



Huron River Report

The newsletter of the

Huron River Watershed Council

PROTECTING OUR WATER TOGETHER SINCE 1965

Poised for Action in Mill Creek

MDEQ Approves Watershed Management Plan for Mill Creek

WHY A PLAN IS NEEDED

The Mill Creek Subwatershed, at 145 square miles, is the largest subwatershed in the Huron River Watershed and contributes an estimated one-quarter of all phosphorus in the middle Huron (the River from Dexter to Belleville), helping to cause nuisance algal blooms in Ford and Belleville lakes. As a result, communities of the Mill Creek Subwatershed are required under federal statute to reduce phosphorus pollution by 50 percent to meet water standards established by the Clean Water Act.

To meet this requirement, nine communities, under the leadership of HRWC, have developed a Watershed

Management Plan. The Plan, recently approved by the MDEQ, is a comprehensive, long-term effort to restore and protect water quality that goes beyond phosphorus. The Plan identifies current conditions in the system, existing impairments, future threats, and opportunities for resource



photo: HRWC

Protecting and restoring vegetated buffers like these on Mill Creek is a recommended activity in the Plan.

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A Muskrat Tale

A Canoeist Learns from this Furry Swimmer

A CLOSE ENCOUNTER

As I carried the canoe from the car to the river I anticipated with great relish what the day might bring. It had been some time since my last visit to this river, the Huron, and I was looking forward to reacquainting myself with

the many opportunities to just play with the current and equally enjoy the diverse life along its banks. It was this that I had in mind as I slipped away to experience the voyageur life again, even if it was only to be for a few hours.

I put in at the south end of the group camp at Kensington Metropark and my plan was to make for the take-out near the Kensington Farm Center. The weather was perfect this mid-September day — a light variable breeze, a temperature approaching the low 70s and a dazzling

blue sky punctuated with fluffy cumulus clouds gently seeking their way east.

The canoe made easy headway as the current caught the bow, swinging me into the grip of the river channel. I was off, alone physically, but suddenly surrounded by many old friends of the flora and fauna variety.

From this location, the river seems to swallow you up into a narrow channel that gradually widens to form a larger pool-like impoundment that is created just upriver from Dawson Road bridge. It was here, on the west bank, that I had my first mammalian sighting of the day.

I had noticed movement in the water to my right, so with a crossbow draw I swung the canoe in that direction. Three

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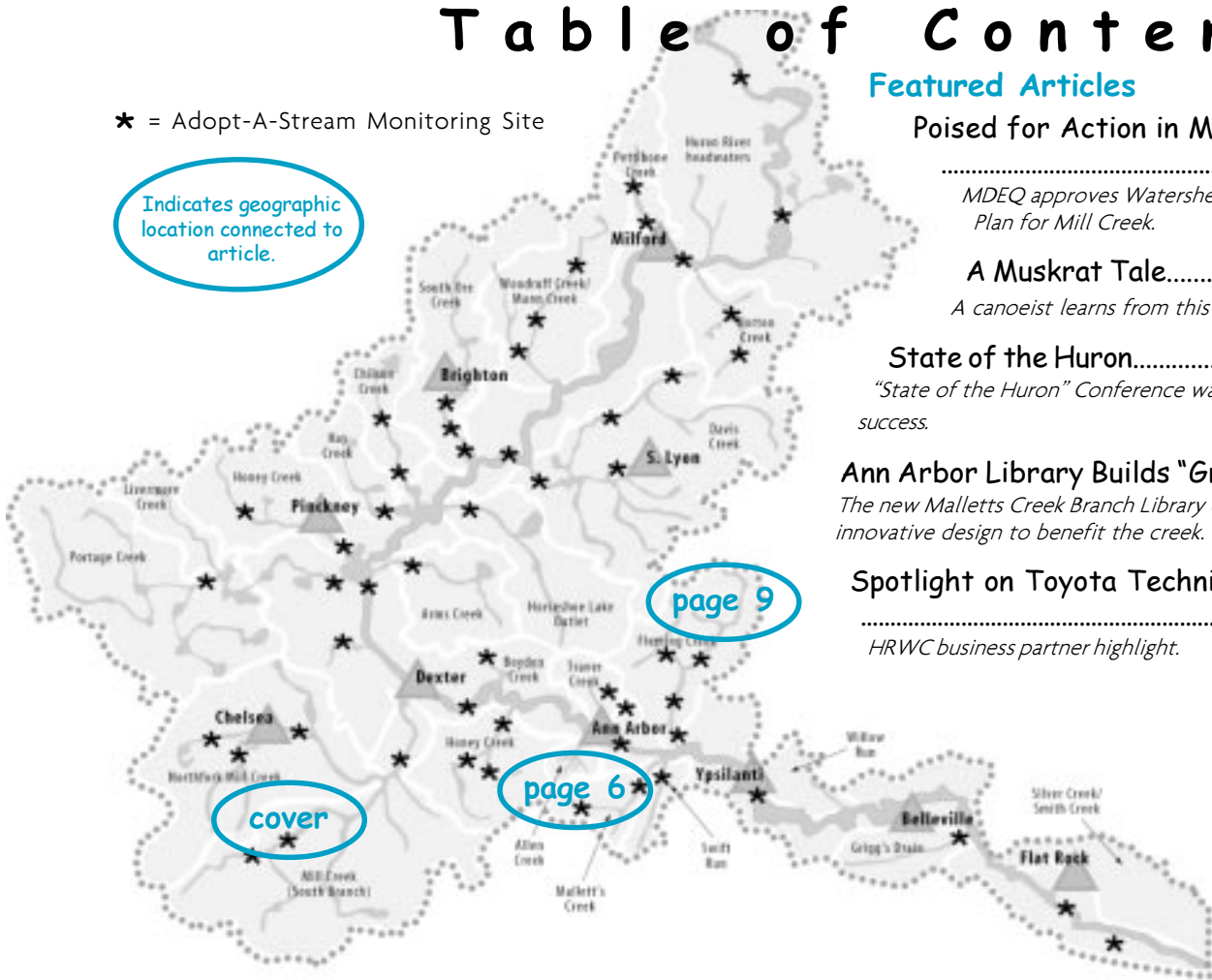


