

# G.R.E.A.T.

Grand River Environmental Action Team



P.O. Box 223, Jackson, Michigan 49204

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## GREAT receives award



Daveda Quinn of the Jackson Waste Water Plant presents GREAT as one of the four recipients of their 2105 Appreciation Awards. Representing GREAT are board members Jack Ripstra, Mary Lenardson, and Jim Seitz, as plant supervisor, Trent Stockman looks on. After attendees had an interesting tour of the facility.

### Previous awards received by GREAT

1993, GREAT founder, Marge Hanselman is named finalist for Jackson Citizen's Patriot Citizen of the Year Award because of her outstanding efforts to improve the local Grand River.

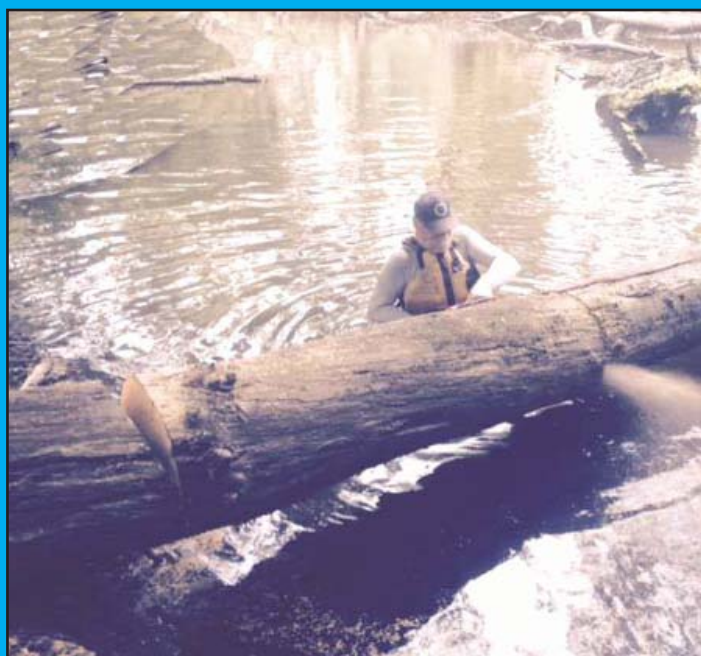
1996, GREAT receives the Jackson County Soil & Water Conservationist of the Year Award

1996 DNR honors GREAT for its river clean-ups and interpretive public local canoe trips

2010, GREAT is named Michigan's 2010 Friend of Conservation by the Michigan Association of Conservation Districts

2015, GREAT is awarded a Certificate of Appreciation by the City of Jackson in recognition of valuable contributions to environmental stewardship, leadership and 25 years of dedication to the Grand River

## Dedicated few clear the river for each paddle trip



Don Nelson cutting a big log by the Lansing Ave. bridge in preparation for GREAT's October 11th public paddle from Maple Grove DNR site to State Rd. It took 70 hours of work hours for the 5.4 mile route.

**Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to everyone!**

# Is the River Safe?

## What's in the local water?

By Paul Rentschler  
Aquatic/Wetland Ecologist, Arborist  
ASTI Environmental

One of the most common questions asked on GREAT paddle trips or during GREAT's Annual River Cleanup is, "Is the river safe?" The short answer is, "Yes, it's safe for paddling." A longer answer, however, would include an explanation that the river is not always safe for swimming, and that one should check state guidelines for eating fish caught in the river or local lakes. That said, common sense and a little homework will allow you and your family to be safe doing any of these activities.

There are two general categories of pollutants of concern in the Upper Grand: (1) bacteria, and (2) legacy contaminants in the sediments.

### **Bacteria**

Unfortunately, concentrations of *Escherichia coli* (*E. coli*) bacteria are too high in a significant stretch of the upper and middle sections of the Grand River, exceeding water quality standards for swimming and other forms of full-body contact. This includes the mainstem of the Grand River from the City of Jackson, downstream through the Lansing area to the boundary between Eaton and Clinton Counties, and portions of the Portage River and Albrow Creek in Jackson County, and the Red Cedar River in Ingham County. To try to improve water quality, the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) has developed a TMDL for this stretch of river. TMDL is short for "Total Maximum Daily Load," which is a long way of saying a target for reducing pollution. TMDLs are calculated and required by the State of Michigan for all lakes, streams, or rivers that fail to meet water quality standards.

In general, bacteria are washed into the rivers, from a variety of sources (e.g., livestock, pet waste, failing septic tanks, etc.), when it rains. So, you can increase your odds of being safe by avoiding the river for two or three days following rain storms. Also, simply making sure you wash your hands before eating is also a simple common sense way of staying safe.

