

G.R.E.A.T.

Grand River Environmental Action Team



P.O. Box 223, Jackson, Michigan 49204

Website: www.great-mi.org 517-416-4234 Volume 30 Number 4 NOVEMBER 2019

WHAT'S INSIDE:

Page 2

- GREAT Annual River Cleanup

Page 3

- Road Salt & Challenge of Michigan Winter

Page 4

- Composting

Page 5

- October Paddle

Page 6

- Grand River Expedition 2020

Page 7

- GREAT sponsors

How you can join GREAT

Contact information is on page 8 for Mail, Email, Website, Facebook or Phone

Send \$20 individual membership
\$30 family membership or
\$100 for sponsor membership

GREAT Land Invasive Species Removal Saturday, December 7th, 9:00am-Noon

By Kurt LaFrance

With the turning of the seasons comes GREAT's annual battle against invasive species on GREAT's land. This is a project that has been ongoing for several years, but with over 25 acres of land along the Grand River, there may be no end to removing the invasive species in an effort to allow the native species to creep back in. Late fall is a "great" time to work on removing invasives, since they tend to be easier to spot. The native plants generally lose their leaves earlier in fall, but the invasive species hold their leaves longer.

The process to remove the invasive species includes chain-sawing the bigger invasives, or using loppers on the smaller plants. Once the plants are reduced to manageable size, they are piled tightly to provide habitat for mammals, birds and reptiles. The stumps are then treated with an herbicide to prevent regrowth.

We are looking for adults and older teenagers to help with this work. No particular skill is required besides a desire to work hard. You can cut trees, lop off branches, haul debris, or dab herbicide on the stumps. If you have your own chain saw or loppers you are welcome to bring them. Be sure to dress for



Our hardworking volunteers at last year's invasive species removal event.



Invasive trees can out-compete natives. Once cut, herbicide is applied to prevent regrowth.

the weather, as last year's event was very cold and snowy! But GREAT treasurer Jack Ripstra provided a propane heater in the GREAT barn as a refuge for those who got too cold or wet

from working.

The removal runs from 9 am to noon on Saturday December 7. If you are interested in participating, please RSVP to grand@great-mi.org.

Annual Grand River clean up was a huge success!

By Jack Ripstra

The morning of September 7, 2019 was near perfect weather with a high of 67° with no wind or rain. A dedicated group of 70 volunteers, including 48 from the Junior ROTC Program made this year's Grand River Cleanup a huge success. The volunteers meeting bright and early at the CMS Amphitheater for registration and team assignments were greeted with warm donuts from Hinkley Bakery and hot coffee from the Jackson Coffee Company. Three 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 four different locations along the Grand River. Shortly after 9:00 a.m., four teams were formed, assigned their equipment, and transported with their team leader to the canoe drop off locations thanks to the buses and drivers provided by the 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. A walking team of volunteers also left from the CMS Amphitheater cleaning both sides of the banks from Liberty Street to Ganson Street. Roll off containers generously donated by Emmons Service Inc. and Granger were strategically placed along the river where the trash and debris picked up by the canoeing and walking teams was deposited. Over 7 miles of the Grand River was cleaned from the US-127 South downstream to Stonegate Farms Subdivision, by 19 canoes and their 38 paddlers. The 14 cubic yards of trash collected from the Grand River included automobile parts, bikes, bottles, cans, clothes, dock float, furniture, glass, highway barrels, plastic, PVC pipes, styrofoam, and 9 tires. The tires were picked up and recycled thanks to the generosity of Modern Waste Systems. Lunch was provided at 1:00 p.m. with food generously donated from Buffalo Wild Wings (chicken wings), Chilango's Burrito Bar (tacos), Dawn Foods (brownies and cookies), Fazolis (bread sticks), Jackson Coney Island (coney dogs), Little Caesars (pizza), Marino's (pizza), and Papa Johns (pizza). 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.



Just some of the trash removed from the river by our hardworking volunteers.



JROTC volunteers were a huge help!



Canoes loaded with trash from the river.

Road Salt and the Challenge of Michigan Winters

By Jeff Lolkus

With winter weather quickly setting in, now is a good time to discuss the use of salt to maintain safe travel on our roadways. More specifically, I'd like to highlight the importance of balancing public safety with the risk salt poses to the quality of our waterways.

The use of road salt has doubled since 1975, with a significant portion (up to half) being used on private roads and parking lots. Salt is typically viewed as a relatively abundant, and therefore cheap, insurance against slip-and-fall or vehicular accidents.

