

# G.R.E.A.T.

Grand River Environmental Action Team



Website: [www.great-mi.org](http://www.great-mi.org)

517.416.4234

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## Annual Meeting DEQ Specialist to present “What Makes a Good River?”



Dave Drullinger, specialist for the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality's Office of Environmental Assistance is the guest speaker for GREAT's 2013 Annual meeting on March 20th.

The audience will learn the answers of “What Makes a Good River?”, by understanding stream channel basics, such as the role silt plays and how development, impervious land surfaces, dams, and bank retention efforts impacts channel formation. The talk will relate actions which can be done to develop the land more wisely to lessen the negative impacts on the health of the river channel.

This presentation is designed to give people a little different perspective on the river, whether they are floating it or fishing from the bank. It will help the layman understand more about why the river is shaped the way it is. Dave will also present some technical information for the municipal official or consultant who works with or designs storm water infrastructures. Dave says, “it is the actions of these people which ultimately determine if the urban river remains good - or becomes better.”

Dave has a BS in Biology from Michigan State University, and a Masters in Fisheries Science from New Mexico State University. After college, for five years, Dave was a marine biologist with Louisiana State University. The next 20 years, Dave worked for the DEQ in wet-weather pollution and volume control. During that time he oversaw the statewide program to regulate storm water from municipal separate storm sewer systems (MS4s). He was the project administrator for Michigan's Low Impact Development Guidebook published in 2008, and is presently the lead coordinator for a Michigan Green Infrastructure Conference proposed for 2014.

This presentation will be very relevant to GREAT members and local residents as the Grand River in Jackson County is its headwaters, but on this smallest volume of the Michigan's longest river, sits a major metropolitan area which gives us many resulting environmental challenges.

Jim Seitz

### **GREAT Annual Meeting March 20 (Wednesday)**

Steve's Ranch

311 Louis Glick Hwy.

Downtown Jackson

Complete Dinner 6:30 pm

Cost: \$12 (pay at the door)

Meeting 7:00 pm (no charge)

Free dessert and coffee for all

For Dinner Please RSVP at:

517 416-4234 or [grand@great-mi.org](mailto:grand@great-mi.org)

by Monday, March 18

## Welcome New Board Member



*Don and Amelia Lynn on the river*

Our newest GREAT Trustee is Don Lynd. He and his wife of 12 years, Tracy, enjoy many outdoor activities. Don began kayaking in 2010 after about 8 years of canoeing. He kayaks in both rivers and lakes, but rivers are his preference due to the added challenges and routing limitations. In recent years he and Tracy have additional participants included in their travels; Amelia - 5 years old and Caleb - 3 years old, are ever present participants in the outdoor activities. It won't be long until Amelia will have her own kayak.

Being outdoors is a regular adventure for Don and his family. In addition to kayaking, they love to go camping. Don and his wife enjoyed a snowmobiling trip earlier this winter, while the kids enjoyed time with their grandparents.

Don is an Electrical Engineer for Consumers Energy. He has worked for them for 13 years. He went to Michigan Technological University and chose Jackson for the career opportunity.

Don enjoys the kayak trips and has always offered a helping hand to get each trip up and running each month. When asked to join the board he had little hesitation. He sees his participation as a way of helping the group to continue, offer the experience of the Grand to others, and keeping the paddling experience going and growing.

Don's outdoor experience and love of paddling makes him a great addition to the Board.

Helen Burnett

## Thanks to Our Generous Corporate Donors!

Although GREAT is a non-profit organization, it still takes money to fulfill our mission. All of those boats and trailers don't take care of themselves! Not to mention chainsaws and cutting equipment for clearing the river, insurance, PFDs, paddles, equipment for the annual cleanup, and so on (and on). While your membership dues (thank you for your membership!) help defray some of these expenses, we have also had some very generous donations for 2012.

TAC Manufacturing, located on County Farm Rd., sent us a donation of \$1500 for 2012, and they have also already given us a donation of \$2500 for 2013! GREAT was selected to receive this donation by the employees of TAC and we would like to thank TAC and its employees for recognizing the importance of the Grand River watershed in our community. GREAT President Kenny Price has personally visited TAC to thank them for their generosity.

When the future of the USGS Grand River water gauge near the waste-water treatment plant came into question, GREAT turned to the Consumers Energy Foundation with a grant request to help fund continued operation of the gauge. Consumers Energy came through with a \$1500 grant to help fund the river gauge for another three years. We would like to thank the Consumers Energy Foundation for helping keep this simple yet vital tool available to the community.

