

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 26 Number 3

September 2016



Since 2009 Jr. ROTC members make up a large percentage of our volunteers on cleanup day. Thank you to the young men and women there.



Just a portion on the many tons of garbage taken from our beautiful Grand River.



You're never too young to start caring for your environment.

MARK THE DATE

IN YOUR CALENDAR

Our annual
Grand River Cleanup
Saturday, Sept. 10, 2016

We will meet at the CMS Energy Band Shell in downtown Jackson at 9:00 in the morning.

Cleanup assignments can be on land or in the river. Dress should be old jeans and shoes that can be worn in the river. You should also bring a hat, mosquito repellent and sun screen.

Lunch will be provided at the Band Shell at 1:00 p.m. thanks to the generous donations from many of our local restaurants.

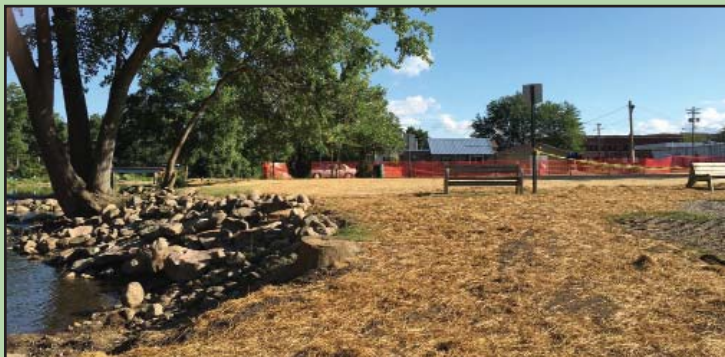
In case of questionable weather, check for cancellations at www.great-mi.org or call (517) 416-4234.

If you would like to be a Trip Leader, help serve food or any other advanced questions on this year's Grand River Cleanup, please contact Jack L. Ripstra at jlrpstra@aol.com or by calling (517) 740-5680.

Last paddle of the year held on October 9, 2016

Dams being removed

The rapids coming back to Eaton Rapids



Dam removal included a much improved canoe and kayak access.



One dam removed in back of Quality Dairy, so some rapids are back in town!



PHOTOS BY: Mary Lenardson

Kay Brown and Dan Kaser fill 2 of the 3 board vacancies

Kay Brown has been kayaking with GREAT for several years and has enjoyed herself each trip. She wanted to 'give back' and has become very active in the organization.

Kay is from Clare, MI and has two grown daughters.

She is self-employed, and owns a home for the aged.

Kay likes anything outdoors. Her ideal retirement home would be a tree house on Lake Michigan! Glad to have you with us Kay!



Kay Brown

Dan Kaser lives in Summit Township. He is married to his wonderful wife and has three children.

He is a retired landscape contractor. He spends his time remodeling his new house, target shooting and hunting with his dog. He also loves to read mysteries.

Dan feels that we need to take care of the rivers in our area and by getting people on our rivers, we will get them enthused to care about them and our watershed. Glad to have you aboard Dan!



Dan Kaser

GREAT 2016 Sponsors

Overall Sponsors

Barbara Anderson
Bo-Kay Studio of Photography & Fine Art
Kay Brown
Betty Desbiens
William Dunphy
Byron & Amy Ennis
Raymond & Susan Fix
John & Sue Francey
Jim & Mary Geisman
Great Lakes Paddlers (GLP)
Thomson Accounting, Jeff Grund Co Workers
Dr. John Hand
Susan Harper
Joe & Lisa Hart
Steve Hoekman
Jon Hoover
Kelli Hoover (City of Jackson Recreation)
Jon Hoyle
James Justin
Krupa's Boat Mart
Kathy & Mike Kulchinski (Quiet Water Sports)
Kurt LaFrance
Tim Laning
MBTM LTD (Jack Lapinski)
Mary Lenardson
Don and Tracy Lynd
Methods & Equipment Associates (John Minar)
Michigan Automotive Compressor, Inc.
Rod & Jackie Monasmith

Don Nelson
Steve Rick (Marcoux Allen)
John & Nancy Ocwieja
Barbara O'Kelly
Jack L. Ripstra
James & Pamela Rossman
Kurt and Lisa Rudolph
Jim and Jan Seitz
Susan Sylvester
Trudell Auto (Mike Trudell)
Benjamin Ward
Phil & Pat Willis (Willis & Jurasek, PC CPAs)