Muskrat Illustration: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Tom Kelley

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Indicates geographic location connected to article.



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EVENTS

Thursday, Dec 11, 5:30-7:30 pm
Executive Committee Meeting
 NEW Center
 call Laura at (734) 769-5123

Saturday, Dec 13, 9 am-12 pm
Bald Mountain Stewardship Workday
 Lake Orion/Oakland
 call Curt Winter at (248) 814-8589

Tuesday, Dec 23, 6 - 7 pm
Headwaters Steward Circle
 Auburn Hills
 call Erin Lavender at (248) 601-2825

Saturday, Jan 17,
 11:30-2:30 or 1-4 pm
Stonefly Search -see p.9
 Entire Watershed
 call Adopt at (734) 769-5971

Saturday, Jan 22, 5:30-7:30 pm
HRWC Board Meeting
 NEW Center
 call Laura at (734) 769-5123

Thursday, April 22, 9am-12pm
Spring Meeting of the Middle Huron Partners
 Location to be announced
 Call Elizabeth at (734) 769-5123

More events and updates on the web at: www.hrwc.org

The NEW Center is located at 1100 N. Main Street in Ann Arbor. Call (734) 769-5123 or visit the HRWC website for directions.

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Correction

In the Fall 2003 River Report we listed communities within the Watershed with ordinances addressing phosphorus. We inadvertently omitted Orchard Lake Village, which adopted lawn fertilizing regulations in August of 1991. This village is within the Huron River Watershed, Upper Straits Lake.

Poised for Action in Mill Creek

MDEQ Approves Watershed Management Plan for Mill Creek

continued from cover

protection and restoration. The 2-year planning process involved government, business and citizen representatives, as well as technical advisors who contributed their expertise to ensure a scientifically-defensible plan. Washtenaw County Conservation District and USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service co-facilitated the planning process. The U.S. EPA provided the funds for the project and MDEQ administered the grant.

CURRENT CONDITIONS

Results of the HRWC's Adopt-A-Stream Program identify good ecological conditions in the headwaters of both the north and south branches. Here, Mill Creek supports a diverse aquatic insect population including many such as the saddle-case making caddisfly that require high quality conditions. Even in the hot summer months some of the headwaters remain below 66.2°F, which is cold enough to support cold-water fish such as mottled sculpin and trout.

Downstream, temperatures increase, water quality declines, and the creek supports fewer insects that are sensitive to pollution. Sites on the north branch of Mill Creek that flows through Chelsea remain in acceptable condition while the south branch is poor, as indicated by an impoverished insect population.

EXISTING IMPAIRMENTS

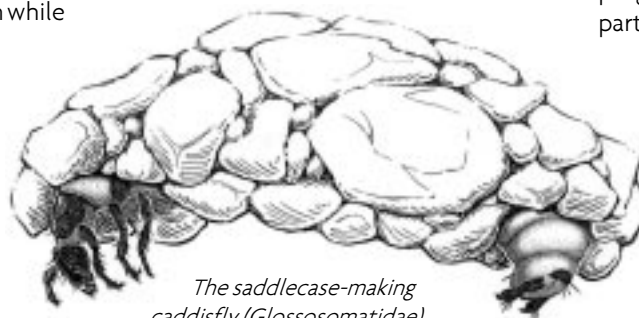
Three primary challenges for Mill Creek are identified in the Plan: (1) altered hydrology/ high stormwater peak flows; (2) sedimentation and soil erosion; and (3) high phosphorus load. Sources and causes of these top challenges and several other challenges are presented in the Plan. A key finding is that unregulated nonpoint sources of pollution contribute approximately 9-10 times more phosphorus than regulated point sources.

