

G.R.E.A.T.



Grand River Environmental Action Team

P.O. Box 223, Jackson, Michigan 49204

www.great-mi.org

Spring 05

April Outing Paddlers Go With the Flow

Due to low water and numerous obstacles on the section of the Grand River that was scheduled for the April outing, a last minute change of location was made. Actually Amy and Bryon Ennis, the leaders for the April outing had pretty much decided one week before, after scouting the schedule route, that without rain the Jefferson Rd. to Reed Rd. trip on the Grand would not be much fun.

Participants who showed up at the intended Jefferson Rd. put-in, took the news of the change with good humor and we all reconvened near the Draper Rd. Bridge for our put-in. Our take-out destination would now be the river front home of Cloanne Boobyer where the Grand flows under Glenshire Drive. The new course would take us through a mix of upland forest and wetlands between Draper and Hague Roads, then through mostly river floodplain from Hague Rd. to Vandercook Lake.

The winds were quite brisk so we hugged the southwest shore of Vandercook until we reached the passage into Browns Lake. Across Browns Lake we stayed as close to the north shore as we could considering the reach of shallow water along this shore which would hardly float a canoe or kayak. We had to labor against the strong west wind, but at the far west end of Browns Lake, among the trees, we found the camouflaged outlet to Williams Lake. The outlet is quite shallow, but the bottom is very solid for walking. This was little consolation as I dragged our canoe through leg-numbing cold water. It was clear that springs in the bottoms of both Vandercook and Brown's Lake keep those lakes cool. I had earlier waded in the Grand River upstream of the lakes and found the temperature much warmer.

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New Insurance Rates Cloud Future of GREAT Canoe Trips

What used to be a minor concern for GREAT now threatens the future of our monthly canoe trips on the Grand, Kalamazoo, or Raisin Rivers. The American Canoe Association (ACA), which provides GREAT with liability coverage, has been forced to find a new insurance carrier themselves. The result is that ACA has had to pass on to GREAT new cost increases.

In the past GREAT has been able to limit the cost for river outings to \$5 for nonmember for canoe or kayak rentals. GREAT members could use one of our canoes or kayaks free, and the outings themselves, led by volunteers were free. According to the new ACA requirements, any participants who are not ACA members must be charged \$10 for liability insurance coverage. Since most of the participants in our river trips are not ACA members, GREAT or the participants must pay the fee.

GREAT board members were shocked and dismayed by the news relayed by president Chuck McKeown. Board member Barb Anderson wondered if we could continue to carry out an important part of our organization's mission, which is to acquaint more people with the Grand River by taking them out on the water. Bill Sonnet lamented that a family of two adults and two children would now conceivably have to pay \$40 to participate in one of our Sunday outings. Will novice canoeists be discouraged from having a new personal experience on the river?

For now, GREAT is going ahead with all scheduled river trips while the board of directors works out a plan to provide liability coverage for the organization.

GREAT Welcomes Three New Board Members

John Hand is a long time resident of Hanover, where he and his late wife Nancy have restored the home and outbuildings of a farm originally established in 1837. Dr. Hand is a psychologist in private practice in Jackson where he also has also restored a “turn of the century” era residence into his office complex.

He credits the devotion of his late wife Nancy to environmental concerns with leading him into many work projects in wilderness areas and national parks around the U.S. John is a member of many environmental organizations such as the Sierra Club and the Nature Conservancy. He also has served on the Board of Directors of the Cascades Humane Society for nine years.

John has worked on almost every GREAT river cleanup since the organization’s inception. He feels strongly about eliminating pollution from our county’s rivers and the intentional reduction of our huge stream of waste through reuse and recycling.

Bill Bivins and his wife Nancy have lived in Jackson County near Tomkins Center for thirty years. Bill was raised on a Barry County dairy farm, and is a Viet Nam veteran. In his professional live he worked thirty five years with the major land and water stewards, farm land owners, as a Michigan State Agricultural Agent.

Mr. Bivins enjoys Michigan’s natural resources in a variety of ways. He participated in the first Grand River Exposition and believes we live in the best of times with the most wildlife and the best quality rivers in our lifetime. He believes working together GREAT members can help bring about pride in the Grand River, can enjoy and celebrate it’s successes and encourage the stewardship to leave it a better place.



