

G.R.E.A.T.



Grand River Environmental Action Team

P.O. Box 223, Jackson, Michigan 49204

www.great-mi.org

Winter 05

Message from the President Winter 05

The paddling season has drawn to a close for all but the most hardy, and I wanted to thank you all for an excellent year. We put some new people on the river and removed some old garbage (one and a half tons we are told). The Upper Grand River Watershed Council is moving steadily toward becoming a watershed wide citizen/government partnership. Please see the updated website at www.uppergrandriver.org for more information.

The website now has helpful hints on being river friendly at home and how-to guides for improving our watershed. Please take a few minutes to look over the resources section and put some of this to use. On October 6th the Upper Grand River Watershed Council had a stakeholders meeting to assess the priorities of the community and the following goals (ranked by voting in order of concern), and corresponding actions, highlight the steps developed by the stakeholders during this meeting.

Have a well informed and involved public on protecting and managing the watershed

- Educate through mass media, mailings, billboards, public service announcements, implement a volunteer water quality monitoring program

All new development projects will be water quality friendly

- Facilitate at least one demonstration project low impact development standards in the worst areas

Meet warm water fisheries and aquatic life and wildlife designated uses

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Dedicated Group of Adults and Youth Brave Cold and Rain to Clear Grand River

Though the day began cool and cloudy and the turnout of volunteers seemed small, by mid afternoon the temperature had risen, the sun was shining and nearly forty volunteers had made a significant impact on the condition of the Grand River.

This year GREAT's river clean-up took place September 17, and was launched from the new amphitheater in downtown Jackson. The setting of the amphitheater, at the foot of the new Consumers Power building, was conducive to the task ahead. There was room for display tables and river cleaning equipment, and even permanent standards to mount our banners on. Though there is still a need to beautify the Grand River as it passes through downtown Jackson, the new sloping grassy banks made an easy launch site for half of the canoes and kayaks that would serve as mini garbage scows. The other half of the boats used in the cleanup were hauled to High Street in Jackson where they were launched and floated to their termination point downtown.

In addition to floaters, picking garbage from and near the river, a group of cub scouts walked to various sites downtown affixing plastic medallions to storm sewer openings. The medallions advise the public not to dump pollutants into the sewer openings which lead directly to the river without any form of water treatment.

What is the motivation for citizens to spend a day hauling tires, shopping carts, furniture, plastic bags, and used drink containers from the river? Alan and Pricilla Gamble say they feel a sense of community responsibility. Alan said he has worked on roadside and river cleanups since his youth. Pricilla feels that Jackson deserves a

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2006 GREAT Membership Dues are due in January.

President's Message continued...

- Manage the waterways and natural water course, protect and restore the loss of natural features

Conduct an inventory of the stream corridor

- Identify areas of eroding stream banks and excessive sedimentation, identify their potential sources, rank in order of importance

Protect and enhance recreation opportunities

- Provide waterway access points and supply

Encourage water quality friendly agricultural practices

- Implement buffer strips in agricultural areas, Include tax incentives

Increase water quality through pollution prevention/good housekeeping practices for municipal operations

- Ordinance enforcement and maintenance

Continued watershed management plan implementation and institutionalization

We are in the process of developing an Adopt-a-Stream program for the Grand River that will enable long term monitoring of the impaired sections of the river (If you are interested in becoming a volunteer let me know). We are also beginning public education this winter. Look for the new billboards and watershed signs soon. The next council meeting will be December 13th at 2 p.m. in the County Commissioners Chambers. I encourage everyone interested to attend.

While there is a lot going on to help the river, it seems to be being done by only a few. For example, of over 80 invited watershed stakeholders, only 30 attended. Only about 50 people attended the river cleanup this year even though GREAT and the council put a large effort into publicizing it. To truly have an impact, both the efforts of GREAT and the Watershed Council must foster a stewardship ethic and get more people involved in helping the Grand River live up to its name. We need to get the community involved and we need your help. If you have suggestions please let me know.

Fair Winds

Charles McKeown

River Clean-up continued...

better river winding through it's midst. Volunteer Curt Chatters says his close contact with the environment from his frequent bicycle excursions motivated him to work on the river cleanup. "You sure get a different perspective of the environment from bike than from a car. You become more aware of the presence of litter and trash.