Clean-Up Sponsors

Camp Storer (YMCA)
Dahlem Nature Center
Emmons Service Inc.
Fazolis Granger
Hinkley Bakery
Golden Knights Cadets (Jr ROTC)
Jackson Coffee Co.
Jackson Area Transportation Authority
Jackson County Conservation District
Lester Brothers
Libra Industries
Little Caesars Pizza
Los Tres Amigos
Marino's Pizza
Papa John Pizza
Upper Grand River Watershed Alliance
Virginia Coney Island

Jackson area bridges you may have seen



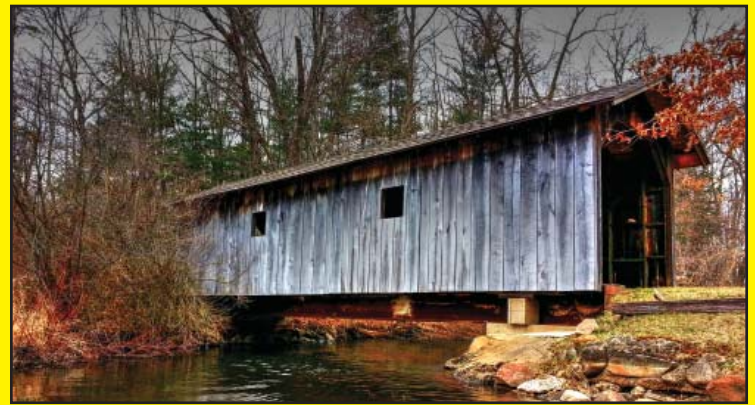
Walking over the Grand River near the Downtown Amphitheater where Washington Street used to cross



The Rail Road Bridge near the Toy House



The Louise Glick Bridge over the Grand River



The only covered bridge on the Grand River north of Jefferson Road only visible from the river



The 1918 Railroad Bridge over the Grand River running alongside the Brooklyn Highway



The E. Morrel Bridge over the Grand River

PHOTOS BY: Kenny Price

“No Shows” can be a problem

GREAT has experienced, in the past, an increase of those who reserve canoes and kayaks for our public paddle events, but then do not appear on the date to use the boats set aside for them. When making boat reservations, we request to all, if they are not coming to let us know as soon as possible, anytime right up to the hour of the event. This is because we often have a waiting list of people to use our limited supply of canoes and kayaks, who we will contact accordingly. Please be responsible. Thanks!

Weather forced July paddle to relocate

The July GREAT paddle was scheduled for July 17 on the River Raisin from Sharon Hollow to the Manchester dam. The intrepid trip leader, Don Nelson, kept a close eye on the river, as well as the sky, in the weeks leading up to the paddle. Unfortunately water levels were low and not enough rain came to provide enough water to float our boats. Since the June paddle had also been cancelled due to low water, the decision was made to move the July paddle to Lime Lake, to give our membership and guests a chance to get out in their boats despite the low water levels around the region.

On the 17th, 25 adults showed up for the paddle on South Lime Lake. GREAT President Kenny Price gave a short history of the lake (partially man made by mining marl for cement) and pointed out the old railroad bed, now the Falling Waters Trail, separates South Lime Lake from North Lime Lake. He then led a group of paddlers around the lake to point out old remnants of the mining activity.

Further around the lake a handful of paddlers portaged their boats a few dozen yards to brave the chilly waters of spring-red peppermint creek. A few paddlers harvested some of the pep-

permint growing along to creek to use for later. From there, boats were walked down the creek to Third Lake.

Third Lake is a relatively large lake with no direct access for boats or land vehicles, so the GREAT paddlers had the lake to themselves aside from a fisherman who hiked in with his pole. Among the lily pads were a group of swans who greeted the paddlers.

Across from Peppermint Creek is access via a small waterway to Fourth Lake. A couple paddles pushed through the overgrowth into Fourth Lake, which is very shallow, and also the headwaters of Sandstone Creek (which flows into our namesake Grand River). It appears very few people access Fourth Lake, and it is very wild.