Warren Renando joins the board after being a member of GREAT since 1997. Mr. Renando is the former city manager of Jackson who retired from that position in August of 2004. While city manager Warren was instrumental in the removal of the cap from the Grand River. He also oversaw the removal of combined waste and storm water sewers in the city and assisted GREAT in its annual spring clean up by allocating monies and city employees.

Mr. Renando’s experience as a founder of the Clinton River Watershed Council was recently tapped when the city named him to represent them on the Upper Grand River Watershed Council. Warren is married to Jean, who frequently accompanies him on kayaking trips with GREAT during the summer. Wade, his son and also a Jackson resident, goes on kayaking camping trips with his dad. Warren is usually one of the last ones out of the water on these trips because he stays behind to fish.

Departing Board Members

GREAT bids a fond farewell to three long-time board members Louise Hefka, Johnathan Hoover, and Al Ferry. GREAT wishes to thank them for their service to this organization, the community which benefited from their work, and the environment which hopefully is more secure. Though Louise is officially leaving the board, she has agreed to continue working with our treasurer.

Terry Beaver takes in the flora and fauna along the Grand below Draper Road while his dogs Angel and Shadow enjoy the ride.



Dana Randolph takes a rest at the entrance to Vandercook Lake.



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Willams lake is a hidden gem to most people in the Jackson area, even canoeists and kayaker like GREAT members. There are only a few dwellings on the lake, and much of the shoreline is still natural. Because of the amount of natural shoreline, it required some exploration of lovely little coves before we found the outlet to the Grand River.

Most of the participants in this outing completed the trip in about two hours, but since we were in the “sweep canoe,” which is the last canoe for safety reasons, it took us closer to three hours. When we rounded the final bend before our designated take-out at Cloanne Booyer’s home, we were relieved to see all the participants gathered in little groups on her lawn. Thanks Cloanne for the use of your back yard and for the welcome bathroom facilities.

Flora and Fauna Report from April River Trip

by Terry Beaver

Insects and animals-small caddis fly swarms, whirlygig beetles, green frog, chorus frog, fresh water clams.

Birds-robin, chickadee, red-wing black birds, yellow shafted flicker, great blue heron, sandhill crane, mallard ducks, Canada geese, red breasted nuthatch.

Plants-tamaracks, skunk cabbage, marsh grass, blue vervan, spadderdock, eelgrass, shrub willow, red-twig dogwood, red maple.

Annual River Clean-up
Saturday, September 17
9a.m.-2p.m.



Grand River History

Was There a Trail at Trail Street?

According to Jackson historian Mr. Lewis Smith, “As many as nine Indian Trails crossed at , or near, a fording place on the Grand River within the present site of the City of Jackson.” Naturally where several Indian Trails converged there was likely to be an Indian settlement because Native Americans were as eager for news and commerce as we are.

When white settlers began to occupy southern Michigan, Horace Blackman was one of the first to establish a claim for land in Jackson County. “He toured the land up and down the river for a few miles. After carefully measuring distances, Blackman stuck his stakes by the great Indian trail which passed directly through the only place for several miles where the river was fordable, with hard land on both banks; it was quite level, and yet high enough above the river for good drainage and gradually rose toward the hills to the west and north.”

Although it may not be quite as apparent now, the site of the City of Jackson was one of the few locations high enough for dependable year-round east-west travel for miles. Many of the vast swamps both north and south of Jackson have now been drained and the Grand River dredged and channeled, but we can still see vestiges of these former obstacles to primitive methods of travel. It now appears quite logical why many primitive trails ultimately leading to various locations along Lake Michigan in the west, and Lake St. Clair and the Detroit River in the east, passed through Jackson.



River Survey Provides Enjoyment and Frustration

By Bryon Ennis

In anticipation of the April 15, GREAT-sponsored river outing that I had volunteered to lead, my wife, Amy, and I set out to survey the designated section of the Grand River between Jefferson and Reed Roads. Because I had not paddled that section, I was eager to learn what would be in store for participants one week later. There had not been rain for over two weeks, and the Saturday afternoon we chose to paddle the river was quite warm and sunny for early April. The river was low, as we expected, but there was still sufficient water to easily maneuver our 17ft. fiberglass Sawyer, which only draws about two inches even carrying two good sized adults.