The results of their efforts was the collection of 1540 pounds of garbage pulled form the river and the river banks. Crews from the City of Jackson picked up the larger items while Emmons Refuse contributed dumpsters for the dozens of bags of trash and smaller items. Kibby Cobb Market provided box lunches and water for the workers. Afterwards Darryl's Downtown Restaurant hosted a post clean up gathering. Fortunately there was lots of room outside on Darryl's patio for the still dirty and odiferous volunteers to celebrate their accomplishments.



Refuse from the river clean-up fills the lead canoe while another begins to receive more cargo.

There is no such thing as waste in nature. Nature reclaims everything it produces. Only man produces waste.--From Humanure Handbook by Joseph Jenkins

Scenes from the September 17, 2005 Grand River Clean-up

Curt Chatters hauls a shopping cart from the downtown section of the Grand River.

Participants in 2005 River Cleanup

Curt Chatters
Jim Seitz
Carol Badgley
Greg Hazard
Melanie Page
Nicole Whitmore
Taylor Whitmore
Jon Hoover
Jenn Zeller
Ken Bieszki
Nathan Bieszki
Cliff Payne
Irene Sonnet
Bill Sonnet
Cambree Page-Strout
Alan Gamble
M. Priscilla Gamble
Betty Desbiens
Glenn Chinavare
Bryon Ennis
Connie Spotts
Janna Sebald
Ken Dodge
Bob Liskiewicz
Louise Liskiewicz
Rhonda Ball
Kamron Ball
Charity Steere
Chuck Loftis
Louise Hefka
Barbara Anderson
Chuck Mckeown
Dennis Whitehead
Todd Zeller



**Winners of the Kayak
Drawn at 2005 Clean-
up: Jean and Warren
Renando**

Rivermaster Todd Zeller inspects the pile of large debris pulled from the river during the annual clean-up.

Falling Water Trail Signage Will Include Watershed Features

Todd Zeller, GREAT Rivermaster and president of the Falling Water Trail had some great news to share. Along with the news that the right-of-way for the Falling Water Biking and Walking Trail has been secured from Weatherwax Road in Summit Township all the way to the Concord Millpond, The Falling Water board, has decided to place interpretive signage along the trail near significant features of the Grand River and Kalamazoo River watersheds.

Todd indicated such features as the Sandstone Creek crossing at Moscow Road, the Lime Lake wetlands and the watershed divide between the Kalamazoo and Grand Rivers would likely receive markers. He added that the Lime Lake/Sandstone Creek area is still one of the most pristine and purest sub-watersheds of the Grand River.

Though the Falling Water Trail is not yet paved, it is walkable for its entire length. When connected to the Jackson Intercity Trail, it will be possible to walk or ride a bike from the east side of Jackson to the Concord Millpond. Expectations are that the entire trail system across southern Michigan will run from Lake St. Clair to Lake Michigan.

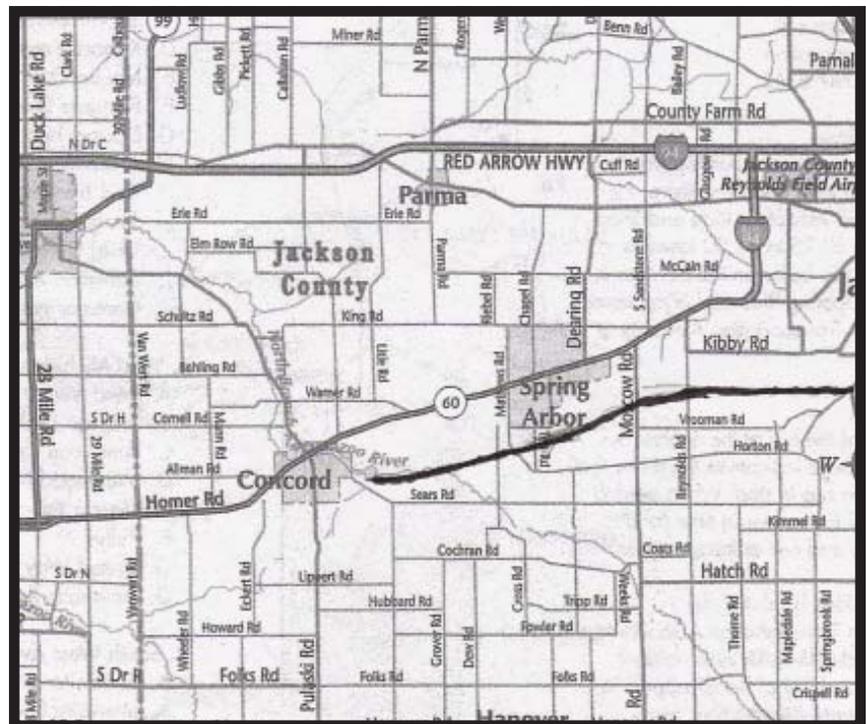
GREAT Seeks \$2000 Grant for 2006 River Activities

