

GREAT 2018 Annual Report

The GREAT board was happy once again to have vigorously pursued its mission by means of diverse activities throughout the 2018 calendar year. The weather once again played havoc with our schedule and river cleaning, but as usual the G.R.E.A.T.'s board made the most of it and created a workable plan out of disaster.

The GREAT paddling year got off to a bad start with the April trip being only from Loomis Rd. to Vandercook Lake due to weather. Everyone arrived safe at Vandercook Lake, and some even got to see Ospreys flying around the river and their nest in the radio tower on Hauge Road. Earth day was again a huge success, with many people riding our canoes and kayaks for the first time. Seeing the smiles on so many faces made our hearts smile and boosted our spirits to continue. The weather gave us challenges in May, June, and July, so we changed our schedule to make use of the weather. Our May change found us paddling on the River Raisin and June found us paddling on the Kalamazoo River. In July we went back to the Grand River and paddled from the Consumers band shell in downtown Jackson to R.A. Green Park. In October, we got to see the fall colors going from Tompkins to Onondaga. At every event we had, most people said "Thank You" for all the hard work the Board and other volunteers do to make great paddle trips.

The GREAT Annual Cleanup of 2018 was also a great success. Tons of brave people came out to clean the Grand River from Michigan Center downstream to the convergence of the Portage River with the Grand River. GREAT used canoes from GREAT and the YMCA Camp Storer to allow us to have a lot of canoes in the cleanup. Once again, the number of cleanup volunteers were about half JROTC cadets and half civilians. Little Caesars of Jackson, Papa John's Pizza, Marino's Pizza, Fazolis, Dawn Foods, and Jackson Coney Island provided us with food to feed all our volunteers. The hope is that one year we will not need to clean up the river, but if it needs cleaning, GREAT and its many fantastic volunteers will be there to clean it up.

For August, we decided to not have a paddling trip, but to have a paddling Clinic instead. Kat Vanderbosch Kulchinski taught people how not to be afraid if they fall out of their boat on the water. She showed them how to safely get back in their kayak. Krupa's Boat Mart brought kayaks to test and talked to people how to choose a P.F.D and paddles. The Jackson County Conservation District was there to talk about invasive species and how to prevent the spread of invasives from one body of water to another. The U.S. Coast Guard Aux. was on hand to discuss safe boating practices. Channel 6 News WLNS-TV covered the event, with a news report at 6 and 11.

Board member Don Nelson and ex board president Jim Seitz have been working with Drainage Commissioner Geoff Snyder and Aquatic/Wetland Ecologist & Arborist Paul Rentschler to develop a Grand River Water Trail. Working also with the DNR and Lower and Middle Grand River Watershed representatives, they have come a long way to make the trail usable to the public. In December 2018, Governor Snyder designated the Upper and Middle Grand River an official public use trail, among the first water trails to receive this status.

The year was a great year for G.R.E.A.T and all the great people and board!

Respectfully Submitted, Kenny Price – Board President