Shortly after putting in we encountered our first private bridge over the river, but there was sufficient room to pass under the bridge if we ducked way down into our canoe. For the first one-half of our trip, we passed through wetlands with only scrub trees, so we did not encounter any sweepers or blow-downs. Near the midpoint of this section of the Grand, we entered upland terrain with woods growing right up to the river. Now we began to encounter sweepers and blow-downs which we either had to negotiate under or through, or we had to stand in the river and lift our canoe over. At first these obstacles did not faze us, because we have often encountered them on back country paddles.

What did irk us, though, were the private river crossings built or dropped over the river by riparian landowners. I believe it is within their rights to connect two pieces of land they own which are separated by the river. However, when landowners drop trees or build

bridges across the river which cannot be passed over or under, they force boaters to trespass on their land. We were not prevented from trespassing, even though I'm sure we were watched, but that may have been because we were only two people in one canoe. What if there had been a dozen canoes and kayaks, and twenty-five or so people traipsing across private yards? Would they have prevented our passage? And what could we have done when we were one hour from either the put-in or the take-out without a public access nearby?

As a result of the numerous lift-outs we had to make during this survey trip, and the absence of any rain during the following week, the Rivermaster decided it would not be a good idea to take a group through that section of the river. The trip route was moved to include sections of the river which we knew would be easily navigable, starting at Draper Road and continuing through Vandercook, Browns, and Williams Lakes.

It is important that understandings be reached between users of navigable waterways and riparian owners. As GREAT encourages more citizens to enjoy this valuable recreation resource, we are likely to encounter more private land owners who are obviously building homes along the course of the Grand River. River users must understand the concerns of the land owners regarding invasion of their property and discarding of trash. On the other hand, owners must recognize that they chose to locate along a public resource. Perhaps organizations like GREAT can play an important role in discussing and balancing the needs of both sides.

New Decal Raises Funds to Fight Exotic Invaders

From the [Michigan Environmental Report](#)

Great Lakes waters are under assault from over 160 invasive aquatic plants and animals. To help thwart further invasive species and to control those already in the system, Michigan is offering a new way for boaters

to fight back. A new Great Lakes Protection Specialty Watercraft Decal is available for \$35 from the Michigan Mall web site, www.michigan.gov/michiganmall, or through the Secretary of State's office. \$25 from the sale of each decal will be deposited in the Michigan Great Lakes Protection Fund. Proceeds will

GREAT Board Members

Chuck McKeown, President

Dennis Whitehead, Vice President

Nancy Lapinski, Secretary/Treasurer

Todd Zeller, Rivermaster

Barbara Anderson Jeff Grund

Bill Bivins John Hand

Ken Dodge Bill Sonnet

Bryon Ennis Warren Renando

The GREAT board meets on the second Tuesday of each month, at 7:00pm, in the Summit Township Municipality Building. Meetings are open and visitors are welcome. If you would like to have an item placed on the agenda, please notify Nancy Lapinski at 783-3661

GREAT,
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The GREAT Newsletter editor is Bryon Ennis.
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Upcoming GREAT Activities

June 5, Sunday at noon. Paddle Stoney Lake. Meet at 31 Herdale Place. Herdale runs S. from N. Stoney Lake Rd. just E. of intersection of Napoleon Rd. and N. Stoney Lake Rd. 2-3 hours. Picnic afterward. Food provided by GREAT.

July 10, Sunday at noon. Raisin River. Meet at Brooklyn Ford on M50 in Brooklyn. Take out at Norville Dam, Mill Rd. 2-3 hours

August 14, Sunday at noon. Meet at Tompkins Rd. DNR river access site. Take out at Onondaga. Picnic follows. Food provided by GREAT.

See river maps at our website
www.great-mi.org

For information or to reserve a boat, call Todd Zeller at 750-1476. If you reserve a boat, please honor that reservation, otherwise you may prevent another party from enjoying the trip.

Welcome New GREAT Members

Rachel and Ryan Rodts Carol Scott

Raniece Prather Jay Potter

Pricilla and Alan Gamble Chuck Loftis

Carol Rostar Laura Bendele

Marl Mathias