When road salt dissolves, it breaks down into its' constituent Na+ and Cl- ions. Of the two, Cl- can be most damaging to waterways and represents a long-lasting pollutant that can linger for decades. In fact, as little as 1 teaspoon of road salt can pollute 5 gallons of water! In Michigan alone, thousands of tons of salt, at a cost of up to \$25 million are used each year. Additional costs often include the corrosion of our roads and automobiles as well as the negative health effects to humans and animals exposed to high salinity levels.

Whether at the County Road Commission level or for the small homeowner, several practices exist to minimize the harmful impacts of road salt while still ensuring safe winter travel. For instance, modern equipment allows for more accurate calibration of salt applications. By managing speeds and placement, more salt stays on the road without bouncing off into nearby drains and ditches.

Weather forecasting is
Continued on page 6

• PROTECT OUR WATERSHED •

WINTER TIPS



SHOVEL

Shovel snow onto vegetated areas. Grass and plants absorb and filter meltwater, reducing runoff that goes down storm drains and directly to rivers and streams.



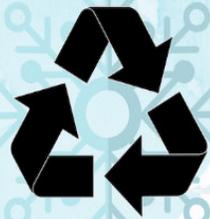
PLAN AHEAD

Shovel and scrape early and often. De-icers work best when there is only a thin layer to remove.



USE LESS

A little salt goes a long way. Apply sparingly, and remove slush once the snow melts to prevent refreezing.



REUSE

Save money by reclaiming salt for re-use by sweeping or vacuuming the solids from the sidewalk after the storm.



STORE SAFELY

Practice good housekeeping by storing salt or other de-icers under a roof or other cover to minimize polluted runoff.



MAINTAIN

Winterize vehicles to prevent leaks. Wash cars at a commercial carwash, where soapy water does not enter the storm sewer.

• VISIT WWW.LGROW.ORG FOR MORE INFO •

When it comes to falling leaves, consider composting

Adapted from Michigan DNR, Oct 2019

One of the best autumn activities in Michigan is an outing to view the brilliant color show put on by yellow beeches, red maples, and bronze oaks as they prepare for cool weather. But once the show is over, homeowners begin the work of raking leaves.

Many people burn leaves to dispose of them. Cities and townships often prohibit this, however, and debris burning is recognized as the number one cause of wild-fires in Michigan. In 2018, debris burning caused 98 fires responded to by DNR wildland firefighters.

A easier and safer solution is composting. Composting is the combining and managing of specific waste materials so that they decompose. Composting involves scooping leaves into a pile or containing them in a bin and leaving them to naturally decompose. Veggie scraps, coffee grounds and eggshells can also be added, cutting down on kitchen waste (just don't add items like meat scraps that can smell bad and attract pests). Once the materials are mixed together, microbes in the soil will start to breakdown the waste and turn it into a nutrient rich material that helps plants grow.

The Benefits of Composting: Composting provides rich fertilizer for gardens and landscape plants, reducing the need for chemical fertilizers. By composting, you are not only creating something that helps keep plants healthy, but you are keeping compostable waste products like food scraps and yard waste out of landfills. It also has the added benefit of cutting down on smoke and airborne particles which can adversely affect sensitive individuals.

Continued on page 6

HOW TO COMPOST

Composting is the combining and managing of specific waste materials so that they decompose. Once the materials are mixed together, microbes in the soil will start to breakdown the waste and turn it into the nutrient-rich material that helps plants grow. By composting, you are not only creating something that helps keep plants healthy, but you are keeping compostable waste products like food scraps and yard waste out of landfills.

WHAT YOU WILL NEED

Brown material to produce carbon:

Dead leaves, branches and twigs, sawdust or wood chips, coffee filters, cotton and wool rags, shredded pieces of paper, cardboard or newspaper and shredded nut shells.



Green material to produce nitrogen:

Grass clippings and leaves, fruit and vegetable scraps, hair, lint, tea and coffee grounds



Water



1 Select a dry, shady spot near a water source.

Ideal size for your compost area is 3 feet wide by 3 feet deep by 3 feet tall (1 cubic yard). You can buy a bin, use chicken wire, or just isolate an area of ground for your compost heap.



2 Add brown and green material in alternate layers.

Try and keep the ratio roughly 3 parts browns to 1 part greens. Make sure larger pieces of material are chopped or shredded.



3 Keep the compost moist [but not too wet].

Moisture helps with the breakdown of organic matter.



4 Occasionally turn your compost mixture to provide aeration.

This helps speed up the composting process and keeps things airy, which cuts the risk of things getting smelly.



5 As materials breakdown, the pile will get warm.

There might even be steam. Don't be alarmed. That means it's working. Now you just have to wait.



6 All done!

When material is dark with no remnants of food or waste, your compost is ready. Add it to lawns and gardens or anywhere that could benefit from some good soil.

