

G.R.E.A.T.

Grand River Environmental Action Team

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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 ANNUAL GRAND RIVER CLEAN-UP SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 12, 2020

Please join Grand River Environmental Action Team at the annual Grand River Clean-up on Saturday, September 12, 2020 from 9:00AM-1:00PM. This event can only be successful with volunteers like you!

There will be many changes in the clean-up this year because of the Coronavirus. We will be meeting at R.A. Greene Park, located at 2995 Lansing Avenue, Jackson, one half mile South of Parnall Road, at 9:00 a.m. Follow the route through R.A. Greene Park marked on the map to the right - go through the gate to the wastewater treatment plant and we'll direct you where to park.

The cleanup will be accomplished by sending canoes both upstream and downstream from the park and then returning back to the launch site to provide social distancing by not having to shuttle. Other volunteers will drive their own vehicles to selected locations along the river to walk the banks and pick up



debris.

Dress should be old pants, shirts and tennis shoes that can be worn in or along the river along with a hat, sun screen and mosquito repellent. Gloves, tools, canoes, and PFD's will be provided.

Lunch will not be provided this year due to the Coronavirus.

We need volunteers to accomplish this Grand River Cleanup, including help with these spe-

cialized jobs:

- Be a Team Leader to help guide 8 canoes with 16 paddlers on the river.
 - Registration of volunteers.
 - Distribute cleanup equipment to the workers.
- Masks will be required for registration and picking up equipment. Please contact Jack L. Ripstra by email at jlripstra@aol.com or by phone at 517-740-5680 if you can help with one of these jobs.

UPCOMING EVENTS:

Grand River Paddle Trip – Saturday, October 10 at 11:00AM. We'll be paddling the Grand River north of Jackson - from N. State Street (adjacent to US-127) to Trestle Park on Dixon Road. This is a 5.7 mile trip and will take approximately 2.5 to 4 hours. This is a beautiful stretch of the Grand with extensive forested floodplain and few houses. If we're lucky, we'll get to see a little fall color along the way.

Annual Invasive Species Removal – Saturday, December 5, from 9:00 AM to 12 Noon Help us in our ongoing effort to clear invasive species from GREAT's 25.3 acres located at the corner of Cardinal Crest and Canary Lane in Blackman Township, Jackson. Check out our website for more event details at www.great-mi.org.

Kayaking Detroit



By John Minar

John recently took a group kayaking on the canals of the Detroit River. We asked him to share his adventure!

The canals of Detroit are at the east end of the Detroit boarder with Grosse Pointe Park. Straight and narrow, some socioeconomically advantaged neighborhoods, and some lesser. It is an interesting paddle on many levels. Many homes are literally underwater due to the high water levels.

Pumps run 24/7 to return water from homes, yards and streets back to the river. The paddle is pleasant, calm and relaxing until you venture into the Detroit River to visit the old mansions at Greyhaven.

The Fabulous Fisher Mansion, 18,000 sq. feet of luxury, 50 rooms, not counting the attached garage and attached boat house which kept the 106 foot yacht Margaret IV from the elements. The ultimate bachelor pad was the home of Lawrence Fisher, the most flamboyant of the seven Fisher brothers. Body by Fisher Corporation was eventually purchased by General Motors. The exquisite Fisher Building & the Fisher Theater were built by the Fisher family. The mansion has seen better days, but has fared better than its neighbor Greyhaven.

Greyhaven was another story. Gar Wood built his man-

sion on the island across the canal from the Fisher mansion. His 46 room estate was home to several Miss Americas' - the fastest boats in the world. It also housed the largest pipe organ of any private residence in the world. Alas, the pipes were eventually used by a motorcycle gang to decapitate the statues on the grounds during an especially wild weekend party in the 1970's. The trashed mansion was eventually replaced with condos but a couple of the smaller 1920 era homes remain on the island.

