

G.R.E.A.T.



Grand River Environmental Action Team

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National Environmental Organization Sends Michigan Director to Address GREAT Annual Meeting

Cyndi Roper, Michigan Director of Clean Water Action will address this year's gathering of GREAT members on current issues of surface and ground water quality. Cyndi has been with Clean Water Action since 1990, and has played a leadership role in numerous successful water, energy, environmental health, and waste campaigns in Michigan (1995-present) and Rhode Island (1990-1994).

Cyndi played the lead role in organizing the Great Lakes, Great Michigan Coalition, which led the charge for establishing strong groundwater protections in Michigan, and passing the Great Lakes Compact.

The origin of Clean Water Action dates to the late 1960's when water pollution was spreading virtually unchecked in many parts of the country, with a burning Cuyahoga River in northeast Ohio and a dead Lake Erie among visible examples of much wider problems. In 1972, with funding from two fishing tackle companies in New Jersey and Iowa, David Zwick started what was to become one of the nation's largest grassroots environmental organizations, Clean Water Action. CWA was instrumental to the passage by Congress of the Clean Water Act of 1972. From this act many subsequent laws protecting our nation's waters have evolved.



Cyndi Roper

GREAT Annual Meeting is March 25

For the fifth consecutive year, Daryls Downtown Restaurant will host GREAT's Annual Meeting. In addition to the gourmet food we have become accustomed to Daryls providing, we look forward to sharing memories of the past year's paddle outings and accomplishments. The Annual GREAT Meeting will provide an opportunity for members to ask questions of the the board of directors, to receive an update of the organization's current operations and to get a preview of the coming year's goals and activities. In addition the board will announce the 2009 winner of the new "Make It Happen Award," that honors the citizen, group, or organization which has most notably promoted the mission of GREAT.



**GREAT Annual Meeting
Daryls Downtown Restaurant
March 25, 6:30 for dinner, 7:00 meeting
\$12.00 per person for meal
Coffee and desserts will be provided free
for all attending meeting**

Must RSVP for dinner by Friday, March 20

GREAT Boat Shortage Needs Your Cooperation and Help

On several monthly paddles last year, all of GREAT's boats (seven canoes and eight kayaks) were reserved and used. Therefore some had to be denied. This is a "positive problem" resulting from the increased number of participants on GREAT trips in the last few years which is aligned with our mission to promote the protection and preservation of the Grand River Watershed through activities and educational programs. *However, there are some ways you might be able to help this situation.*

First, you or someone you know might be in a position to donate or sell, for an attractive price, a new or used canoe or kayak. Our two trailers have the capacity for one more canoe and two additional kayaks. Such a donation would be a tax deduction as GREAT is a 501 (c) (3) non-profit.

Second, if you own a canoe or kayak, please use your boats on GREAT trips rather than reserve one of our boats. GREAT's canoes and kayaks were donated and purchased for the purpose of providing boats to as many as possible of those who do not have access to a canoe or kayak. We want all interested people to have the opportunity to experience and appreciate the local natural environment which increases awareness and the importance of protecting it.

Last year, I remember a young man who was just thrilled and very grateful that he and his fiancée could use our boats free of charge to enjoy the experience of paddling on one of our trips. He was recently laid off and could not afford to join GREAT, let alone purchase such a boat. However, if you own a canoe or kayak and still want to use one of our boats for what ever reason, we will have no problem with you checking last minute to see if we have a spare you could use.

Third, boat reservations will not be taken until the conclusion of the previous monthly trip. Please be mindful of how many boats you reserve as we need to try to help as many parties as possible.

Your help and cooperation will greatly be appreciated. This is what GREAT is all about!

Jim Seitz
President

Three Goals for 2009 Will Focus GREAT Board's Efforts

Each month for the past year, new opportunities for partnerships with other organizations, worthy community activities, and significant environmental concerns were considered by GREAT's trustees. Several standing commitments were renewed, especially taking folks out on local rivers and lakes once each month, partnering with the Jackson County Conservation District on the Upper Grand River Implementation Plan, Phase II, and with the Dahlem Conservancy on the Stream Monitoring Program. But the board of trustees believed three new concerns generated within our organization needed to be addressed.

Establish an Equipment Replacement Fund

GREAT has been in existence for nearly twenty years, and much of our equipment including kayaks, canoes, paddles, and some life vests are nearly that old. Though we regularly examine and repair what we can, the board would like to establish a fund to replace equipment that is no longer deemed serviceable.

