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The GREAT Board will meet next on September 12, 2007 7:00 p.m. at the Summit Township Municipal Building, 2121 Ferguson Road. Meetings are open and visitors are welcome. If you would like to have an item placed on the agenda, please notify Jim Seitz at 787-7492.

GREAT,
P.O. Box 223
Jackson MI 49204
517-416-4234

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

GREAT welcomes NEW MEMBERS:

Alexis Anderson
Richard Adkins
Joie Bennett
Bill Cook
Chip & Emily Curry Family
Martin Griffin
Ken Johns
Dennis McGeen
Maria Maldonado
Don & Renee Nelson
Kenny Price

Tom Price
Andrea Ralya
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GREAT Recognizes these sponsors who have supported the organization with donations of \$100 or more:

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GREAT’s fiscal year runs from January 1 through December 31. Your dues is a tax-deductable contribution as are other donations to GREAT. Call 517-416-4234 to leave a message.

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GREAT Membership

___Individual \$15.00

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P.O. Box 223
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G.R.E.A.T.

Grand River Environmental Action Team

P.O. Box 223, Jackson, Michigan 49204
www.great-mi.org 517-416-4234 Volume 17 Number 3 Fall 2007



Annual River Clean-up Will Be On the Grand River After All

What to Expect at a River Clean-up

We try to remove as much trash as we can while still being safe. Never put yourself in danger to retrieve a piece of debris. Sometimes trash items will be too large for one or even two workers to handle. This is OK; we are not always able to remove every piece of trash from the river.

If you are walking--Much of the trash that needs to be removed will be found near or along the banks of the river. Wear old but substantial shoes that can get muddy. Long pants will protect you better than shorts from vegetation scratches. GREAT will issue gloves if you want them. Be prepared to carry a plastic bag for garbage. If you discover a large item, it will have to be carried up from the river bank to a location where garbage crews can carry it away.

If you are wading--GREAT has a number of pairs of waders. We should be able to fit most adult wading workers. Be very cautious of deep holes. If you cannot see the bottom of the river don't step. Be prepared to carry a plastic garbage bag for trash or you may be working with a boat team to gather trash.

If you are floating--Kayaks are not suitable for river clean-ups as they can't hold much trash. GREAT will have several canoes on the river, but if you have a rowboat we could use, that may serve us well. You may be with one partner, but three in a boat is too many. Wear old tennis shoes or running shoes. You will probably have to step out of the boat at some point.

What: Annual Grand River Clean-up

When: 10:00-2:00 Saturday September 15

Where: Consumer's Energy Building, Downtown Jackson

Who: GREAT members and other volunteers



After many months of planning for the GREAT annual river clean-up to be on the Portage River, it was determined that there simply was not enough work there to warrant a full-scale project (see Portage

River article on page six of this issue). As soon as this decision was made, members of the GREAT board went into action switching the venue of the full-scale clean-up back to the City of Jackson and the Grand River. In addition, GREAT will assist residents of Indian Village Mobile Home Park in a clean-up of their river banks. GREAT hopes that many of our new members will help the Grand "live up to its name."

Some “GREAT” Facts!

A midyear review of where GREAT stands, is very exciting to say the least.

Last year, we finished in December with around 70 memberships. In sharp contrast, we now (July 1st) have 107 memberships, which is a very impressive 50 % increase.

While GREAT membership has risen, participation at GREAT events has reached record levels. Twice we have set records for the number of paddlers on the monthly Sunday canoe/kayak trips, the most recent being the July trip which put 65 people in canoes and kayaks paddling from Draper Road to Vandercook Lake Park. About half of the participants on our trips are non-members, which fits with GREAT’s mission to “...*promote, through activities and educational programs, public awareness for the need to protect and preserve the Grand River, including its watershed and surrounding wetlands in Jackson County, Michigan*”. Many non-members on these trips eventually end up joining GREAT.