### **Legacy Pollutants**

The other chief pollutants of concern in the Upper Grand River are mercury, and to a lesser extent other metals, and PCBs. These are primarily found in the river sediment, so most people do not come into direct contact with them. However, these contaminants are bioaccumulative, meaning they build up in fish tissue as they go higher in the food chain, and they persist in the environment. These pollutants are primarily of concern when we eat fish caught in the river or local lakes. Still you can eat what you catch, but we recommend learning how often and how much.



The Michigan Department of Health and Human Services provides very useful information about fish safety on their website. Information specific to the Upper Grand River and a few Jackson County lakes (i.e., Clark, Norvell, Portage, and Vandercook Lakes) can be found on pages 50 and 51 of the Eat Safe Fish Guide for Southwest Michigan. There you'll find a list of particular fish species of concern and recommendations for how many servings you should have per month according to the size of the fish. If the species of fish you're interested in is not found there, then they will be listed with the state-wide general recommendations found on page 9. The Eat Safe Fish Guide also provides useful information regarding how the way you clean and cook your fish can improve fish safety and how the safety guidelines change depending upon your age, weight, and health.

The Upper Grand River, like most Michigan rivers, is no longer pristine. But it is quite beautiful, and it's safe enough for you to get out on the water and enjoy it. The more people get out and paddle, swim, or fish in the river and area lakes, the faster the river will make a complete comeback. Simply please be careful: wash your hands and do a little homework with the Eat Safe Fish Guide.

# Some 2015 GREAT Facts

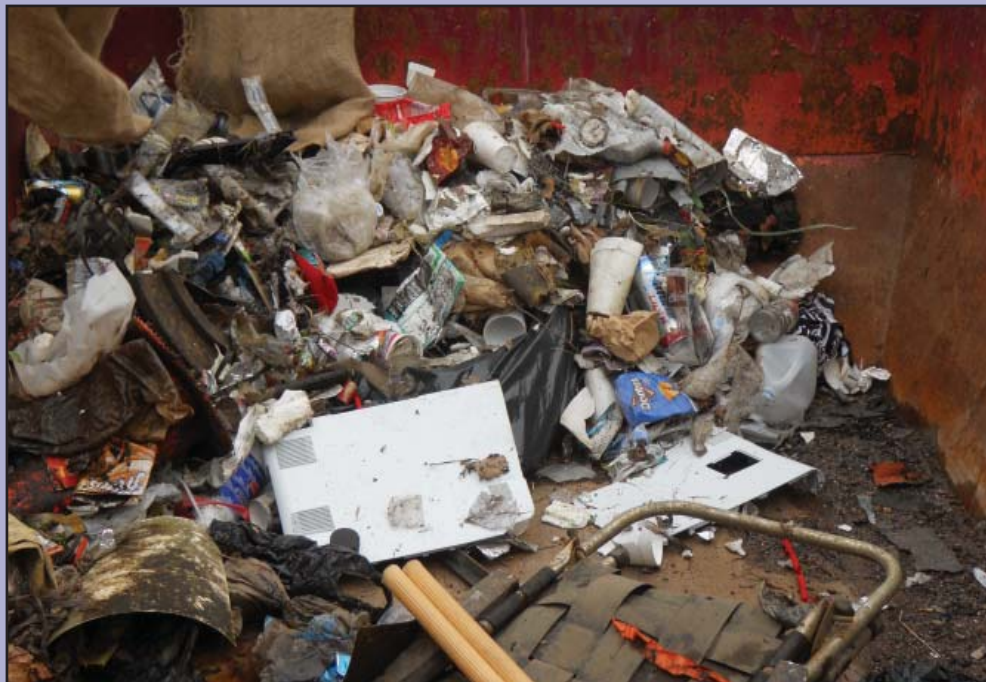
116	Number of Annual Clean-up Volunteers
12	Number of Miles Cleaned on Grand River
60	Average Number Paddle Trip Participants
63	Number of Attendees GREAT Annual Meeting
100	Number of Earth Day Paddling Participants in GREAT Boats
246	Number of Hours of River Chain Work
28	Number of River Miles Chain Saw Work
156	Number of GREAT Paid Memberships
5	Number of Continuous GREAT Membership Since Organization Founding in 1991
43	Number of Ten Year Continuous GREAT Memberships
18	Percent of 2014 GREAT Members who did not Renew Membership
22	Percentage of GREAT Membership paid On-line (PayPal or credit card)
33	Number of GREAT Sponsor Members (\$100 or more)
25	Percent of GREAT Members who Volunteer/Participate in a GREAT non –paddle Event
36	Percent of GREAT Members who participated in at least one paddle
26	Percent of GREAT Members who live outside of Jackson County:
60	Percent of GREAT Individual Members who are female
8,547	Dollars of 2015 GREAT Budget

## GREAT's final paddle of the 2015 season brought out 60 participants



The weather was perfect and with the fall colors running a little late this year, the trees were just starting to turn. This is the section of the Grand River where the dredge ended its work of straightening the river in 1920 from downtown Jackson to around Berry Road. Also, a section between Berry Road and Lansing Avenue bridges the large rocks in the river were placed there by Native American to create a dam to help catch fish. Because of many fallen trees and difficulty of cutting in deep and mucky water, it took GREAT 70 hours of chain saw work to clear the river for the paddle event, even though it had been previously cut only three prior. After, several went to the Pleasant Lake Pub (PLP) to socialize with good food and drink.