As the group finished paddling around Third Lake, the wind picked up, so it was quite a bit of work to paddle back to Peppermint Creek. By the time the group returned to South Lime Lake, several power boats were touring the lake at high speed towing rafts or other devices. Coupled with the wind picking up, this brought up a lot of waves and wake in the lake, making for a challenging, but enjoyable, paddle back to the park.

August paddle successful on the Kalamazoo

After the dry summer, we worried that the August GREAT paddle would have trouble with low water, and set up a backup plan to paddle a local lake instead. However, Mother Nature cooperated with us in August and provided plenty of rain to get the local rivers flowing. The August paddle was scheduled for the South Branch of the Kalamazoo River from Goose Lake Road to the Twin Pines Campground.

GREAT board members pre-paddled the route on Monday, August 15. It rained nearly the entire three hours, but that didn't take anything away from this beautiful stretch of river. This route is used by many people who rent boats from the Twin Pine campground, so it is kept fairly clear, but we did stop a few times to cut trees out the way. We also hit a few low spots and scraped bottom with our kayaks. However, later that night much of Southern Michigan got torrential rain, and the Grand River had



a flood warning issued. It rained again on Friday and Saturday, and this brought the river level up to a more comfortable paddling depth.

Sunday brought the main event, with a number of GREAT members and guests braving the gravel back roads to join

us. The weather threatened with a 50% chance of rain. We started a little late after waiting for a busload of paddlers from the campground to put in. However, the great stretch of river was worth it, as there are only a couple houses (and a footbridge) at the beginning of this route, followed by miles of undeveloped shore.

Unfortunately, the heavy weather during the week brought down a large tree that blocked the entire width of the river. However, a few paddlers helped everyone over and kept them on their way. Even with this obstacle, the group made GREAT time, coming in at a little under two hours on the river. In the end, the weather was perfect, with temperatures in the low 70s, a light breeze, and very little rain.

After taking out at the campground, around fifteen of the group met at Slice of Spice in Spring Arbor to enjoy beverages and tasty pizza.

Krupa's Boat Mart now selling kayaks

By Jim Seitz

After two long time local businesses who sold kayaks recently closed their doors, Krupa's Boat Mart last October opened a new section selling four quality kayak brands and many accessories. Krupa's who is celebrating their 60th anniversary, and is one the largest US retailers of pontoon boats sales has put long time employee, John Tornga in charge of their paddle boat product line in their new Paddle Boat Center, the smaller building located on the left as you enter their main gate at 3909 Francis Street in Summit Township, near Vandercook Lake.

Kayak brands are Hurricane, Native, Liquid Logic, and Elie of which they carry an inventory of about 100 such boats made up of touring, fishing, tandem, and ocean styles of a variety of lengths and lay-up materials within a wide price range. Both sit-in and sit-on-top kayaks are sold. Aqua Bound and O'Brien kayak paddles, Stohlquest and O'Brien PFD's (Personal Floatation Devices) are stocked. Thule boat carriers are sold along with Boonodox's t-bone truck bed extenders, Geeko brand waterproof phone cases, and some paddle clothes. Krupa's also sells water carpets (floating mats supporting several people) and the O'Brien, Pelican, and California brands of growing popular stand up paddle boards.

John says "Most people who come in have no idea of what type of kayak is best for them. We advise them ac-



ordingly, but a real advantage we offer is they have the opportunity to first test prospective boats on Sharp Lake located behind our store, before making a purchase'.

In spite of Krupa's quiet entry into the local market, the response has been strong with sales ranging from the young to retirees. Some is the result of powerboat customers noticing Krupa's attractive kayaks. Krupa's is a GREAT sponsor member. In 2009, Krupa's was the host of the put-in for GREAT's 2011 October public paddle starting on Sharp Lake and going to the East High Street Bridge near US 127.