This year for the first time, the GREAT Board offered in the addition to the traditional \$15 individual membership, \$25 family and \$100 sponsor memberships, which have both been well received. Therefore, GREAT revenues have significantly increased. More revenues will be needed as the GREAT Board develops plans to create a permanent storage facility for GREAT’s equipment and possible educational and facility projects on our Grand River land north of Jackson.

Four new GREAT board members this year (Rick Berry, Jon Hoover, Kathy Kulchinski, and Don Nelson), have revitalized the GREAT board with new enthusiasm, energy, and ideas. Presently, the board is investigating several new initiatives, which if implemented will require an increased commitment of financial and people resources. We will need more help from both our member and the community.

With this momentum behind us, we hope to see you at our annual river clean-up (downtown Jackson CMS Amphitheater, September 15th) to help create a better environment and another “GREAT” fact!

Jim Seitz
President, GREAT

From the Dahlem Newsletter:

Dahlem to Begin Watershed Monitoring Programs

Currently the Upper Grand River Watershed does not have a Volunteer stream Monitoring system in place to assess the overall health of the watershed. Well . . . that is about to change!! The Dahlem Conservancy, in conjunction with the Jackson County Conservation District’s Upper Grand River Implementation Project(UGRIP) is going to take the lead in establishing a volunteer stream monitoring system beginning in the fall of 2007. This initiative is going to consist of two projects: the The School Outreach Monitoring Program and The Adult Volunteer Monitoring Program. For more information on either program call Dahlem at 782-3453.

Tell us your opinion: Why is GREAT Setting Participation Marks This Year?

After setting new participation marks for our April and May outings, a record sixty-five paddlers joined our July float from Draper Road to Vandercook Lake. There are a number of possible explanations for this dramatic rise in GREAT activities, but we aren’t sure which are most plausible.

Is the price of gas keeping folks in Jackson? Our improved website? Perfect weather? Our new permanent phone number? A renewed concern for the environment? A temporary canoe and kayak fad? Our activities brochure? Or something else? We thought you might help us answer this question. If you would like to respond, log onto our website at www.great-mi.org. and blog us, or email the editor, bryon_ennis@sbcglobal.net, or drop us a note at GREAT, PO Box 223, Jackson, MI 49204.



Local Paddling Instructor Sees Jackson County as Shangra La

By Bruce Clevenger

Ninety-five percent of the students who come to our Quiet World Sports kayak classes are from outside Jackson County with most being from the Detroit area. As a life long resident of the area, I grew up here sort of feeling like my home area was a swampy region with a few decent lakes to water ski on. But when I became a paddler I quickly realized those lakes I thought were “cool” were actually over-crowded and polluted. Like most paddlers, I began to seek the quieter waters and that meant going into creeks and streams in the wetlands that I had formerly disdained as “swamps”. Not only was the wildlife active and vibrant, but I became aware where the Jackson area waters gather and where it all ends up. Like many other area paddlers I found “stashes” of navigable streams and wetlands that could provide 1-2 hour escapes from the noisy and busy world. Todd Zeller became a friend and resource for more places to try out in the canoe and kayak, and soon I had “stashes” enough to offer a fine choice to friends and clients to choose from for little tours.

I’ve now paddled all over the US, but can honestly say some of my best hours on the water have been right here in “swampy” old Jackson. I take real pride in teaching a class at Vandercook Lake, but it’s when we slip up the Grand at the southeast corner of the lake and make those, first two sharp bends that I listen

for the inevitable “Wow! This is simply beautiful back in here!” All motor sounds from Vandercook lake die off and it’s just us, the herons, cranes and muskrats. Oh, and some monster carp that love to slap themselves on my students’ kayaks which causes some shrieks and hoots. My clients from Detroit or Ann Arbor are simply smitten with the area whether it’s Lime Lakes or the Kalamazoo River into Albion. Almost all of them thought they had to drive four hours north to find paddling and solitude like this. Even driving my clients to the launch sites I see them begin to relax and notice the rolling, green lands and some of the attractive homes and properties. Many say their preconceived notion of Jackson was “the prison city” or a place where there always seemed to be another factory closing. So it’s gratifying to see how pleased and surprised they are once they slow down and visit the region.