WHAT NOT TO COMPOST

Metal, glass, and other products that do not easily breakdown, coal or charcoal ash, diseased or insect-ridden plants, black walnut tree leaves and twigs, pet waste, bones, meat, fats, oils dairy products and eggs (egg shells are OK), and yard trimmings treated with chemical pesticides.



What's vermicomposting?

Vermicomposting is a type of composting that uses red wiggler earthworms (*Eisenia fetida*) to break down organic material. Place worms in a container 8-16 inches deep, layered with dirt, newspaper, and leaves. Make sure the bin has small holes at the bottom (a quarter inch or smaller) to allow for ventilation and drainage. Fruit and vegetable waste will eventually be replaced with nutrient-rich excrement. This method requires far less space, so it's a good alternative for people who don't have enough room or the ideal conditions for a large compost pile.


NATURE®
WWW.PBS.ORG/NATURE
© 2013 THIRTEEN
ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

October Paddle Event – A Perfect Day for a trip down the Grand!



Clearing the river



A little cleaning up along the way



Perfect day for a paddle!



Relaxing afterwards at The Roadhouse

By Deb Snell

The weather cooperated beautifully for a lovely fall paddle down the Grand River on October 6th – our last paddle event of the year. Preparations began days before with lots of log clearing on this stretch of the river. Special thanks go out to our chainsaw crew – Jack Ripstra, Dan Kaser, and Perry Rickman. It was definitely A LOT of work to clear this stretch for our paddle event – you guys rock!

Our group of about 25 paddlers put in

at the Maple Grove Road DNR Boat Launch site, north of Jackson. We traveled approx. 5.4 miles through scenic forested floodplain. The current is relatively slower and the river is fairly wide through this area, and we got to practice our steering skills by weaving through all the downed logs! We passed Berry Road, then Lansing Ave, finally arriving at US127 where we took out at State Rd. Afterwards we gathered at The Roadhouse on Lansing Ave for “light refreshments” and

some great conversation.

Sadly this section of river also had a lot of floating trash, which tends to get caught behind the many downed trees. Our wonderful participants stepped up to the challenge and many of them collected debris along the way. Many thanks go out to all who helped with our impromptu mini-clean-up! We collected quite a bit of trash at the take out, which the County Road Commission kindly picked up for us.

SAVE the DATE for Grand River Expedition 2020 – July 5-18, 2020!

The Middle Grand River Organization of Watersheds (MGROW), in partnership with the Upper Grand River Watershed Alliance (of which GREAT is a participating member) and the Lower Grand River Organization of Watersheds, will present Grand River Expedition 2020, July 5-18, 2020!

The daily schedule for the 2020 Grand River Expedition has been finalized! The itinerary will feature some new campsites, along with some you might remember from 2010 and earlier. Here are some highlights:

- Sunday, July 5 – afternoon headwaters tour (optional), with pre-launch camping at Vandercook Lake Park near Jackson
- Monday, July 6 – launch from Vandercook Lake
- Friday, July 17 – camping and closing ceremonies at Connor Bayou near Grand Haven
- Saturday morning, July 18 – short paddle to Grand Haven, quick load-and-go at Harbor Island Park

MGROW will be announcing the full schedule in the near future in a separate email to those who have signed up for the GRE2020 email list. Go to <https://mgrow.org/grand-river-expedition/> and fill out the GRE2020 contact form to start receiving updates.

In addition to the daily itinerary, MGROW will soon be announcing:

- Fee schedule for day paddlers, section paddlers, and the full Expedition
- Registration process
- Shuttle planning if you want to spot a car in Grand Haven
- What to bring
- Activities for paddlers and non-paddlers
- Volunteer opportunities

2020 will be the fourth Expedition since the legendary paddler Verlen Kruger first launched the event in 1990. Verlen was the Riv-

ermaster for the second Expedition in 2000. The 2010 event carried on his legacy, and once again we'll honor his memory in 2020 as we paddle the 250-mile length of the Grand River from Jackson to Grand Haven over 14 days in July.



ROAD SALT continued from page 3

also an important tool for efficiently timing the use of salts. A focus on pre-wetting surfaces with brine prior to snowfall can

COMPOSTING continued from page 4

als.

Bins can be purchased or constructed out of low-cost materials such as the one pictured made of reused pallets. Learn more about composting with this handy infographic from PBS Nature at <https://www.pbs.org/wnet/nature/blog/inside-nature-infographic-how-to-compost/>.