GREAT also submitted a Volunteer Investment Program grant to the Consumers Energy Foundation. This grant recognizes the volunteer efforts that CMS Energy employees and retirees make within the community. Thanks to the efforts of some of our members and other non-member volunteers, Consumers Energy has awarded us a \$325 grant.

However, it's not just about the big donations. Every donation, whether in money, equipment, or services, helps to achieve our mission. So here's a big thank you to all our donors; your contributions help make all our hard work go that much farther.

Kurt LaFrance



# 2013 GREAT Board Adopted Goals

The GREAT Board of Directors has adopted the following goals for 2013:

1. Fill the Board of Directors' vacancies to a full capacity of 12 persons.

a. The current Board of Directors has four officers - President, Vice President, Secretary and Treasurer, one River Master and four Directors. We would like to find three more Directors. This being a working Board, additional fresh ideas, connections, resources and assistance with our events could make the Board more efficient, capable, better at representing the membership and fulfilling our mission and vision.

2. Engage general membership on GREAT Committees.

a. There are six Standing Committees - Finance, Membership, Communications, Activities & Calendar, Education & Advocacy, and Nominations; and five Ad Hoc Committees - Annual Clean-Up, Equipment, GREAT Land, River Debris Removal and Strategic Planning. Currently, only members of the GREAT Board of Directors are on these committees. By including general member volunteers, there is the opportunity for more ideas, sharing of duties and better representation and engagement of our membership.

3. Continued development of the plan for GREAT's land.

a. The GREAT land, situated Northeast of Parnall Road and N. Lansing Avenue, along the West side of the Grand River, has endured a 12-year journey through the State Congressional processes of boundary change, examination and determination. This process has been overseen and assisted by many dedicated GREAT members, local and State governmental staff and dignitaries. We speculate that this process may be completed within the next few months. Many ideas have been discussed and plans continue to formulate as to the best environmentally-conscious and membership approved use of our land. We welcome all members' input in this process.

GREAT Board goals from previous years were to develop a Strategic Plan, increase our sponsor memberships, promote plans for public river access facilities, improve navigability of the Grand River in Jackson County and many more, develop a strategy for the replacement of equipment, and many more.

The GREAT Board of Directors welcomes membership and public attendance at our monthly Board meetings and GREAT events. The Board meetings are on the second Wednesday of each month at Summit Township Hall at 7:00 p.m. Please share your ideas with any of the Board members. Consider volunteering some time and talents on one of the Committees.

Mary Lenardson



## Things you would like to hear about.

While we believe we have a very informative newsletter with a wide variety of topics related to the Grand River, environmental issues and our paddle events, we would like to know if there is something else you would like to hear about. Or if you would like to write a column for the newsletter, please let us know. If you have a topic or writing skills and would like to contribute to the newsletter, please contact Helen Burnett, Editor at [hmburnet@gmail.com](mailto:hmburnet@gmail.com).

## Do you have talents you would like to share?

We have a few things the Communications committee would like to find within our membership/readership. A page on our website shows lists of flora and fauna we have encountered on our trips. Is there a member out there that would like to help with this page in identifying and preparing information about some of our findings?

The second request is someone with web design. Jim Seitz is great at managing our webpage, but is looking for someone with this talent who would like to offer ideas and skill to freshen up our website. Please contact Jim Seitz to discuss either of these opportunities. Jim can be reached at [seitz.jim@gmail.com](mailto:seitz.jim@gmail.com).



# Thanks to all those who helped at Vandercook Lake!



Last September, more than two dozen volunteers from GREAT, the Jackson County Master Gardeners, Quiet World Sports, the Jackson County Conservation District (JCCD), the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ), the Upper Grand River Watershed Alliance, and others got down and dirty to stabilize a portion of the shoreline at Vandercook Lake County Park. Two sites, 250 linear feet in all, became demonstration sites for using native plants and natural materials to stop the loss of park land due to erosion of the shore.

The project was organized by the JCCD and Jackson County Parks, as part of JCCD's Upper Grand River Implementation Project (UGRIP) and a grant from the MDEQ. The two demonstration sites were chosen to be visible from high-use areas of the park; one, near the swim beach and canoe/kayak livery, the second site located at the south end of the park near the boat launch. At each location, two lines of coir logs - rolls of coconut fiber - were staked into place to protect the soils at the shoreline and to dampen wave and ice action so that plants may get established within the shallow water zone near shore.