Now, the challenge will be to keep these “stashes” pristine and free from harmful development. It’s only been by paddling and exploring the wetlands that I became aware of and appreciated Wetlands legislation, but also now I see the abuses that take place. Jackson County is certainly challenged in many ways economically, but over the long haul I feel that the scenic beauty of the region is what will draw people to live here. Not more shopping malls and concrete.

2007 GREAT Activities

September 15, Saturday

Annual River Clean-up

Grand River at Consumers Energy Building

October 21, Sunday

Paddle Outing

With Great Lakes Paddlers Club

Huron River, Washtenaw County

Bring your own bag lunch

11:00 am Sunday., meet at

Jackson Crossing near Shell Station

Put-in, 12:00 at Hudson Mills Metropark

(Washtenaw County)

Stop for picnic lunch during paddle.

Take-out: Dexter-Huron Metropark

All participants will need to purchase a Metropark day pass for \$4.



GREAT phone number

517-416-4234

Portage River Clean-up

On July 29 fifteen brave paddlers set out to remove trash from the Portage River/Drain. They had been told it would be a leisurely, clear paddle during which they could scoop up debris from the river and nearby banks. They might even have a chance to see a variety of birds, reptiles and mammals. Leaders of the effort had warned participants there would likely be serious trash areas near bridges at Dunn, Wooster and Hawkins Roads. Most of the trip on the Portage confirmed the advanced information given by the leaders, but midway between Dunn and Wooster Roads, they encountered several deadfalls which had to be negotiated in order to continue. Clean-up leader Rick Berry commended all the participants, many from Ingham County, for their persistence and good spirits. Due to the low water levels, much more trash was visible and accessible than had been expected. The result of this condition was both fortunate and unfortunate, however the evidence of human disregard for the river can be seen below.



Unfortunately, the most serious problem that plagues the Portage is heavy siltation from decades of agricultural run-off. This problem is now being addressed in incremental steps. For example, Jackson Audubon, as stewards of Haehnle Sanctuary along the Portage, has removed and old drainage tiles which had carried water, soil, and fertilizer run-off to the Portage. This land is being allowed to return to its natural state.

Above right, paddlers help each other over a blow-down. Right, Blair Spence hefts a large trash can. Below, Peter Vincent displays a Cit Pat newspaper box retrieved from the Portage.

Photos by Cecelia Govrik



Two More New Trustees Bring GREAT Board to Ten



Don Nelson says his early experience camping with his father and two brothers awakened an initial appreciation for the out-of-doors. His father’s active participation in Trout Unlimited, Don believes, was instructive to his own understanding of the

stewardship of our lands and waters. Further activity in an outdoors/environmental club while living in New Jersey for part of his career with Raytheon Engineering sustained his interest in hiking and canoeing.

Don had always loved being on the water, and his Dad’s old Grumman canoe still conjures many wonderful memories from his youth. But it took a trip to Sweden in the summer of 2006 where he first paddled a kayak to stir a strong new desire to be on the water.

Once Don had his kayak he was eager to explore the many rivers and streams in Jackson and Hillsdale counties. This naturally drew him to GREAT where he has been on every outing this year. Coincidentally he had developed an acquaintance with new board member Kathy Kulchinski during his 2006 kayak class. Kathy convinced Don that his areas of expertise and his balanced commitment to environmental concerns would be valuable to GREAT. Don officially joined the board at the July meeting.

As an Information Technology expert for the City of Jackson, Don has valuable knowledge and important connections to Jackson County’s largest municipal government. These personal resources have already benefited GREAT as Don was able to expedite essential paperwork and to secure necessary clearance for our September 2007 river clean-up which will take place on the Grand River in Jackson.