Due to the changing nature of our society, protection from possible lawsuits against GREAT arising from injury to participants in our outings has made liability insurance a necessity. The board of directors of GREAT has decided that rather than charge each participant approximately \$10 to cover the cost of liability insurance through the American Canoe Association, we will pursue an activity grant to underwrite our projected yearly liability expenses. Based upon the number of outings and other activities in past years, the board of directors has estimated this expense to be approximately \$2000. Though the GREAT board has considered several possible sources of financial support in the community, we are eager to hear from our members additional ways to raise this money. If you know of a source which would possibly fund our educational and healthy outdoor activities, please send a note to GREAT or call the editor of our newsletter.

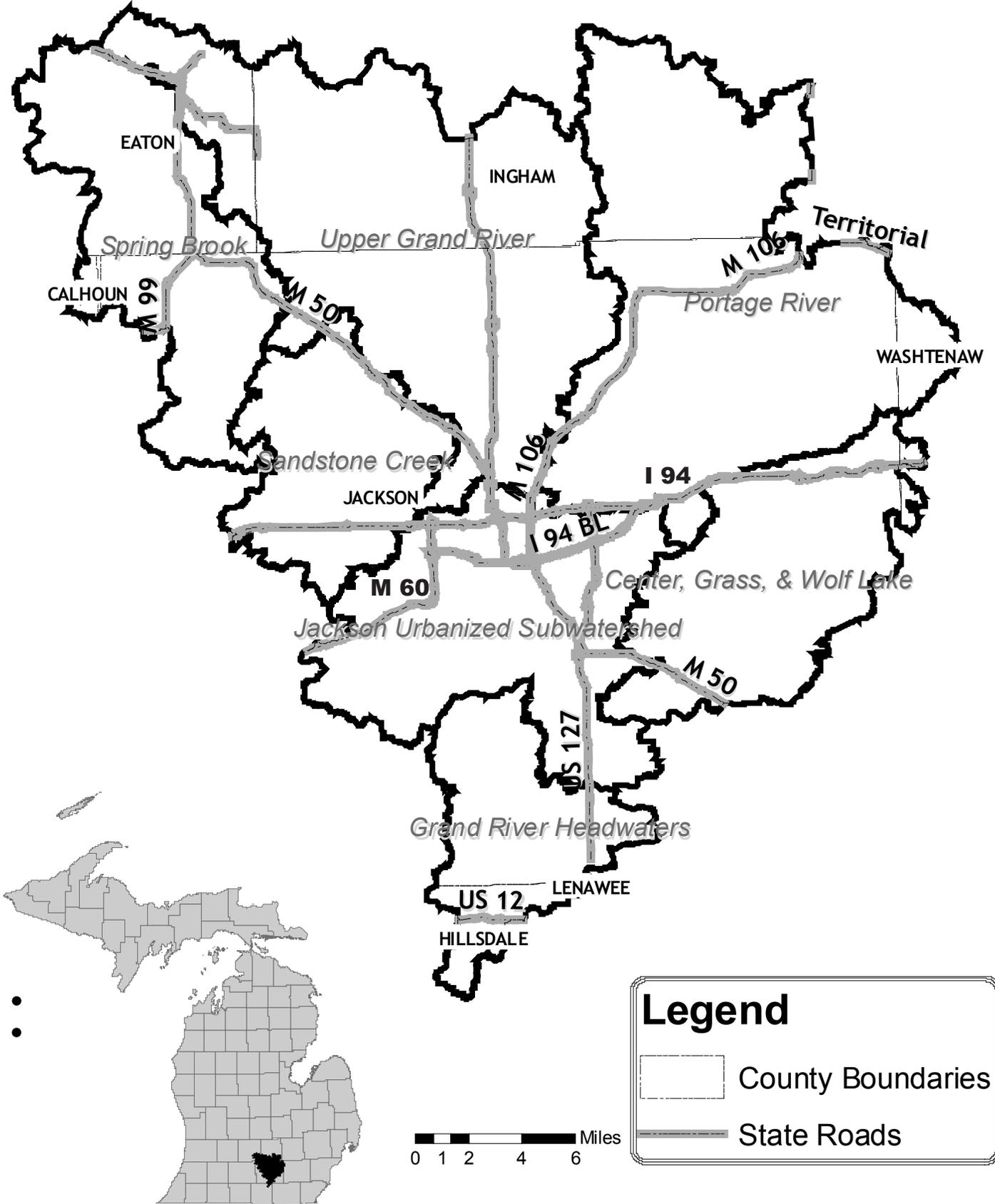
GREAT, P.O. Box 223, Jackson MI 49204
Bryon Ennis, 750-1476

