.

For almost 40 miles the river winds through woods and fields from its source in the marshes of Liberty Township, northeast, towards Clark Lake and the marsh on the Napoleon road, to its departure from the county in Section 4 Tompkins.

Called O-Wash-ta-nog, by the Chippewas and meaning “the longest stream” or “the far-away waters,” the river has always been the theme of song and story. Indians believed that the Sun God came, in the spring first of all to their river, and freed the water from the Frost Giant, and they loved the long valley and fertile lands that marked its course from Jackson county to its outlet into Lake Michigan at Grand Haven.

In 1830, it was a valley of peace and plenty, where Indians from many regions came for fishing and hunting. The young braves made canoes from the birch forests in the western part of the valley and the old men fished for the giant bass that thronged its clear water, and hunted the red deer in the thickets near the banks.

Indian mothers sang to their children along its winding path, songs of Nana-bojo, the Hiawatha of Longfellow’s legend. One of the Chippewa spring songs of this region was the following:

“The Sun God comes beyond the Hills;
The birds make songs of welcome;
The smoke rises from the wigwam fires;
The forests awake from their sleep’
Oh, spirit of the rustling leaves;
Oh, spirits of the rippling waters;
Oh, spirits of the morning light;
Listen to my prayer!”

Along the banks of the Grand River, north of Jackson, especially in Rives and Tompkins, there are still scenes of beauty, as wild in some places as in pioneer days. One of the most picturesque spots is just north of Berry bridge, Section 15, Rives, where the Indians used to camp, and the river winds around to the west in a great curve.

One of the loveliest scenes is about a mile north of Tompkins, for the banks are heavily wooded, and the whole region wild and lonely. Another most beautiful place is in Section 12, Tompkins and it is reached by taking the Tompkins road from Rives Junction, a mile and a half to the turn, and then following the smaller road half a mile north to the river bank.

If it were not for the condition of the river, due to the sewage, this would be an ideal spot to camp; but alas, there are no fish, and the odor of the river is almost nauseating at times.

The sewage nuisance is even more noticeable at Berry bridge and at the concrete bridge on U. S. 127. In days when the waters ran clear and sparkling in the sun over their pebbles and stone ledges, when fish were plentiful, and the prison was not yet dreamed of, this must have been a real Paradise. But now on certain days, when the wind is just right—or just wrong—these river banks are rather more like the infernal regions.

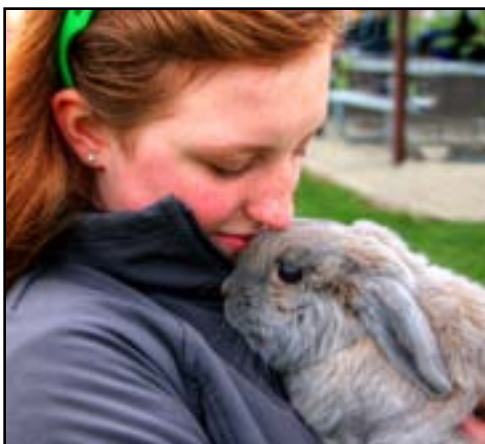
The swift-flowing and crystal-clear Washtenongeseepie has become a debased, sluggish, brown flood utterly beyond description, where no fish could live and few birds have to heart to sing. It is sufficient to make even an Indian weep to see the condition of the once beautiful river and to realize that the minds of his white brothers must have become as sluggish as the stream, to allow such a misappropriation of beauty.

Earth Day 2015 huge success

Saturday, April 25, 2015 was the chosen day to celebrate the Earth in Jackson. The weather decided to be a little cool, but over 470 people came out to Cascade Park to enjoy and celebrate Earth Day. Under the leadership of Kandice Karl this year it was a great success. The Jackson Fitness Council was there to let people ride a bike to make a fruit shake. The Michigan DEA was there to show water quality. The Grand River Watershed was there to help people become familiar with the Grand River. The Men's Garden club and the Master Gardener Club were there showing how to plant flowers and trees. The surveyors were also present to tell people about the Michigan Baseline and Meridian marker. The Audubon was there showing the kids birds and butterflies. Horse Creek Candles was there bringing good smells to the Earth along with Essentials Oil who brought more good smells. Pheasants Forever was there to help bring back the Pheasants to Jackson County. Children and adults alike got to pet and hold snakes, ferrets, bunnies and skunks courtesy of "Classroom Critters". Smokey the Bear even made an appearance to the delight of all. Members of the Junior R.O.T.C. were there to provide help with the event.

The BIG star of this year's Jackson Earth Day and every earth day was the Canoes and Kayaks of G.R.E.A.T. Over 100 people both adults and children took out a boat on the Cascade Park Lagoons, many for the first time. Everyone had a great time and no one decided to go swimming. Many of the people who rode a boat commented they wanted to go on a scheduled G.R.E.A.T. trip. A giant whale named Lori was a new addition to the lagoon. Lori is and will become the mascot of Jackson Earth day. The docks to allow people get into boats on Earth day were allowed to stay in the lagoons to allow people to ride their own boat in the lagoon any time they want to.

Kenny Price



VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

If you have a chainsaw and a desire to help clear a path on the river so our paddlers can get through, we sure could use the help. The work falls on the same few and it would be nice to have more help. Email grand@great-mi.org to volunteer or call 517-416-4234. Thank you!

Board Meetings

The GREAT board meets on the second Wednesday of each month, with the exception of December, at 7:00 p.m. 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.

Welcome New Members!

Thomas Connors
Sarah DeLuca
Gregory Forbes
Mark Mathias
Constance Ross
Jane Stigel
Tim Weaver
Jackie Zirkelbach

GREAT Newsletter

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If you wish to join or renew your membership
visit: www.great-mi.org/Membership2.htm

GREAT Board

Don Lynd, President
Kenny Price, Vice President
Jim Seitz, Secretary
Jack Ripstra, Treasurer
Don Nelson, Rivermaster
Pam Brown, 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