OPPORTUNITIES TO PROTECT AND RESTORE

A menu of best management practices is

provided in a 5-Year Action Plan ranging from managerial practices (e.g., new and revised policies) to structural practices (e.g., removing Mill Pond Dam in Dexter) to vegetative practices (e.g., vegetated riparian buffers). The combination of actions to be taken will be determined by each community based on cost, acceptability and sustainability.

A project evaluation found that participants in the project felt that the Plan provides useful analysis, tools and recommendations to "some degree" or to a "great degree." However, these same participants expressed that they are only "somewhat confident" to "not confident" that some of the recommendations can and will be implemented. The main obstacles they cite are the cost of making changes, a lack of resources at the local level, and the perceived lack of



The saddle-case making caddisfly (Glossosomatidae) requires clean streams and lives in the headwaters of Mill Creek. Illustration by Matt Wimsatt

public knowledge of the problem and solutions. Securing funds to implement activities is vital to making the Plan effective.

WHAT'S NEXT?

Approval of the Plan makes the Mill Creek communities eligible to compete for implementation funds to address problems such as high nutrient loading,



stream bank destabilization, soil erosion, and other challenges identified in the Plan. The Plan meets the criteria of the Clean Michigan Initiative Nonpoint Pollution Control Grant Program. In addition, the Plan was the first in Michigan to meet U.S. EPA's new requirements for its federal grants program. HRWC is working with the Plan partners on prioritizing which activities to implement in the first year and submitting proposals for state and federal funding assistance. We have the opportunity to determine what Mill Creek becomes in the future and this opportunity should not be lost.

The Plan can be viewed by downloading the PDF files from the HRWC website (go to the Middle Huron Initiative Program page), or by requesting a CD-ROM from the HRWC. Mill Creek communities and other stakeholders have received copies of the Plan and CD-ROM. Contact Elizabeth at eriggs@hrwc.org or (734) 769-5123 x4 for more information about Mill Creek activities.

- Elizabeth Riggs
and Theresa Dakin

State of the Huron

HRWC Holds the First Conference to Focus on the Huron River.

The first State of the Huron Conference was held on October 24th, 2003. It was a great day filled with informative presentations, vibrant conversation and loads of learning. The attendance of 185 people exceeded our expectations and represented a diverse audience. Many familiar faces were among the crowd along with new faces of interested citizens, developers, planners, local government officials, researchers, and regulators.

Paul Cousins, HRWC Board Chair welcomed attendees to the conference with Laura Rubin providing a brief introduction and overview of the Watershed. A panel of Laura Rubin, Dick Carlisle, and Janis Bobrin presented their thoughts on “what we know, what we are doing and what we need to be doing” to address land use impacts on water quality. A presentation on the Michigan Land Use Leadership Council followed. Julie Metty Bennett from Public Sector Consultants in Lansing, who served as staff to the Leadership Council, shared her thoughts on the process and outcomes.

Lunch in the atrium of the Washtenaw Community College was bright and sunny and allowed people to meet, share stories, and hatch new ideas. Congressman John Dingell spoke eloquently to

the lunch crowd about his experiences in the U.S. Capitol, his efforts to protect the environment, and his support of our local efforts to protect the Huron River Watershed.



Janis Bobrin, Washtenaw County Drain Commissioner discusses land use implications on water quality. photo: HRWC

After lunch the conference turned to breakout sessions,

which offered participants a choice of three topics to accommodate varying interests. The first breakout session featured nine speakers on topics of *Vital Stats of the Huron*, *Community Involvement and Stewardship*, and *Land Use Policy*. The second breakout followed the same format with sessions on *Restoration Efforts*, *Water Regulations*, and *Lakes, Floodplains, and Wetlands*.



Congressman John Dingell speaks during lunch at the State of the Huron Conference. Photo: HRWC



185 people attended HRWC's State of the Huron Conference. photo: HRWC

The conference wrapped up with a short film titled *Huron River Reflections*.

Overall, attendees provided very positive feedback. A sampling of responses on the most beneficial aspect of the conference include: “the holistic summary of all aspects of the watershed and not just the river,” “listening to people who are knowledgeable and dedicated to protecting our water,” and “great presentations—the quality was high.”