# Annual Grand River clean up a success



Just a sampling of river debris

The morning of September 12, 2015 started out at 45° and warming up to a windy 58° at 1:00 p.m. This weather did not dampen the spirits and enthusiasm of our 116 volunteers, which included 9 board members, 2 of their spouses, 2 children, 1 granddaughter, 40 from CMS Energy, and 40 from the Junior ROTC.

Warm donuts from Hinkley Bakery and hot coffee from the Jackson Coffee House was 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 six different locations along the Grand River.

At 9:00 a.m., six teams were then formed, assigned their equipment, and transported with their team leaders to the canoe drop off locations thanks to the buses and drivers provided by the Dahlem Environmen-

tal Education Center, Jackson Area Career Center and the Jackson Area Transportation Authority.

Depending on 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. Two teams formed by

many of the CMS Energy Volunteers walked the banks of the Grand River, from East Morell Street to North Street, placing and carrying the debris they picked up in burlap bags.

The debris was later moved to a roll off container at East High Street by Junior ROTC members. Roll off containers generously donated by Emmons Service Inc. and Granger were placed at East High Street, Monroe Street and the City of Jackson Waste Water Treatment Plant, where trash and debris picked up by the teams was deposited. The following week Emmons Service Inc. and Granger picked up the roll off containers and recycled what trash they were able.

Over 12 miles of the Grand River was cleaned from Michigan Center to downstream of where the Portage River outlets into the Grand River in Northern Blackman Township with 24 canoes, 1 kayak and many walkers.

Even with low water levels, for the fourth year in a row we have seen a decrease in the amount of trash collected from the Grand River.



Everyone does their part during the cleanup



Debris taken out of the river



A very hungry crew devours lunch that is served after the cleanup.



Junior ROTC members are a vital part of the clean up

## Thank you to our 2015 sponsors for our clean up

Camp Storer  
City of Jackson  
Dahlem Nature Center  
Emmons Service  
Fazolis  
Granger ( Trash)  
Hinkley Bakery  
Golden Knights  
Cadets (Jr. ROTC)  
Jackson Coffee Co.  
Jackson County  
Conservation District  
Jackson Area Transit Authority  
Lester Brothers Construction  
Libra Industries  
Little Caesars Pizza  
LosTres Amigos  
Marino's Pizza  
Papa John Pizza  
Upper Grand River Watershed  
Alliance  
Virginia Coney Island

# GREAT Launches Pole Barn Donation Campaign



This is where the building site will be beginning next year.

The past eight years GREAT has been storing our boats, trailers, and clean-up equipment at the Dahlem Environmental Education Center, and other items that are stored in a board member's basement. The Dahlem building is an old cattle barn, open on the front, giving access to swallows, rodents, and insects which often create messes and some equipment destruction in spite of our best prevention efforts.

Anticipating this need for the past five years, through prudent financial management, GREAT (Grand River Environmental Action Team) has been successful increasing its savings account by three fold. Plans have been drawn up for the 1,980 square foot pole barn that will utilize solar lighting. We have incorporated a design option to

add a future bathroom should we later create river access. Building construction is estimated at \$42,000. We have recently spent \$9,500 for site preparation (grading and fill for building, parking, approach road) leaving us to raise \$30,000 to complete the project. It is our goal to construct the building in 2016. However, this can only occur if we soon receive enough donations of cash and in-kind.

This building will increase our efficiency and help us continue and expand GREAT's efforts to improve the environment and recreational opportunities of the local Grand River. Please consider making a donation to our building project. Send contributions to Box 223, Jackson, MI, 49204 or use our website's donation page: [www.great-mi.org/Membership](http://www.great-mi.org/Membership).

# GREAT meets neighbors of our land



On a nice late September Sunday, GREAT hosted invited neighbors who live adjacent or near our land in the Birdland subdivision off Lansing Avenue with Cider, donuts, and good conversation about our organization and plans for our land. Six parties showed up, of which one expressed an interest in joining GREAT

and participated on our October public paddle. Another expressed a willingness to help with river chain saw work. For many reasons, GREAT feels it is very important to maintain good relations with our neighbors. While the turn-out was modest, we made some friends.



# 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](mailto: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!

Connie Kobert-Wilkins  
Bonita Vale

## GREAT Newsletter

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If you wish to join or renew your membership visit: [www.great-mi.org/Membership2.htm](http://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  
Jon Hoyle, Director

### *Special Assignments:*

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