Improve Navigation on the Grand River

A second goal for 2009 is to improve navigation of the Grand River, especially just north and south of the City of Jackson. Last year a considerable effort was made to clear the stretch of river south of downtown. Maintaining a clear path for boats through this stretch will require frequent monitoring and likely more bullwork removing fallen trees. According to River Master Kathy Kulchinski, this year's major clearing effort will be from Monroe Street, to Parnall Rd. With one of the GREAT monthly paddle outings scheduled to pass through this stretch, Kathy hopes participants can "paddle their boats and not climb trees." Kathy hopes we can work on this stretch as soon as the water begins to warm, as in early April.

Develop a Land Plan

Last of the three goals for 2009, will be to develop a plan for a tract of land north of the City along the Grand River that was donated to GREAT in 1990. The original meets and bounds of this parcel were

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Accountant/ Outdoor Enthusiast/ Environmental Preservationist Joins GREAT Board of Trustees



DeAnn and Seth Monroe

If DeAnn Monroe were applying for employment with GREAT, she would have been our preferred candidate—she fits all our essential criteria. Fortunately GREAT gets all of her attributes free. As with all board members, DeAnn has agreed to contribute her time and talents to advance GREAT’s nearly twenty-year mission, “to promote the protection and preservation of the Grand River Watershed through activities and educational programs”

DeAnn spent her earliest years in Missoula, Montana, but managed to migrate east in time to reside in Stockbridge and graduate from Dansville High School in 2001. She received her Bachelors degree in Business Administration from Grand Valley State University in 2006. Yes, DeAnn is younger than the other wizened old GREAT board members, and we welcome her youthful attributes.

Her favorite partner in outdoor activities is her husband Seth, who she married in November, 2006. Together with extended family and friends, they have kayaked the man-made rapids of the Red Cedar River in Williamston, and the Pine River in northern Michigan. In addition to kayaking, DeAnn and Seth enjoy tent camping, geocaching, cruiser bike and dirt bike riding.

Changes in Board Personnel Involve Treasurer and Accountant Duties

Due to changes in the makeup of the GREAT board the executive committee has tapped new individuals for their expertise in money matters. Long time board member Jeff Grund, our standing advisor on current accounting practices has informed trustees that he will



Jeff Grund

not seek an additional two-year term of service. In his place, GREAT is fortunate to welcome DeAnn Monroe, an accountant with Drake, Watters and Associates. Though we lose Jeff’s experience as an accounting advisor, we still look forward to his presence and

expertise on GREAT outdoor paddle activities. Jeff has been especially generous with his time and his truck on practically every major event GREAT has sponsored in recent years.

In another financial area, Ken Dodge will pass on the duties of treasurer to Carol Scott. Ken will remain on the board in the valuable capacity as a biology specialist. Carol, whose work-a-day duties include book keeper and computer specialist for Taylor Rental in Jackson, will apply both of these competencies to keeping GREAT’s finances transparent and orderly.

DeAnn expresses her views on protecting the environment this way. “Seth and I plan to have children some day, and we want our children to be able to experience all the beauty of nature that we have been fortunate to experience. That is why Seth and I want to be involved in activities that will help preserve our environment.”

Birding By Boat

By Bill Sonnett and Bryon Ennis

This spring when beautiful and rare migrant birds are passing through lower Michigan on their way from Central and South America to the boreal forests of Canada, most birding enthusiasts will view this event from terra firma. That is, they will step out into their yards before the leaves have grown to full size, lift their binoculars to their eyes and look up into the trees or shrubs for feeding or resting passerines (perching birds). Some will drive to local “hot spots” or even birding Mecca’s to have a better chance of sighting more migrating species.

A few, such as Bill Sonnett, a retired naturalist from the Toledo Public Schools, and a GREAT member, will take to his trusty canoe in order to see a wider selection of birds than he would have from land. While Bill was actively working for the Toledo Public Schools, he spent much of his time with groups of Ohio students at Stoney Lake in southern Jackson County (Roger Tory Peterson, author of perhaps the best known field guide to birds, was also a naturalist for one summer at Camp Storer on Stoney Lake). Because Bill has both an extensive knowledge of birds and many Southern Michigan Rivers and Lakes, I asked him to share his knowledge with GREAT about the “whys” and “wherefores” and “whens” of birding by boat.