Thank you to the Ann Arbor Area Community Foundation and CDM for their sponsorship of the conference. Thank you to Washtenaw Community College for providing the facilities and

audio/visual equipment. Thanks to the conference speakers and facilitators for their time and efforts. Thanks to the conference planning committee and to the HRWC staff. And finally, a big thanks to Mary Cronin for her design work on the brochures and posters, and to Mike Mouradian for his time filming and editing the film.

Finally, thanks to all who attended. I am so happy and proud to be among such a talented and committed group of watershed protectors.

-Laura Rubin

A Muskrat Tale

continued from cover

possibilities — small beaver, mink or muskrat — quickly came to mind as I watched a little furry head make its way toward an expanse of cattails growing out away from the riverbank. As I watched more closely, I caught a glimpse of a long, pointed tail. It was a muskrat.

BORN TO SWIM

Muskrats (*Ondatra zibethicus*) are semi-aquatic rodents that tend to have a rotund, paunchy appearance. Although muskrats exhibit behaviors like a beaver, they are not related; nor are they a true rat. The muskrat is more closely related to field mice so it could be thought of as a large mouse that has adapted to an existence in and around water. With the exception of feet and tail, the entire body is covered by rich, waterproof fur. The short under-fur is very dense and silky, while the longer guard hairs are coarse and glossy. The color may vary from dark brown on the head and back to light grayish-brown on the belly. An adult weighs on average about 2½ pounds and the length from end of nose to tip of tail is about 18 to 24 inches. The tail is slender, flattened vertically and averages 9½ inches in length. The tail is covered with a scaly skin that tends to act as an armor, protecting it from damage. Muskkrats can swim up to three miles per hour and are adept at



Muskrat Lodge photo: National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration, Mary Hollinger

swimming backwards. They can remain submerged for as long as 15 minutes.

AT HOME IN THE WATER

My muskrat was heading for one of its typical habitats, that of a slow moving

stream or back water with an abundance of cattails (*Typha latifolia*) including some sedges (*Carex spp.*), arrowheads (*Sagittaria latifolia*) and duckweed (*Lemna minor*). Other places frequented include fresh water marshes and the marshy edges of lakes and ponds. Even roadside ditches are used.

Certain water depths are extremely important to the muskrat's survival. Water must be at least three to six feet deep so that it will not freeze to the bottom during the winter, but sufficiently shallow to permit growth of aquatic plants. This particular area, where I was watching my muskrat, fit the bill perfectly. Food availability and water depths were just right and the cattails, the most desired food for the muskrat, were abundant.

As I approached, the muskrat noticed my presence in its domain and quickly dived out of sight next to a large mound of cattails that had been piled up in the water. This lodge was its home. The lodge and its construction is an important aspect of the ecology of muskrat, allowing them to live in areas completely surrounded by water. It protects them from enemies and provides shelter from the weather. Construction of a lodge starts by heaping plant material and mud to form a mound. A tunnel is then dug into the mound from below water level and a chamber is created at the center. The lodge is typically two to three feet high and about the same dimensions across, and usually has one or two exit holes.

Another interesting facet of muskrat behavior is the creation of "push-ups," which are usually built after freeze up. The muskrats chew holes through the ice at various distances from the lodge. After the opening has been made, plant



Say Cheese! A muskrat proudly shows off its pearly whites.

material and mud are used to make a roof over the opening, essentially creating a mini lodge. The openings remain relatively ice-free and the push-ups are used as feeding stations and as resting places during underwater journeys. My muskrat seemed to have been busy with preparations for the coming winter, as I could see evidence of new construction on the lodge.

In addition to lodges in the water, muskrats also may use the banks of lakes and waterways to dig ground burrows back into the banks, with underwater entrances added for safe access to their habitat.

NATURAL PREDATORS AND TRAPPING

As they move about their territory they have to be on watch for potential predators. Young muskrats can fall prey to snapping turtles and northern pike, but the greatest mortality is from the mink that occupies much of the same habitat. If they wander onto land muskrats are subject to predation from dogs, coyotes, owls, foxes, racoons, and other larger predators.

While sitting in my canoe and observing this marvelous rodent that is so well adapted for life in the marsh, my thoughts turned to a more historical slant of its use by humans. Trapping of this species for the fur trade dates back well over 300 years. During the height of the fur trade in the mid to late 1700s, it took 15 muskrat pelts to equal the value of one beaver pelt. In more recent times,

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photo: Waterschap Roer en Overmaas

Ann Arbor Library Builds "Green"

The new Malletts Creek Branch Library Demonstrates Innovative Design to Benefit the Creek.