GREAT breaking ground on storage building construction

Construction of GREAT's metal pole barn for equipment storage is expected to start this month. GREAT has accepted bids from of \$17,392.61 from Spring Arbor Lumber for materials and a construction bid of \$7,200 from R. A. Schoch Builders of Horton. Last summer GREAT spent \$9,441 on grading and fill for the building pad and a long driveway to begin the project. Funds received include a \$10,000 from a Jackson Community Foundation grant and to date \$15,290 from our member fund raising drive. With another \$2,559 from GREAT's savings, we are still around \$6,650 short to complete the project. Until those funds are received, we will delay the concrete floor and apron. Donations may be sent to: GREAT, PO Box 223, Jackson, MI 49204 or at GREAT's web site, <http://great-mi.org/Membership2.htm> with PayPal or credit card.



Michigan's newest state park opens in Jackson County

Watkins Lake State Park and County Preserve, Michigan's 103rd state park, officially opened in June of this year. The Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) recently purchased 717 acres of land in Norvell Township. Combined with 405 acres of adjacent land owned by the Washtenaw County Parks and Recreation Commission in Manchester Township, the property totals 1,122 acres. The property is the first state park to be jointly managed with a county recreation agency. The park's planned recreational offerings include hiking, bird watching, upland hunting, mountain biking, and other activities.

The park, located about 5 miles east of Brooklyn, features beautiful rolling land covered in a mixture of open meadow, mixed hardwoods, low wetland areas and open water. Watkins Lake, a 50 acre natural lake located along Arnold Road, is its most prominent feature. The lake holds large numbers of waterfowl during the spring and summer migrations making it a great destination for watchable wildlife, and it's one of Michigan's best inland lakes to observe canvasback ducks.

"It is very rare that there's an opportunity to increase the public land portfolio in southern Michigan," said DNR Park and Recreation Chief Ron Olson. "The DNR places a priority on providing additional opportunities for outdoor and history-based recreation and protecting valuable natural resources and wildlife habitat, especially in this part of the state. We believe that Watkins Lake State Park and County Preserve will be popular with outdoor enthusiasts and an excellent waterfowl refuge and birding destination."

The property includes a 4.5-mile former rail corridor that traverses the property from east to west. The trail will link state and county parcels and has the potential to be developed into a non-motorized multi-use trail, well-suited for hikers, mountain bikers and equestrians. There also is the strong possibility of expanding the trail to connect the villages of Manchester and Brooklyn.

The park is rich in history, too. Royal and Sally Carpenter Watkins, who first farmed the land, played a key role in the Underground Railroad. Their well-documented history provides an interesting opportunity for historical interpretation at the site as well.



Watkins Lake Park and County Preserve

The park is now open to the public but with limited parking. The parking area is located on Arnold Rd., between Fay Lake Rd and Horning Rd – just north of the lake where the road takes a 90 degree turn to the west. A recreation passport is required.

"Pending the adoption of a management plan, Watkins Lake will become a seasonal waterfowl refuge," said Olson. DNR Park Supervisor, Jim O'Brien, says "We hope to start our Management Plan in October, which will then take about a year. Our management planning will include stakeholder and public input sessions and surveys."

When asked about paddling opportunities on Watkins Lake, O'Brien said "Currently there is nothing that states canoeing or kayaking is unauthorized, however, it is our long-term goal to manage Watkins Lake as a Waterfowl Refuge, which could lead to canoe/kayak restrictions on Watkins Lake during the peak Fall and Spring migration time period. For the time being, I would suggest that if you're planning a paddle trip to the lake then avoid the peak migratory time period and stay up to date with [the DNR's] long-term vision for the property, particularly Watkins Lake. We hope to have more guidance regarding recreational uses on Watkins Lake soon."

The DNR is encouraging people who are enthused about this new state park to contact Jim O'Brien at 517-467-7401 to assist in forming a "friends" group for the park. Or visit Michigan.gov/stateparks for more information.



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. at the Summit Township Hall, 2121 Ferguson Road (across from Knights Restaurant, near the Intersection of South Jackson and Horton Roads).

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

GREAT Board

Kenny Price, President

Kurt LaFrance, Vice President

Pam Brown, Secretary

Jack Ripstra, Treasurer

Don Nelson, Rivermaster

John Minar, Director

Jon Hoyle, Director

Mary Lenardson, Director

Deb Snell, Director

Kay Brown, Director

Dan Kaser, Director

Special Assignments:

Louise Hefka, Publicity

Jeff Grund, Tax Statements

Barb Anderson, Historian

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

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