I first asked Bill what is to be gained by birding from a boat. Most important are the additional species of birds that are likely to be seen on or near the water. Many waterfowl uncommon to our area, pass through in early spring, and unless you are near water, you simply miss them. Loons for instance which no longer nest this far south in summer are quite commonly found on local inland lakes during spring where they stop to rest and feed on

their way north. Many seldom seen resident, nesting birds are just a lot easier to see from the water. Examples would be Marsh Wrens, Sedge Wrens, Least Bitterns, and the various species of Rails. These birds are most active during their nesting season and once located, one can return again and again to observe them until their parental duties are finished.

Another advantage of viewing birds from the water, according to Bill, is the relatively unobstructed view one has from a boat. Not only is the horizontal perspective to perching or feeding birds in shrubs more likely to be open, but trees along the banks of a river tend to lean inward as they seek the open space and sunlight over the water. Insects are found in great abundance hatching on these trees, so an observer on the water below has a better opportunity to view active birds feeding here. On larger bodies of water, birds such as martins and swallows skim over the surface catching emerging insects, and who isn’t fascinated to see the nests of Swallows and Phoebes on the girders as they float under bridges.



Scarlet Tanager

Still another advantage of viewing birds from a boat might be called the “stalking factor.” Although men have used boats for thousands of years, birds and other wildlife still seem to be less fearful and disturbed by us when we are floating quietly by. According to Bill, “If you remain quiet, you can often float up to within a few feet of birds, and they will continue their normal activity while you get to examine their markings and perhaps capture a rare

photograph. In the case of lake birding, one has only to pull up to a cattail patch and sit quietly for ten or fifteen minutes, and previously camouflaged birds will begin to move about, oblivious to your presence



Prothonotary Warbler

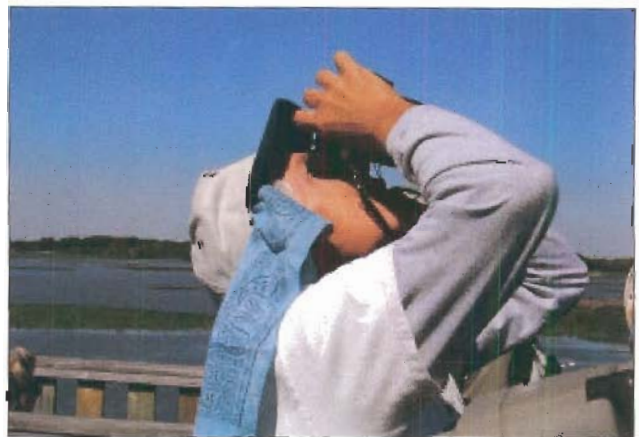
Even a casual observer of birds probably realizes that early morning and late afternoon or evening are the optimum times of day to observe bird activity, particularly feeding. But migrating birds are more likely to be seen feeding at any time of day since they tend to fly toward their nesting grounds at night. Migrating waterfowl can be seen moving through Michigan as early as late February. Smaller birds such as the warblers which winter in Central or South America must await the hatching of insects to consume as they move north. Some may be seen beginning in April, but the largest contingent of species will pass through, and a few species will establish nests in Jackson and surrounding counties around Mother's Day.

In order to see the greatest variety of bird species from a boat, one must employ the same principles as on land and select a variety of habitats. This would include lowlands or wetlands, where water moves through slowly. Vegetations there would include water surface plants, cattails or tall grasses, low woody shrubs and some water loving trees. Upland habitat would basically be higher and drier terrain where the water tends to move faster. Here you would find a combination of taller woody shrubs, mature trees and possibly agricultural land.

Fortunately the Grand River itself moves through a wide variety of habitats, even small vestiges of boreal

(northern) forests remaining from the recession of the last ice age. There are chains of lakes in the southern portion of Jackson County (Vandercook, Browns, and Williams Lake), and in the eastern portion of the county (Michigan Center, Round, Olcott, Little Wolf, and Big Wolf Lake) all formed by the waters of the Grand River. According to Bill there is excellent birding habitat west of Jackson along the Kalamazoo River, and one of the most productive riverine area for birding lies north of Jackson along the Grand River from Maple Grove to Eaton Rapids. Along this stretch of river Bill has documented Prothonotary Warblers, Acadian Flycatchers, Cerulean Warblers, Redstarts, Scarlet Tanagers and many more

Birding is not known as a particularly expensive activity, although one can spend a considerable amount of money on binoculars, spotting scopes, cameras and lenses. However in the case of birding by boat, Bill recommends low powered field glasses. Says Bill, "If your field glasses are too powerful, you may have some difficulty keeping them focused on your subject because of the movement of your boat. Bill also warns that the boat needs to be fairly stable, and you need to be low to the water. The reason is that your balance works best when your eyes are focused horizontally. However, when you raise your binoculars to your eyes and then tilt your head back to look up in a tree, your sense of balance is thrown off and you may find yourself pitched into the water.