Growing up in Vandercook Lake, Kathy Kulchinski spent many enjoyable hours paddling, fishing and swimming on that body of water. It was only a matter of time before she gravitated toward

an organization like GREAT which mixes paddling activities and a concern for the environment. And, once Kathy became a member, it was not long before she was alerting the GREAT board to unsightly deposits of trash along the banks of the Grand River that she thought we should be doing something about. So strong were her feelings for the Grand, that she was willing to join the board and see to it that trash disposal along the river was stopped.

Perhaps Kathy would have taken these measures sooner, but she is just reaching the stage in her life when her two children and two step children are demanding less of her time. However she still works as a traveling dental hygienist mainly serving schools throughout Michigan.

Besides her ability to perform tasks more regularly associated with women, such as writing by-laws, organizing events and fund raisers, she also says confidently, “I can back up a trailer too.” Though readers may wonder what this skill has to do with serving on the GREAT board, one has only to attend a paddle outing and witness two board members pulling up with GREAT’s big blue boat trailers to realize backing a trailer is almost a prerequisite skill for board membership.

Besides backing a trailer, Kathy adds a much needed dimension of service and a valuable perspective to the GREAT board. We welcome her and look forward to working beside her.

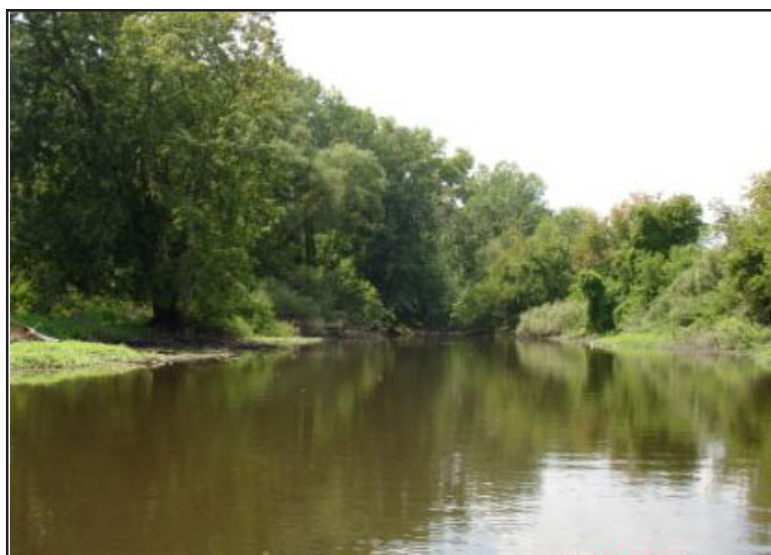


Ecological Partners

Jackson County Conservation District

Under the auspices of the Jackson County Conservation District, Cecilia Govrik, head the Upper Grand River Watershed Project, or UGRIP. Foremost on Cecilia's agenda is fulfilling the tasks set forth in the Department of Environmental Quality's (DEQ) 319 Grant. Task #2 of the UGRIP grant is perhaps the most significant for GREAT and the other organizations on this page. Task #2 states that "...information/education/public participation programs" be carried out. In order to accomplish task #2 and the other six tasks in the project requires Cecilia to be a coordinator, leader (maybe even a cheerleader), a dispenser of practical information, a mentor, and a first-rate bookkeeper (to verify what has and has not been accomplished according to the UGRIP plan).