On the land, 8 to 12 foot wide buffers were planted with native plants such as buttonbush, marsh milkweed, purple and yellow coneflowers, blue flag iris, etc. These native plants develop deeper root systems than turf grass and, as such, will further help hold shoreline soils in place. Each site required a different group of plants as the north site is heavily shaded and the southern location is open to full sun.

It will likely take a couple of growing seasons for the native perennials to become fully established. In the meantime, the sites will be monitored and irrigated to help them along.

Two-hundred and fifty feet of shoreline is just a fraction of the 1,100 feet of eroding shoreline at Vandercook Lake County Park, but will hopefully be a start for further, similar projects. Research conducted throughout the Great Lakes states indicates that the chemical, physical, and biological health of inland lakes declines when more than 25% of the natural shoreline vegetation is cleared and developed for home sites, beaches, or lawns. Many of the lakes in our region have already passed that threshold, but individual landowners can help turn back the clock by restoring native vegetation and re-establishing natural transition zones from the open lake to upland areas on shore.

The MDEQ is promoting the techniques and materials used at Vandercook Lake as an alternative to the installation of seawalls or other hardened shorelines. As part of that initiative, MDEQ and the MSU Cooperative Extension Service are training contractors to design and install natural shorelines. Additional information regarding natural shorelines, how they can help our lakes, or how you can find a certified contractor may be found on the [Michigan Natural Shoreline Partnership](#) website or FaceBook page.

Paul Rentschler



***GREAT volunteers who helped work on the project:  
Mark Muhick, Rick Berry and Jim Seitz***

# More Grand River History

I want to be a Hemmingway, Clive Clusser, Jon Hoover, or Bryon Ennis, but I have not found the right material. However, I did find this article in "Today In Jackson" from March/April 1988. It tells the tale of the Grand River in Jackson. I will be writing more on "The Cap" in a future newsletter.

It was a warm day in April with deep blue skies and the surging of life ready to burst from the old "spearing tree," a gigantic oak that stretched its powerful limbs over the sparkling waters of the Washtenog-sepe. From a low hung limb, two young Pottawattamies waited silently, with perfect grace and balance, spears held high, watching the bass swimming frantically against the surge of the cold water.

Upstream, the clear waters plunged over a natural sandstone dam, where its white water swirled among the rocks and time-worn gouges in the sandstone ledges. On the banks of the pond above the dam, three white-tailed deer lowered their stately heads to drink, seeing their reflections in the clear water.

A hundred years and more have flowed down the river since then. Today, as I stand on the banks of The Grand, I feel a sense of that time, and the timelessness of the river. It is something that the ages have made, quite beyond our ability to create, but not beyond our ability to preserve.

The Washtenog-sepe, since named the Grand River, has its small beginnings in the southern extremity of Jackson County in the lovely Lake LeAnn and the beautiful and placid Mirror Lake. The headwaters of this drainage basin extends over 154 square miles, including 60 lakes and countless miles of streams, fed by springs and wetland marshes; a habitat for muskrats, beavers, and a variety of waterfowl.

In 1829 the city of Jackson had its small beginnings along the banks of the river, where a wooden dam was built for the operation of a mill. As the little town grew, the beautiful river soon bore the marks of urbanization—its' lovely sparkling water began to carry the sewage from the city. North of town, downstream, where the river broadened through the marshes, its stagnant pools began to smell.

In 1888, residents in the area began to take a look at the plight of the once beautiful river. What had once been the reason men were drawn to the area, now had become a health problem.



*Installing the cap in the early 1900's*

Proposals were made for the construction of a drain through the flat country, to speed the flow of the river and release the stagnant waters from the marshes.

Construction of the drain was started in April of 1918. For nearly two years the steam-driven dredge slowly chewed its way north from Jackson to Berry Road. Night and day, it relentlessly chugged on, digging a new channel for the river. The cost was approximately \$293,000 which included the construction of four bridges.

North of Berry Road the river was left to follow its meandering course which time had worn through the valley, between the rolling hills. At least that was the plan. In reality, the little town of Rives soon became the dumping ground for the sewage of the city of Jackson.