Be sure your boat is stable before raising your binoculars up high.

Hugh Heward Ultimate Canoe Challenge to Travel from Detroit to Chicago and You Can Participate

In 2008 retired auto worker Charlie Parmalee paddled from Lake Huron to Lake Michigan in order to recreate a trip made in 1790 by British trader Hugh Heward and his companions. The trip was the culmination of years of research by paddle enthusiast and Michigan historian James Woodruff of Lansing, MI. Woodruff knew from Heward's journals the water route he and his men had followed, and wanted to know if such a course across lower Michigan was still possible today. The trip in 1790 for Heward and in 2008 for Charlie Parmalee navigated up the Huron River to a point near Hell, Michigan where there is a fairly short portage from the Huron River watershed, to the Grand River watershed. Once on the Grand River, Heward and Parmalee paddled all the way out to Lake Michigan.

That is where the journey ended for Parmalee, but not for Heward. He and his band of hearty men followed the Michigan, Indiana and Illinois shoreline all the way to the Chicago River and then went southward to reach the Mississippi. This year's Hugh Heward Ultimate Canoe Challenge will start on Belle Isle in the Detroit River and will end at the Chicago River in order to more thoroughly recreate the original 1790 trip.

Paddling enthusiasts are encouraged to join this year's HHUCC in their own boats for an hour or a day. The trip will start in Detroit April 17, 2009 and will end approximately three weeks and 475 miles later in Chicago. You may read more details of the modern and historic trips by logging on to <http://www.thetopologist.blogspot.com> or <http://www.krugercanoes.blogspot.com/>



Charlie Parmalee rests among the equipment used for the 2008 Hugh Heward Challenge.

Upper Grand River Watershed Adopt A-Stream Program

Volunteer Training	Collection Day	Bug I.D. Night
Saturday, April 25th 1:30-4:30 pm	Saturday, May 2nd 9:00 am-1:00 pm	Tuesday, May 5th 5:30-8:30 pm
MacCready Reserve 9243 Skiff Lake Rd. Liberty Township	Meet at the Dahlem Center 7117 S. Jackson Rd.	Jackson Community College, McDevitt Hall

Contact Cecilia Govrik at 517-784-2800 Ext. 208 or cecilia.govrik@macd.org to sign up as a volunteer. Watch for the Adopt A-Stream newsletter coming soon! Visit www.theugrip.org under "Upcoming Events" for more information as it becomes available.

***Citizen Patriot* Articles Express Concerns Regarding Water Bottler's Pumping Station**

by Bryon Ennis

Late in 2008, two articles appeared in the Jackson Citizen Patriot which dealt with the Absopure pumping station in Columbia Township. One, written after the Michigan Water Protection Law was passed questioned whether Absopure was abiding by the new law which limits the quantity of Michigan ground water shipped outside of the Great Lakes Basin. The second article, actually an opinion page editorial, asked whether Absopure should pay some sort of royalty fee for selling Michigan ground water.

Where is the Water Going?

The first recent CitPat article appeared on December 8, 2008, under the heading "Where is the water going?" This question was not adequately answered in the subsequent article since only Absopure knows where its product is shipped after it is bottled. According to the article's author, Keith Roberts, Absopure did not respond to his inquiries. What we know is that a number of tanker trucks transport water from the Columbia Township pumping station, to a bottling plant in Plymouth MI. From there the trail of the water grows murky.

The Michigan Department of Environmental Quality provides fairly convincing data to answer an underlying question from this same article, "Will the water withdrawals by Absopure affect other users of groundwater in the area?" According to Richard Overmyer, manager of the noncommunity drinking water unit of the MDEQ, the total pumping capacity of Absopure's wells is 845 gallons per minute, while the production capacity of the aquifer is 6,000 gpm., so there is little danger of the aquifer being depleted enough to affect other users. What remains unclear is, "How large is this aquifer?" and "What other large-quantity water users tap into it?" Does Jackson City? Does Blackman Township? Does Quanex? Do large irrigated farms?