Falling Water Trail

The darkened rough line running approximately parallel to M-60 shows the route of the Falling Water Trail.



The Upper Grand River Watershed



October Outing

It's a Drag Being the Sweep!

By Warren Renando

It's not just a drag getting old, as Mick Jagger sings, it's a drag being the sweep during a canoe outing. The sweep or drag canoe is there to make sure that everyone on the outing gets back safely and that no one is left stranded on one of the outings. Being the drag canoe or kayak is not a prestigious position, nor does it offer any opportunities to view wildlife. By the time twenty happy, conversant canoeists have passed by a site most of the birds and almost all of the wildlife have taken a powder and are hiding somewhere just hoping we will all just go away.

Now, as many of you know, I like to fish, and being the last person in the party allows me to move along real slowly, just taking my time casting to every likely looking log or deadfall. Fish are not very bright. Their brains are just tiny. However, they are not insensitive to their surroundings and they get just as frightened by the passing over their heads of twenty canoes as the other wildlife does. So, being the drag canoe in the outing almost ensures a slow day of fishing.

Then why do I almost always volunteer to be the last person in the water? Is it some misguided sense of social responsibility, trying to make myself feel better by being the one who has to make sure that everyone else is back safely? No, I've avoided all aspects of responsibility since I retired. No, I do it so save my marriage.

Now, Jean and I have been married for 37 years and we've been canoeing together even longer. During that time I've learned a thing or two. I've learned that you can't tell that woman anything. Not even, "Watch out for that rock!" Kayaks saved our marriage or at least some big arguments. But even in our own separate but equal water taxis, I couldn't help giving good advice or adding fascinating anecdotes on the flora and fauna as we passed down the river of life together. Not only Jean, but also some of the other women and even some of the other men on these trips, seem to be immune to my humorous suggestions about their paddling.

So now I'm the sweep and it seems to be a good thing.

Last Outing of '05 Season Takes GREAT Paddlers to the Kalamazoo River

Rivermaster Todd Zeller found the lowest water conditions he had ever witnessed on the Kalamazoo River while scouting for the October paddle. The fortunate outcome was an adjustment from the planned put-in near the Grist Mill in Homer, to a private location in the very small village of Condit about two miles downstream.

The private land used for the put-in is owned by Daniel Crandall. It could be mistaken for a public park with a railroad motif including a real caboose on actual rails, and a mock freight station which Mr. Crandall uses for storage. Mr. Crandall was there to welcome the participants and asked only that we treat the property and the river with respect. Many judged this put-in to be the finest river accesses we had seen all season.

The entire float from Condit to Albion took three hours, and considerable river walking was necessary during the first hour. But, the day was warm and dry, and the colors were near their height, so whether walking or paddling their craft, participants remained in good spirits.

At one point in the trip, the group encountered hundreds of "mystery apples" floating in the water. They were a mystery because no apple trees were evident that could have dropped that many fruit into the water. Because of their fine condition, several of the younger paddlers plucked them out of the river and commenced eating them. Shortly though, Terry Beaver, GREAT's unofficial biologist, came upon the scene and reminded participants that seen and unseen decaying carcasses and fecal matter in the water could be sources of giardia, the dreaded disease of backwoods campers.