ECOLOGICAL MODEL

Libraries are a place of learning, and visitors to the new Malletts Creek Branch library can learn not only from the contents of its bookshelves, but also from the building and the property itself. The building and the site of the newest addition to the Ann Arbor District Library will be a model of ecological sensitivity and sustainability for anyone who walks onto the site.

HELPING MALLETT'S CREEK

The new library borders Malletts Creek, which is challenged in many ways. It has problems with water quantity: too much stormwater from impervious surfaces rushes into it during storm events, which contributes to erosion and flooding problems. It also has problems with water quality: pollution, high phosphorus levels, sediment and increased temperature. No single big polluter near Malletts Creek is responsible for its poor health—there are lots of little issues throughout the creekshed that add up to big problems. The Ann Arbor District Library's Malletts Creek Branch does not want to be part of the problem for Malletts Creek; rather it wishes to be a leader in demonstrating solutions for the Creek that will ultimately contribute to the health of the greater Huron River Watershed.

The portion of Malletts Creek that skirts the property line of the library branch actually flows through an underground pipe, but the library has instituted many strategies to respect the presence of the creek despite its low visibility. One of the most important strategies to decrease the impact on the creek is to reduce the impervious surfaces of the library. The library is handling this challenge in two different ways: reducing parking and constructing a green roof. The City of Ann Arbor's parking lot size

standards must be met for each development that is built within the city limits. By demonstrating that the site could share parking with a neighbor and use existing street parking, the library was able to reduce its impervious surface by forty parking spaces. For the green roof, instead of traditional shingles, a light soil medium has been spread over a waterproof membrane and planted with drought tolerant plants that will absorb much of the rain that

it is 'out of sight, out of mind.' At the library, water that comes off of the green roof is directed through a long circuitous above-ground path planted with native plant material that will absorb the water or help it infiltrate into the ground.

Some of the dirtiest water that comes off of any site is from the parking lot. Instead of having raised parking lot islands with a few trees, the islands



Image: InSite Design Studio, Inc.

The site of the new Malletts Creek Branch Library borders the creek for which it is named.

falls on it during the growing season. During a big rain storm, gutters will carry any excess water from the roof to the ground, where it will be managed with innovative methods.

MANAGING STORMWATER

The site was designed so that stormwater is cleaned, cooled and slowed before it flows into Malletts Creek. This objective can be reached only if the water is released into the creek as groundwater, as opposed to flowing untreated through pipes. Traditional development puts stormwater in underground pipes so that

(called bioswales) at the library are depressed and have stormwater flowing toward them. They are heavily planted with native plant material that will help to absorb some of the stormwater. Because heavy metals bind to organic material, the library has committed to replace the mulch in the bioswales every year and dispose of it properly. The soil itself is a special mix that absorbs water well. However, a back-up system must be in place in case a huge storm occurs. Deeply buried perforated pipes lying under the length of the bioswales connect to a naturally occurring seam of

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Spotlight on Toyota Technical Center

HRWC Business Partner Highlight

Toyota Technical Center, USA Inc. (TTC) is an active business member of the Huron River Watershed Council and has been a member of the Ann Arbor community for over 25 years.

Beginning in 1977, TTC conducted emission testing and certification of Toyota vehicles for the U.S. market in Hilbert's Garage (formerly located on Broadway). In 1991, TTC moved its headquarters to the present location northeast of Ann Arbor. Since then, TTC have grown from 291 Team Associates to over 600 by 2002. With this continued growth come additional responsibilities such as engineering design, research and development, vehicle evaluations, powertrain tuning, environmental engineering and regulatory affairs for vehicles sold in North America. TTC has direct engineering design responsibility for vehicles such as the Avalon, Camry, Sienna, Solara and Tundra.

TTC was first introduced to the Huron River Watershed Council through their expansion activities, which began in 1996. Since then, TTC has consulted the HRWC for its recommendations to ensure that their site management activities do not endanger Fleming Creek, neighboring wetlands and native species.

Most recently TTC teamed up with the HRWC for the Fall River RoundUp. The event coincided nicely with the Toyota-sponsored National Public Lands Day (NPLD). In 2002 NPLD generated about \$10 million in improvements to the nation's parks, forests, refuges, reservoirs and rangelands. The number of Toyota volunteers increased from 868 in 1999 to nearly 2,200 in 2002. Toyota volunteers worked at 25 sites in 17 states and Puerto Rico. In 2003, Toyota renewed its partnership for another three years with the National Environmental and Education Training Foundation (NEETF), which administers NPLD.

"This was my first River RoundUp and also my first time to participate in the NPLD," said Dave Baxter, TTC Vice President of Regulatory Affairs. "The experience was far more gratifying than I expected. I was particularly impressed

with the number of volunteers and the organization of the HRWC Staff and veteran volunteers. I look forward to participating again next year."