Why Isn't Bottler Paying for Water?

The question raised by the December 26, 2008, editorial was titled, "Why isn't bottler paying for water?" Considering the product and the price we see in both major grocers and convenience stores, we might be inclined to initially agree with the sentiments of the editorial. But upon further consideration, we may be more willing to see the perspective of the bottler.

View From Two Sides

We all know that royalty fees are paid to both individuals who own land, and to states in which oil, gas, and other minerals are pumped or mined. So the reasoning goes, why not charge a royalty fee to those who withdraw and sell water. In fact, several Canadian provinces are lately moving in that direction. But an important difference is that oil, gas, and other minerals are permanently depleted as we pump or mine them, whereas water is a renewable resource. As long as withdrawals are less than the rate at which aquifers can be replenished the supply should be endless.

Another reason we tend to feel water bottlers should pay a royalty fee is that the product needs little addition or alteration from well head to consumer, so bottlers can afford to pay a fee. In reality the cost of pumping, trucking, purity treatments and bottling water as it is are nearly as high as the costs of other flavored drinks. The cost of flavoring in other drinks is insignificant, and if we are not going to ask that a royalty fee be paid for the water in Coke for instance, or in Latex paint for that matter, how can we justify a fee on water for . . . water?

Yet another reason the public might expect a royalty fee for bottled water is the huge growth in the popularity and price of this product in the last decade. Consider however that Absopure has been in business in Michigan since 1908, paying taxes as established by the state legislature and local municipalities for a century, and the Columbia Township pumping station has been there for decades with little public demand for pumping royalties. One might say they are "grandfathered in" by now. How might we react if we have owned the same home for say thirty years, to be told we must now pay an identical amount of real estate tax as the home right next door to us which has recently sold for a hundred thousand dollars more than we paid for our home?

Current Groundwater Law

Groundwater rights in Michigan are currently governed by the "Law of reasonable use" which means, we have the right to withdraw a reasonable amount of water from the ground as long as it does not affect others who withdraw nearby. Based on this law, Absopure is

Water Bottler, Continued on page 8

GREAT Welcomes These New Members

Rod & Jackie Monasmith
Carolyn Prebble
Karen Coffman
Richard Crawley
Diane Potter
Richard & Kris Luciw
Tom Brandau and Sharon Clark
Paul Rentschler
Pat Searing

Volunteers Needed for Earth Day Celebration

Sunday, April 19
Cascades Lagoons 12:00-4:00

Many ways to assist GREAT
Help participants fill out Waivers
Help participants into Life Vests
Help participants get into boats

or

Paddle your own kayak or canoe while you
keep an eye on novice paddlers

Call 517-740-3133

Three Goals, Continued from page 2

laid out when natural meanders of the Grand River still determined its course. However when the river was straightened and channelized, parts of our parcel ended up east of the river attached to what is now State of Michigan property and small pieces of state property ended up west of the river attached to our parcel. The process of legally exchanging these pieces of land has been extremely slow and laborious. Hopefully, this process will be completed in the next few months, and an exciting phase of investigation and possibilities can begin.

GREAT Board Members

Jim Seitz

President

Kathy Kulchinski

Rivermaster

Jeff Grund

Recording Secretary

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Jonathan Hoover

Ken Dodge

Don Nelson

Kenny Price

DeAnn Monroe

Bryon Ennis

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Carol Scott

Treasurer

Nancy Lapinski

Membership Secretary

Betty Desbiens

Historian

Louise Hefka

Publicity

The GREAT Newsletter editor is Bryon Ennis.
bryon_ennis@sbcglobal.net

14th Annual Quietwater Symposium Celebrates Motorless Boating

- Beautiful wood kayaks and canoes
- Widely known speakers
- Many active environmental groups
- Helpful Demonstrations
- Useful new equipment to examine

Saturday, March 7, 9:00 AM to 6:00 PM

At the MSU Livestock Pavilion

Farm Lane South of Mt. Hope Rd

Adults \$8.00 under 12 Free

Water Bottler, Continued from page 7

operating within its rights. None of us individually pays for ground water that we pump. Michigan may move in the direction of Canadian provinces and declare water to be a community held resource that we must all pay for according to how much we use. Or, if we practice wise use of our water resources, we may find that our current use laws prove sufficient for many years.