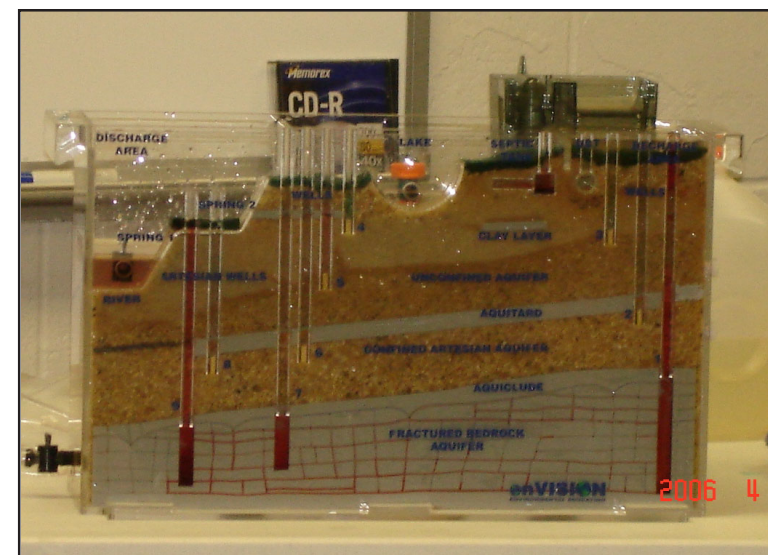
A typical stretch of the Portage River on which the UGRIP plan is focused.



Promote Water Education

Michigan Groundwater Stewardship Plan

A scale model demonstrates how surface water filters through various strata of soil into groundwater.



While Dahlem will oversee water quality tests on local streams, and GREAT will expose people to the Grand River and its tributaries, neither will plunge below the surface waters to assess and protect our sources of drinking water. That is the domain of another water education partner, the Michigan Groundwater Stewardship Program. Blair Spence, whose territory includes Jackson, Calhoun and Branch Counties, is our local resource person.

Blair's mission, to protect groundwater from contaminants, and to protect homeowners from possible contaminants in their drinking water, may take her right into people's homes. There she will conduct a free home or group assessment to determine whether homeowners may be contributing to ground water pollution, or she can arrange tests for the presence of harmful contaminants in their water.

Blair can be contacted at (269)781-4867, extension 33 to set up a one-on-one home assessment or a group presentation.

Dahlem Environmental Conservancy

Education Director Randy Hill wants Dahlem's efforts on water education to reach all segments of the community's population. In addition to the successful "Our World of Water" program which sends volunteer teachers into elementary school classrooms, Dahlem will add water quality monitoring sessions for grades 7-10, plus the conservancy will train three teams of adult volunteers to sample streams in the Upper Grand River Watershed.

Students are naturally drawn to the hands-on lessons which are a part of "Our World of Water," plus the lessons conform perfectly with state curriculum requirements, so classroom teachers are enthusiastically endorsing the program. Randy says that experiencing tiny water creatures close up in simple demonstrations, shows students that there is



Dahlem's *World of Water* curriculum involves students in construction of a model wetland.

much more variety to life in our streams and ponds than just frogs and fishes. Students learn that before frogs and fishes are affected by contaminants in water, tiny creatures like the water boatmen, water striders and water scorpions swimming in their classroom demonstrations will disappear from a stream.



Paddlers in a GREAT outing gather on a lake before heading upriver.

GREAT

The four organizations listed on these two pages constitute perhaps the best combination of water education efforts in any part of the state. GREAT has more than a fifteen year history of taking people

out onto rivers and lakes. Some are experienced paddlers, but most are just getting into quiet water(human propelled) boating activities. It is this aspect of our mission that makes us particularly proud of accomplishing. First we are delighted to see the responses of paddlers when they make that first or second bend in the river, and civilization disappears behind them. "I never realized there were places like this in Jackson County," is a common expression. Second, we are pleased that we can help get dozens of people out of their houses for several hours of enjoyable exercise. Third we have high expectations that children exposed to this healthy outdoor activity may develop a greater appreciation for going slowly and observing the other creatures we share our environment with. In addition to the physical activities themselves, GREAT attempts to inform participants and members through our live demonstrations, publications, and website, the extraordinary quality of our regional water resources.