-Cynthia Mahalak



photo: Toyota Technical Center, USA Inc.

The Toyota Technical Center at Woodbridge in Ann Arbor Charter Township.



photo: Steve Kuzma

Dave Baxter, Ron Gamble and Marcy Bauman collect aquatic macroinvertebrates at Flat Rock to learn about the conditions of the Huron River during HRWC's Adopt-A-Stream Program's River RoundUp.

Support for the RoundUp

HRWC greatly appreciates the generous and comprehensive support from Toyota (TTC) for the Fall River RoundUp. A number of employees participated with their families in searching the streams for bugs. TTC funded a portion of the event costs as well as providing both breakfast and box lunches for every one of the 133 participants. In addition, they provided colorful tee shirts and work gloves for everyone. One happy volunteer echoed the feelings of all when he said, "These generous contributions helped to make the HRWC River RoundUp an even more enjoyable experience than usual."

A Muskrat Tale

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young boys and some girls growing up in and around the marshes would often run trap lines to make extra money just like other children who grew up in the city had paper routes. Humans have also used the "mushrat" or "rat" (local names for this rodent) as a food source for many hundreds of years. This practice still goes on and even with trapping does not seem to have an impact on their numbers.

As I turned away from this foray into the world of the muskrat I realized that two

hours had passed and I had only traveled about one half mile from the put-in. It was time to move on. So with a few short strokes of the paddle I was caught once again by the flow of river. The Huron affords many opportunities to see muskrat. They can be found almost anywhere along the expanse of the main river and its tributaries. As one moves steadily to the merging of the Huron with Lake Erie the evidence of muskrat increases. The river slows down and widens in spots, creating opportunities for large cattail marshes to form and

thus providing the likelihood of muskrat activity.

-Mike George

Mike George is the Supervising Interpreter for the Huron-Clinton Metroparks, Mobile Learning Center, an educational outreach facility providing natural and cultural history programs to schools in the five-county Metropolitan Detroit area.

The Huron River Watershed Council

The Huron River Watershed Council is a coalition of Huron Valley individuals, businesses and local governments established in 1965 under Michigan's Local River Management Act to inspire attitudes, behaviors, and economies that protect, rehabilitate, and sustain the Huron River system. The Watershed Council is a non-profit organization under section 501(c)(3) of the federal tax code.

If you enjoy this newsletter, please consider membership. Services of the Council include hands-on citizen education, technical assistance in policy development and direct river protection projects. You will find a membership form on page 10. All contributions are tax deductible.

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Know Your Board Representative: Meroë Kaericher

Meroë Kaericher was appointed as the Salem Township representative to the Huron River Watershed Council when the township joined in 2002. Although she has been involved in watershed issues for many years, Meroë says her membership on the Council has presented her with

“tremendous opportunities to learn about and participate in evolving environmental resource issues.”

Meroë and her husband, Michael, purchased a twenty-seven acre woodlot in the Fleming Creek Watershed in the early 1980s and, in 1995, they donated it to the Washtenaw Land Trust. At that time, she became Salem Township’s representative to the Fleming Creek Advisory Council and became more involved in watershed issues. She is also a member of the Salem Township Planning Commission.

If you have questions or comments for Meroë, or wish to become more involved in watershed issues, contact Meroë at (734) 459-5386 or the Huron River Watershed Council at (734) 769-5123.

-Eunice Burns



photo: Michael Kaericher

HRWC board representative for Salem Township, Meroë Kaericher at Creekshead Woods, which the Kaerichers donated to the Washtenaw Land Trust.

Ann Arbor Library Builds “Green”

The new Malletts Creek Branch Library Demonstrates Innovative Design to Benefit the Creek.

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sand in the soil strata that will carry stormwater into the groundwater layer. The perforated pipes also connect to the detention area, which is very flat and planted with native plants to encourage plant stormwater uptake and infiltration. Another back-up system is a series of linear channels (they look like inverted speed bumps in concrete) in the parking lot that carry water from the bioswales to the detention area in the unlikely event that all other systems saturate and the bioswales fill with water.

STORMWATER AS AN AMENITY

The path of stormwater at the library site is highly visible. Instead of stormwater buried in pipes, the library has chosen to spend their resources on

plants and land forms above the ground that everyone can enjoy. A series of bridges span the bioswales in the parking lot so library patrons can observe stormwater in action and appreciate the beauty of the native plants and trees. Because this site is within an urban context, all the native plant areas are carefully designed so that the site does not look too wild or unkempt. The small lawn areas will be maintained with zero-phosphorus fertilizer in order to reduce phosphorus loads to Malletts Creek.