Back to kayaking. It was a beautiful day with Jim & Jan Seitz, Kay & Kaitlynn Brown. We encountered, at a socially safe distance, the guided tour group from Detroit River Sports. If interested in kayaking these historic canals you can do it yourself or go online and book a tour with <https://www.detroitriversports.com/>

There is also a kayak to table tour - <https://www.detroitriversports.com/tour-guide/paddle-to-table>

Note: For more fascinating historical information on this area search keywords, Grey Haven, Gar Wood, Fisher Mansion.

Check out this link for a feature article and photos exploring the canals of Detroit: <http://www.dailydetroit.com/2014/09/23/photos-exploring-detroit-kayak-canal-eastside/>

European Frog-bit: Aquatic Plant Recently Found In Nearby Lakes And Rivers!

By Shikha Singh

With summer firmly in place and summer vacations on hold, many people have increased their visits to local parks and beaches, bringing out their kayaks and going for a paddle down the Grand River! This summer, we at the JLW CISMA are asking you to keep an eye out for a new invasive species that has been found in the region, European frog-bit!



Figure 1. Picture showing European frog-bit and comparing frog-bit to native lily pads.

European frog-bit (*Hydrocharis morsus-ranae*) is an aquatic plant that is on Michigan’s invasive species watch list. Invasive species is a species that is not native and whose introduction causes harm or is likely to cause harm to the economy, environment or to human health.

Originally found in Europe and parts of Asia, it was brought to Ottawa, Ontario in 1932 for consideration as an ornamental plant at the Central Experimental Farm. Seven years later, it was found in the Rideau Canal, and the rest they say, is history! It is now found in Eastern United States and has made its way into Michigan. Leaves are thick and kidney bean shaped (Figure 1), and approximately 0.5 to 2.5 inches wide. It has a three petaled white flower with a yellow center, appearing from June to August. It is a free floating plant that can spread via stolons or turions (buds that can form into an entire plant). Frog-bit prefers slow moving waters like ponds, wetlands and irrigation ditches, but has recently been found in the Grand River!

If not removed, frog-bit can accumulate and form dense mats along the surface of slow moving water. As the mats get larger, it can impede recreation (making it hard for boats, kayaks, canoes, floatation tubes, jet skis from moving through the water) and clog drainage canals. Frog-bit can also change the environment, making it unsuitable for native organisms such as birds and fishes by reducing available habitat and food, and limiting light from reaching the bottom. When frog-bit dies in the fall, the biomass will sink to the bottom and decompose, consuming available oxygen in the water column, potentially resulting in fish kills (and other organisms). Small infestations can be removed by hand or a rake due to its shallow roots (shown in Figure 2). Larger infestations may require the use of an aquatically approved herbicide.

Aquatic invasive species have been introduced by people emptying aquariums into nearby lakes and rivers, accidental escape from ornamental ponds (flooding, wildlife, wind etc.) or being transferred via watercrafts and recreational gear. Naturally, they can flow from streams and rivers into lakes, with the water carrying turions, full plants and stolons. To learn more about European frog-bit or to report its presence, please contact the JLW CISMA Coordinator Dr. Shikha Singh via email (shikha.singh@macd.org) or by phone at (517) 432—2089. Invasive species can also be reported at www.misin.msu.com (also comes as a phone app).



Figure 2. With shallow roots, frog-bit can be pulled out of water rather easily.

Steps to Reduce the Spread of Aquatic Invasive Species:

1. **Clean** your boat and trailer to remove all aquatic organisms
2. **Drain** the bilge, livewell, and ballast tank of your boat
3. **Dry** your boat and equipment between uses
4. Do not empty aquariums or release pets/plants into rivers or lakes
5. Clean your waders and fishing gear
6. Never release bait into waters other than where it was caught



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GREAT's FIRST PADDLE OF 2020

Vandercook Lake and the Grand River

By Jack L. Ripstra

On July 11, 2020, twelve paddlers which included 5 Great Board Members had a picture perfect day for a paddle. We put in at the boat launch at Vandercook Lake County Park and then paddled through a portion of Vandercook Lake to the Grand River, then upstream on the Grand River to Hague Road and then back to the boat launch. This

four mile paddle delighted us with blooming wild flowers, dragon flies, fish, frogs, osprey, muskrats and turtles. The wind and chop of Vandercook Lake posed a slight challenge for the paddlers but was soon forgotten when we reached the Grand River. Many thanks to the Great Board members and paddlers who made the first paddle of 2020 a success.