Meanwhile, Jackson was wading through its own set of problems. The old wooden dam that had since been taken over by the power company, was causing problems upstream. The pond above the dam made it impossible to drain the southeast section of the city. Also, the slime and filth of the river had backed up into the basements of downtown buildings, creating intolerable unsanitary conditions.

With the removal of the dam, the flooding of the southeastern area was eliminated, but the old crooked channel and the pond bottom still remained, causing a mosquito nuisance and considerable stench. From the old pond bottom north, the river was silted and filled with rubbish, and during high water, the overflow storm sewers became inoperable, resulting in more flooding of basements in the downtown area. What to do?





***Removing the cap in downtown Jackson***

In 1925, a consulting firm in Ann Arbor prepared a design for covering the river through the business district, however, the cost was more than the city of Jackson could consider at that time. With the advent of the Work Progress Administration, new possibilities looked promising.

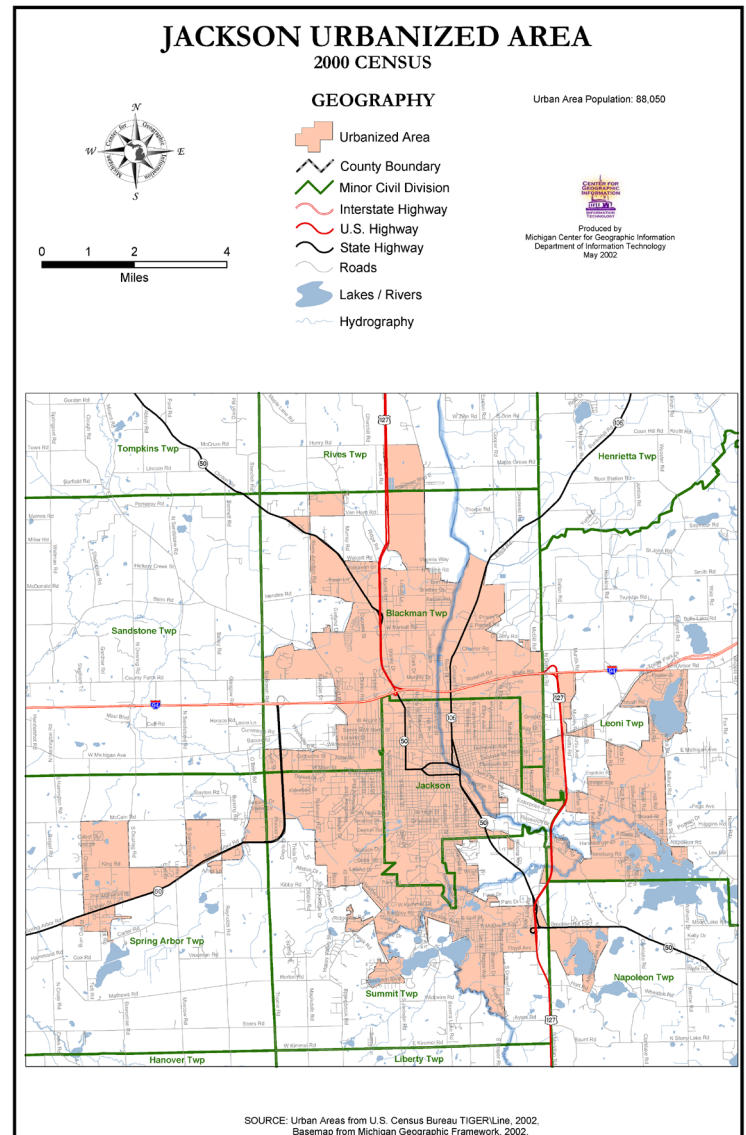
By the middle of 1936 the project was under way. A 5' x 10' concrete conduit (known as "the box") was constructed, five feet beneath the old stream bed, with the top paved to 45 feet wide. By September, 1937, the project was completed, at a cost of approximately \$425,000. The problem was buried. Jackson no longer resided on the banks of the Grand.

But time and the river flow on. Today the river no longer smells. It is no longer the breeding ground of disease. In fact, as I stand on the bank and watch the water flowing over the rocks, I am filled with a sense of awareness—awareness of the potential of our river. It could be one of Jackson's greatest natural resources.