Instead of stormwater being treated as a waste product, storm water and its associated ‘green infrastructure’ is held on-site as an amenity. If Malletts Creek

Volunteer Opportunities

STONEFLY SEARCH

Join a small team and venture to the creeks in search of winter stoneflies. These remarkable creatures thrive in the “dead” of winter and are useful indicators of stream conditions. This activity is part of an ongoing scientific study of the Huron River system by the Adopt-A-Stream Program. Contact Joan Martin at jmartin@hrwc.org or (734) 769-5971.

GIS FOR THE HURON

If you have experience with ArcView 8.3, 8.1 or 3.2, then you could assist staff with updating and improving HRWC’s spatial data. Contact Elizabeth Riggs at eriggs@hrwc.org or (734) 769-5123x4.

LIBRARY HELP

HRWC maintains a library of resources that is open to the public for browsing and may be loaned out to our members. Help is needed to monitor materials on loan and integrate new publications into the library and database. Contact Chris Riggs at cmriggs@hrwc.org or (734) 769-5123x5.

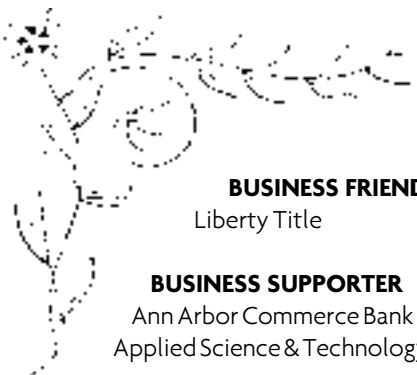
could talk, this message would be written in all the books at the new Malletts Creek Branch Library.

-Shannan Gibb-Randall

Shannan Gibb-Randall is an associate for InSite Design Studio, Inc., the landscape architects for the Malletts Creek Library Branch. Luckenbach-Zielgelman Associates, PLLC are the architects for the building.

Thank You

*to Our New and Renewing Members
this Quarter*



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Liberty Title

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HRWC Endowment Program

On October 23rd, The Huron River Watershed Council's Board of Directors voted to establish an endowment through a planned giving program. To kick off the program the Board will raise \$10,000 through an internal legacy campaign and select a Community Foundation to steward the money.

The endowment will help the Huron River Watershed Council face many immediate and future challenges as we work to protect the Huron River. The Board wants our children and grandchildren to always have safe drinking water and want to ensure that the river will always be a beautiful part of our communities.

HRWC will keep you updated about our endowment campaign, but if you have any questions or need more information, please contact Ellen Offen at (734)769-5123 x1 or eoffen@hrwc.org.

Yes, I want to help the Huron River Watershed Council protect and restore the Huron River.

Here are my 2004 member dues:

- | | | |
|---|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$5,000 Mink | <input type="checkbox"/> \$500 Blue Heron | <input type="checkbox"/> \$50 Friend |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$2,500 Small Mouth Bass | <input type="checkbox"/> \$250 Mayfly | <input type="checkbox"/> \$30 Supporting |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$1,000 Green Heron | <input type="checkbox"/> \$100 Steward | <input type="checkbox"/> \$ ___ Other |

Name _____

Address _____ City, State _____ Zip _____

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Natural River Zoning in the Huron Watershed

Natural River Act Protects the Huron

A large portion of the Huron River and three of its tributaries have such good quality and natural beauty that in 1977 they were designated a Natural River under the Michigan Natural Rivers Act (231 P.A. 1970). The Huron is the only river with this status in southeastern Michigan. The designated area extends from the Kent Lake Dam in Kensington Metropark downstream to the Scio-Ann Arbor Township line (excluding lakeshore in the Chain-of-Lakes and the Village of Dexter) and includes portions of Davis, Arms, and Mill creeks.

For the Huron, this designation establishes special zoning restrictions within a Natural River District Zone that extends 400 feet on each side of the river. In that zone new construction only can include single-family housing, and building construction must take place outside of the floodplain and be set back 125 feet from a river or creek. In addition a 50-foot natural vegetation buffer strip must be maintained along the riverbank and filling and dredging activities are strictly regulated. Variances to the requirements can be obtained under special circumstances. Details of the administrative rules for the Huron River zone can be found at the DNR website www.michigan.gov/dnr by going to the "Forests, Land and Water" page.

WHY HAVE NATURAL RIVER ZONES?

The goal of Natural River designation is to preserve, protect and enhance the river environment in a natural state for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations. Not only does it preserve the river for recreational use and enjoyment of its beauty, it also protects our drinking water. The act "states that the local zoning ordinances or state zoning rules 'shall protect the interest of the people of the state as a whole' and shall bear in mind the unique characteristics of the land and water, surrounding development, and existing use, and provide for the consideration of soil, water, stream beds and banks, flood plains, and adjoining uplands."¹ Natural River zoning involves land use planning

across political boundaries, a concept endorsed by the Michigan Land Use Leadership Council.