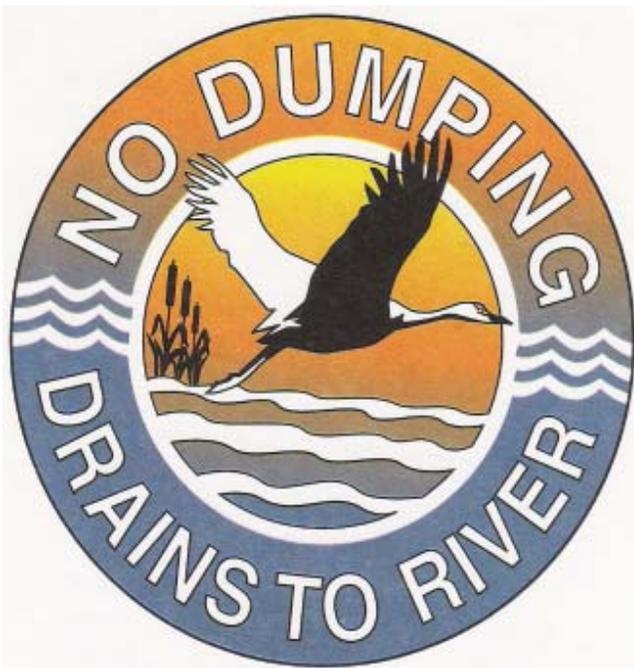
The group then moved along in mostly navigable waters until the take-out site along M-99 in Albion was reached. Todd Zellar would like to thank GREAT members, Warren and Jean Renando, Bill and Nancy Bivens, Ken Dodge, Barb Anderson, Chuck Risdorf, and Jim Seitz for their help on this outing and several other outings this season.

New Great Lakes Concerns Voiced by Michigan Environmental Council Not a Political Stunt

After years of improvement in the quality of the Great Lakes, experts are beginning to see new evidence of degradation and the Michigan Environmental Council has sounded the alarm. Each summer recently scientists have detected dead zones in Lake Erie where oxygen has been depleted to the extent that it cannot support fish. Increased development and paving along Michigan coastlines have allowed more untreated run-off directly into the lakes. Increased withdrawals of lake water and connected aquifers lowered lake levels. Protection from invasive species is at standstill.

Make your concerns known to your legislators.

Become a supporting member of the Michigan Environmental Council



Youthful volunteers in the 2005 river clean-up did their part by affixing plastic medallions showing the logo above to storm sewer openings along Jackson streets.

Flora and Fauna from August River Outing *Tompkins Road to Onondaga Park*

By Terry Beaver

Land Flowers and Herbs

monkey flower, *cardinal flower, *wood nettle, joe-pye weed, sensitive ferns, white baneberry, water hemlock, water horehound

Aquatic Flowers and Herbs

arrowhead, eelgrass, *pondweed, marsh smartweed, purple loosestrife

Trees/Shrubs

burr oak, *swamp oak, *silver maple, American hornbeam, basswood, sycamore, sugar maple, American elm, red ash, shellbark hickory, buttonbush

Vines

riverbank grape, poison ivy

Insects

waterstrider, whilygig beetles, ebony jewelwing damselfly, deerflies, spicebush swallowtail

Mammals

muskrat

Birds

kingfisher, wood pewee, black-billed cuckoos, Canada geese

Reptiles

painted turtles, blanding turtles, map or slider turtles

**Welcome to new Members
Sharon Norton, Jackie Smithers,
Regina Weiss**

Thank you to:

- The City of Jackson for including a page from the Upper Grand River Watershed Council in their Fall/Winter newsletter *City Hall Sentinel*
- Emmons Refuse for dumpsters at river cleanup.
- Kibby Cobb Market for box lunches at cleanup
- Darryl's Downtown Restaurant for post cleanup happy hour.

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 Wednesday of each month, at 7:00pm, in the Dahlem Center. 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,
P.O. Box 223
Jackson MI 49203

Upcoming GREAT Activities

Quiet Water Symposium, MSU, March 4, Saturday all day at the MSU Agricultural Pavilion. View scores of hand made kayaks, canoes, and small sailing craft. Talk with the craftsmen who built them. Also hear presentations by experts on outdoor water adventures. Admission is about \$5.

Annual GREAT Meeting, March 8, Wednesday, 6:30 at Daryl's Downtown Restaurant. Light appetizers and conversation at 6:30 followed by update of GREAT activities. Featured speaker on environmental concerns especially water quality.

The GREAT Newsletter editor is Bryon Ennis.
bryon_ennis@jccmi.edu



GREAT's fiscal year runs from January 1 through December 31. Your dues is a tax-deductable contribution as are other donations to GREAT.

Name _____

_____ GREAT Membership \$15.00

Street Address _____

_____ ACA(American Canoe Association)
membership \$15.00. Dual Membership is \$30.00

City _____

ZIP _____ State _____

Make checks for \$15 or \$30 payable to:

GREAT

P.O. Box 223

Jackson MI 49204

Telephone _____