Many Jacksonians have stopped to take a second look at what the river could offer to our city. In 1976, the Region II Planning Commission proposed a greenbelt plan which they called "Grand River Park." The plan, extending from Micor Park northward to Northlawn Park, included not only the beautification of the river, but the utilization of the river's potential in terms of the quality of life in Jackson. The plan included canoe liveries, hiking trails, bike trails, picnic areas, playing fields, ice skating and fishing ponds, wildlife centers, nature interpretive centers, ski trails and a promenade. Jackson could once again be proud of its river. Was it just a lovely dream?

Today, concerned citizens in our community still dare to dream! Jackson County 1990 is an organization of people who believe that dreams *can* come true. The Grand River Task Force is seeking ways to transform ideas into actions: to make our river a living, vital part of our community. Volunteers are being sought, for there is much that can be done with the help of caring people. Our river can once again be a valuable part of the quality of life in Jackson.

Kenny Price



***Upper Grand River Watershed Area***

## Membership

Your continued support is greatly appreciated. It allows us to offer paddling events spring, summer and fall and provide education on various events and concerns related to Michigan waterways. It also allows us to support the preservation of the Grand River.

If you have not updated your membership, please consider updating your membership for next year. If you have not yet taken the opportunity to join, check out our website or see us at our next event to complete a membership form. If you have enjoyed paddling with us, please consider supporting us.

### **GREAT Membership Form**

*GREAT's fiscal year is from January 1 through December 31 and memberships are accordingly. Your dues are a tax-deductible contribution as are other donations to GREAT. Memberships can also be obtained on GREAT's web site with credit card or PayPal.*

**Great Membership:** Please check membership type

☐ Individual \$15.00

☐ Family \$25.00

☐ Sponsor \$100.00

Name

Street Address

City  State  Zip

Telephone  E-Mail

**If you are interested in volunteering, please check your interests:**

☐ Participating Upper Grand River Watershed Council Activities

☐ Being a crew leader on the annual cleanup

☐ Scout river by canoe prior to GREAT river trips

☐ Assist in removing river debris before GREAT river trips

☐ Organizing/Leading GREAT river trips

☐ Ability to haul boat trailer for GREAT river trips

☐ Assist with our annual trip cookout

☐ Assist with clerical work

☐ Assist with GREAT educational activities

☐ Board membership

☐ CMS Energy Employee/Retiree

☐ Other; please specify:

**Preference to receive Newsletter:** ☐ Postal Mail ☐ PDF via e-mail (pictures in color!)

**Make checks payable and mail to:**

GREAT

PO Box 223

## Upcoming Activities

**April 14th (Sun.) 12 Noon**

### ***Grand River***

Jefferson Rd (US 127 bridge, Liberty Twp.)  
to US 127 (bridge near Reed Road)

**April 21st (Sun.) 1:00-4:00 PM**

7th Annual Jackson Area Outdoor Coalition  
Earth Day Festival on Sunday, April 21,  
2013 1:00 – 4:00 pm at Sparks (Cascades)  
Foundation Park in Jackson.

In 2012 an estimated 500 people attended,  
despite less than ideal weather. We hope to  
have better weather and more visitors this  
year.

This free event will include hands-on  
activities and interactive educational  
displays to increase awareness of outdoor  
activities and environmental education  
available in Jackson County.

GREAT will be in attendance to offer kayak  
and canoe rides. Other previous  
demonstrations have included bird house  
building, children's crafts, composting  
demonstrations, and live animal encounters.

**May 19th (Sun.) 12 Noon**

### ***Goose Creek***

Cement City (Cement City Hwy bridge) to  
Lake Columbia (Karen Court Park – off  
Hayes Rd.)

## GREAT Newsletter

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Grand River Environmental Action Team

GREAT  
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GREAT is a tax deductible 501c3 non-profit  
organization.

*The mission of GREAT is to  
promote the protection and  
preservation of the Grand River  
Watershed through activities and  
educational programs*

Welcome New Members!

Kelli Hoover

Methods and Equipment Associates

Mike Nelson

## Board Meetings

The GREAT board meets on the second Wednesday of  
each month, with the exception of December, at 7:00 PM  
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.

## GREAT Board

Kenny Price, President  
Don Nelson, Vice President  
Jim Seitz, Secretary  
Jack Ripstra, Treasurer  
Kathy Kulchinski, Rivermaster  
Helen Burnett, Director  
Kurt LaFrance, Director  
Mary Lenardson, Director  
Don Lynd, Director

### Special Assignments:

Louise Hefka, Publicity  
Jeff Grund, Tax Statements  
Barb Anderson, Historian