Some opponents of Natural River designation are concerned that it unfairly restricts the right of riparian property owners to build on or modify their property resulting in a reduction in the value of their property by limiting their opportunity to develop the land. Local governments are concerned about what they view as a lack of local control. However, without this protection, uncontrolled development inevitably will lead to the loss of the natural beauty that is the chief source of the value of riverfront property. One look at the urban rivers in southeast Michigan foreshadows the fate of the Huron if we do not uphold and enforce the Natural River zoning requirements.

CURRENT LEGISLATION

Following the recent designation of two rivers in northern Michigan as Natural Rivers, two bills that will modify the Natural Rivers Act have been passed by the Michigan House of Representatives and referred to Senate Committee. The general intent of H.B. 4641 and H.B. 4642 is to alter the process by which a natural river area is designated. In addition, H.B. 4641 includes provisions for periodic review of a Natural River designation with the possibility of the designation being rescinded following resolution by the governing bodies of the majority of the counties and townships within the area. These two bills apply only to recent and future designations. Additional information about these bills is located at

www.michiganlegislature.org.

WHAT WE HAVE TO PROTECT

Today the Huron's Natural River Zone is the longest stretch of free-running, un-dammed water on the river. The HRWC Adopt-A-Stream river-monitoring program has identified four study sites in the entire watershed that have exceptionally good conditions. Two of



photo: HRWC

This beautiful section of the Huron River just south of Portage Lake is part of the Natural River Zone, which stretches from the Kent Lake Dam to the Scio-Ann Arbor Township line.

these are in the Natural River Zone and the remaining two are upstream of the Zone on creeks too small to qualify for Natural River status. Thanks to the Michigan Natural Rivers Act, we can still walk or canoe along this portion of the river and see fish and wildlife and experience the river as it has always been.

However, increasing development is occurring throughout this area, bringing with it the impervious surfaces and human pollutants that degrade the River. If we are to maintain this natural resource for future generations, as mandated by the Natural Rivers Act, we must ensure that the Huron River Natural River Zoning requirements are retained and enforced not only to the letter but also in the spirit of the law.

-Susan Wooley

¹ House Legislative Analysis Section: House Bill 4641 and 4642, First Analysis (9-26-03)

The Huron River Watershed Council
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Please examine your mailing label for your HRWC membership expiration date and use that as a reminder to renew. If there is no date, then you may not be a current member of the Watershed Council. Please consider HRWC membership. We need your support. Thanks.

The Huron River Watershed Council receives contributions via payroll deduction through EARTH SHARE of Michigan.



Thanks to All of Our Supporters!

Protecting the Huron River is a big job and we would be lost without the donations of time, talents, and resources from our dedicated volunteers and supporters. **We extend Special Thanks to:**

The **130 people** who collected macroinvertebrates at 56 sites throughout the watershed.

The **45 people** who sorted the critters and recorded findings from the Fall River RoundUp.

Gretchen Alexander, Brian Swisher, Mahya Wood, Gary Crawford, Nancy Stokes, Mike Wiley, and Catherine Riseng for identifying thousands of insects at Bug ID Day.

Tom Jenkins, Sue & John Lillie, and Dave Brooks for many hours of lugging and arranging equipment during the fall monitoring.

Ellen Rambo and Karl Bates for editing the Monitoring Gazette.

Marilyn & Edward Couture, Tom Jenkins, Sue & John Lillie, and Dave Brooks for mailing the Monitoring Gazette.

Don Rottiers, Jesse Gordon, Wes Vivian, Ron Emaus, and Harry Sheehan for measuring and mapping a study site in Malletts Creek.

The U-M School of Natural Resources & Environment and Dean Rosina Bierbaum for co-hosting MDEQ Director Steve Chester's talk on October 14th.

Steve Chester, the MDEQ Director, for taking time to share his vision for the MDEQ.

Whole Foods Market for helping to fund HRWC programs by donating 5% of store's net income on September 3 to

the Huron River Watershed and thanks to **Dave Brooks, Tui and John Minderhout** for volunteering to acquaint Whole Foods Market shoppers with HRWC.

Marilyn and Edward Couture for stuffing, stamping, and mailing invitations and letters.

Meg Kennedy Smith for spending hours looking up names and addresses and for all the time she took to put those names and addresses into our database.

Mary Bajcz for several hours of tedious data entry.

Jesse Gordon and Don Rottiers for representing the Adopt-A-Stream Program at the State's press conference introducing the Clean Water Corps.