Heading across Vandercook Lake to the Grand River



GREAT board member Benji Ward



Paddling under the fallen oak trees near Hague Road



Paddling downstream on the Grand River

August 2020 GREAT Trip - Watkins Lake



During a “normal” year, August would be GREAT’s fourth group paddle of the year, but this is not a normal year, it is a Corona Virus Year. So August was only our second paddle. Due to health safety restrictions GREAT decided to change our scheduling from a Boating Safety class to a lake paddle in August. GREAT chose to go to Watkins Lake, the newest Michigan State Park.

The lake is actually two lakes divided by Arnold Road. The east lake is 70 acres and the west lake is 35 acres. The founding Watkins family came to Michigan in 1834 and farmed 800 acres

around the lakes. The Watkins farms had close ties to the underground railroad as well as the Lake Shore and Michigan Railroad.

Watkins Lake is only open to boating in June, July and August. The rest of the year Watkins is a major migratory bird location and lake access is restricted. The twenty-one kayakers who attend our paddle event were the biggest group that has been on the lake, as well as being among the few who have boated on the lake. We missed seeing the migratory birds, but did see kingfisher, gull, cormorants, turtles and lots of lily pads.



Grand River Volunteer Covid-19 Friendly Cleanup

Saturday, September 12, 2020

9 am – 1:00 pm

The **Grand River Environmental Action Team (GREAT)** needs volunteers for its annual river cleanup. Come join us in doing something **GREAT** for the river while having fun at the same time!

Assignments can be on land and/or water so dress appropriately for the weather and getting dirty. GREAT has an ample supply of canoes, masks, trash bags, rakes and gloves.

If you have waders, which can be used, please bring them.

Check out www.great-mi.org for more details or call 517 416-4234.



**Meet at R.A. Greene Park
located at 2995 Lansing
Avenue, one half mile
South of Parnall Road by
the bridge over the
Grand River.**





QUICK GUIDE to Jackson's Waterways

Experience Jackson has put together some great info to help you access Jackson area waterways! Check out their website at <https://www.experiencejackson.com/things-to-do/get-outdoors> and click on the Lakes and Rivers link. We've also added their Quick Guide to Jackson's Waterways to GREAT's website on the River Information tab. Check it out!



Jackson County Household Hazardous Waste Collection – August 27

Jackson County Conservation District hosts their next Household Hazardous Waste Collection day on Thursday, August 27, from 12:00 Noon to 6:00PM at the Jackson County DOT, 2400 N. Elm Ave, Jackson (please use the Chanter Road entrance!). The cost is \$20 per vehicle and a reservation is required. Go to <https://jacksonrecycles.wixsite.com/recycling/household-hazardous-waste-2020> for more details on what is accepted and to make a reservation.



ADVOCATE. EDUCATE. HELP SUPPORT OUR MISSION.

Help support GREAT's mission to promote the protection and preservation of the Grand River Watershed! Since 1990, GREAT has worked to improve the quality of the Grand River in and around Jackson County. Your generous support helps continue our mission. Simply go to <https://www.great-mi.org> and click on the Membership tab to renew your membership and/or make a donation. Thank you for your support!





VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

If you have a chainsaw, or can use 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. alternating between the Summit Township Hall and Blackman Township Hall.

March's meeting will be held at Blackman Township. April's meeting at Summit Township Hall etc.

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 Newsletter

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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.

GREAT Board

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Dan Kaser, Director
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Pam Brown, Historian