If a compost pile isn't ideal, you can also use a lawn mower to shred leaves and compost them in place where they will fertilize the grass. You can also mulch perennial beds with shredded leaves or till them right into garden soil.



help prevent ice from sticking and reduce overall salt quantities needed. It's also critical to prioritize mechanical (i.e. plow or shovel) removal prior to relying on hard salt, which is best applied toward the end of a snowfall event. This ensures that continued plowing operations will not simply remove previous treatments.

Identifying the most high-risk areas, whether for traffic safety (curves, expressways, and overpasses) or for environmental sensitivity (such as stormwater basins and surface waters), can also optimize treatment by adjusting rates to match conditions. It's also important to recognize that salt has absolutely no de-icing ability below 15 degrees Fahrenheit, nor is it effective when mixed with sand, which will cancel out its efficacy. Paying attention to the product being used (some can contain harmful anti-caking agents such as ferrocyanide) can also significantly reduce environmental hazards. Lastly, proper storage and handling are essential to minimize unintended runoff.

With a little planning, consideration, and by following these management practices, we can hopefully get through another harsh Michigan winter without having to choose between safety and the environment.

Many thanks to our
GREAT 2019 SPONSORS!

OVERALL SPONSORS

- MYRNA BERLET
- BUDGET DUMPSTER
- BETTY DESBIENS
- CITY OF JACKSON PARKS
- CONSUMERS ENERGY FOUNDATION
- EMMONS SERVICE INC.
- BYRON & AMY ENNIS
- CHARLES J. FALAHEE, JR
- JIM & JOYCE GRACE
- GREAT LAKES PADDLERS
- JEFF GRUND
- DR. JOHN HAND
- STEVE HOEKMAN
- JON & SUSAN HOOVER
- ITC
- JAMES JUSTIN
- KRUPA'S BOAT MART
- KURT & LEAH LAFRANCE
- DAN & MOLLY KASER
- DON AND TRACY LYND
- MICHIGAN AUTOMOTIVE
- COMPRESSOR, INC.
- JOHN & EMILY MINAR
- KURT & LEAH LAFRANCE
- CHARLENE & SHERMAN MAC • CREADY
- MBTM LTD (JACK LAPINSKI)
- STEVE RICK (ABBOTT, THOMPSON, MAULDIN, & ...)
- JACK L. RIPSTRA
- JIM & PAM ROSSMAN

- KURT AND LISA RUDOLPH
- JIM AND JAN SEITZ
- DALE & SUSAN SYLVESTER
- THE EXPONENT
- TRUDELL'S AUTO SERVICE
- BENJAMIN WARD

CLEAN-UP SPONSORS

- BUFFALO WILD WINGS
- CAMP STORER (YMCA)
- EMMONS SERVICE INC.
- FAZOLIS
- GRANGER WASTE SERVICES
- GOLDEN KNIGHTS CADETS (JR ROTC)
- HINKLEY BAKERY
- JACKSON AREA TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY
- JACKSON CONEY ISLAND
- JACKSON COFFEE COMPANY
- JACKSON COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT
- LESTER BROTHERS
- LIBRA INDUSTRIES
- LITTLE CAESARS PIZZA OF JACKSON
- MARINO'S PIZZA
- MCDONALD'S
- MODERN WASTE SYSTEMS INC.
- PAPA JOHN PIZZA
- UPPER GRAND RIVER WATERSHED ALLIANCE

Board Meetings

The GREAT board meets on the second Wednesday of each month, with the exception of December, at 7:00 p.m. alternating between the Summit Township Hall (even months), and Blackman Township Hall (odd months).

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

GREAT's Mission

The mission of Grand River Environmental Action Team is to promote the protection and preservation of the Grand River Watershed through activities and educational programs

Visit www.cafepress.com/greatmi to order a GREAT t-shirt and coffee mug

GREAT Board

Kenny Price, President
Kurt LaFrance, Vice President
Deb Snell, Secretary
Jack Ripstra, Treasurer
Don Nelson, Rivermaster
John Minar, Director
Kay Brown, Director
Dan Kaser, Director
Jon Hoyle, Director
Benji Ward, Director
Kurt Rudolph, Director
Cathy Jehnzen, Director
Jeff Lolkus, Director

Special Assignments:

Jim Seitz, Webmaster
Kurt Rudolph, Publicity
Jeff Grund, Tax Statements

GREAT Newsletter

Published quarterly by the
Grand River Environmental Action Team
a 501(C)(3) non-profit organization

GREAT
P.O. Box 223
Jackson, MI 49204

Email: grand@great-mi.org
Website: www.great-mi.org
Phone: 517-416-4234

Find us on Facebook: GREAT Grand River
Environmental Action Team

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



We accept these
major credit cards at
all of our functions.