



# Huron River Report

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1100 North Main Street, Ann Arbor, MI 48104

**Spring 2012**

Stream Muckin'  
Summer Events  
River Stewards

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## Elusive Neighbors

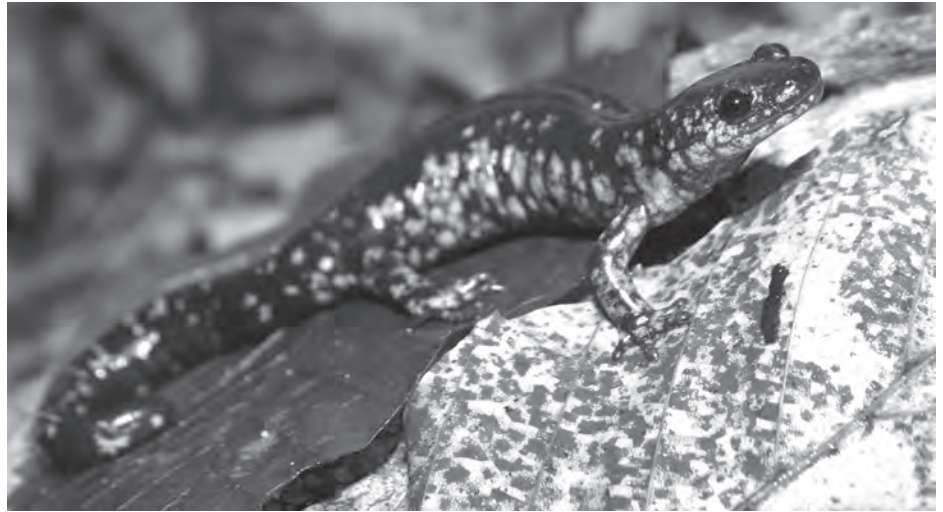
Salamanders are found throughout watershed

Next time you are walking through one of the Huron River watershed's many forests and wetlands, look under a log or glance in one of the little ponds you come across. You may find a salamander, one of the more unique watershed residents.

### SALAMANDER ECOLOGY

Ten species of salamanders call the Huron River watershed home. Some, like the red-backed salamander, are so abundant in parts of Michigan (ecologists have reported population sizes up to 3,600 per acre) that their biomass (the mass of all of them together) can exceed that of mammals and birds combined! Others, like the four-toed salamander, are more specialized and only occur in isolated populations near creeks, sphagnum seepages, and bogs.

While salamanders can be locally abundant, they are among the most secretive herpetofauna - that's "biogeek"



for reptiles and amphibians. Most species are best observed when they head out of their burrows to breeding ponds, which can be up to a half mile away from their hibernation sites. They gather at the ponds to lay or fertilize eggs that hatch

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*The blue spotted salamander emerges early in the spring; they are often the first to arrive at breeding ponds. photo: D. Mifsud*

## What's in the Honey?

New study of Honey Creek investigates bacteria

One of the most common questions posed to HRWC is "Is it safe to swim or wade in my creek?" In most cases the answer is yes, with an important exception. In urbanized areas, rain can wash bacteria and other pollutants into the river and its tributaries, making it potentially unsafe to swim for a day or two after the rain event.

More surprisingly, HRWC studies of Honey Creek in Scio Township have identified consistently high bacteria counts during wet *and* dry weather. The

Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) confirmed HRWC's data with additional sampling in 2007. As a result, the DEQ developed a new regulation to identify and reduce bacterial sources. In December 2011, HRWC, partnering with the Washtenaw County Water Resources

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*Addressing bacteria in the water allows kids to continue being kids. source: David Babcock, Food Poison Journal*

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The content of this newsletter is prepared by HRWC staff and does not necessarily reflect the opinions of HRWC board members.

## Follow us on Facebook and Twitter!

[www.facebook.com/huronriver](http://www.facebook.com/huronriver)  
[www.twitter.com/hrwc](http://www.twitter.com/hrwc)

HRWC offices are located at the  
NEW Center, Suite 210  
1100 N. Main Street, Ann Arbor, MI 48104  
Call (734) 769-5123 or visit [www.hrwc.org](http://www.hrwc.org)  
for directions.

★ = Adopt-A-Stream Monitoring Site

Indicates geographic  
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## Events

More events and updates on the web at: [www.hrwc.org](http://www.hrwc.org)

Saturday, March 3, 9 AM – 4 PM  
**Quiet Waters Symposium**  
MSU Pavilion, East Lansing  
contact: [eriggs@hrwc.org](mailto:eriggs@hrwc.org)

Friday through Sunday, March 16 – 18  
**Home, Garden & Lifestyle Show**  
Washtenaw Farm Council Grounds  
contact: [www.bragannarbor.com](http://www.bragannarbor.com)

Thursday, March 22, 5:30 PM  
**Executive Committee meeting**  
NEW Center  
contact: [lrubin@hrwc.org](mailto:lrubin@hrwc.org)

Saturday, March 24, 1 – 3 PM  
**Water Quality Monitoring Training**  
Location TBD  
contact: [rlawson@hrwc.org](mailto:rlawson@hrwc.org)

Saturday, April 21, 9 AM – 3:30 PM or  
10:30 AM – 5 PM  
**River Roundup**  
NEW Center  
Pre-registration required  
contact: [www.hrwc.org/volunteer](http://www.hrwc.org/volunteer)

Sunday, April 22, noon – 4 PM  
**Ann Arbor Area Earth Day Festival**  
Leslie Science & Nature Center  
1831 Traver Rd., Ann Arbor  
contact: [plabadie@hrwc.org](mailto:plabadie@hrwc.org)

Sunday, April 22, noon – 4 PM  
**Earth Day Festival in Huron Valley**  
Carls Family YMCA in Milford  
contact: [plabadie@hrwc.org](mailto:plabadie@hrwc.org)

Thursday, April 26, 5:30 – 7:30 PM  
**Annual Meeting**  
Dexter Public Library  
3255 Alpine Street, Dexter  
contact: [msmith@hrwc.org](mailto:msmith@hrwc.org)

Sunday, April 29, noon – 3 PM or  
2 – 5 PM  
**Bug ID Day**  
NEW Center  
Pre-registration required  
contact: [www.hrwc.org/volunteer](http://www.hrwc.org/volunteer)



# Elusive Neighbors

continued from cover

into tadpoles, just like frogs. When the tadpoles mature, they emerge from the water to spend the rest of their lives in the neighboring forest, under logs, leaf litter, and some in burrows up to four feet deep. Some species live as long as 50 years.

The red-backed salamander is one of a few species that do not breed in ponds, but lay their eggs in nests on land, tending to them before they hatch. The babies emerge from their eggs looking like miniature versions of the adults and so do not go through a tadpole stage. These predominantly aquatic newts are known as “efts” during this terrestrial phase.

## VALUABLE TO THE ECOSYSTEM

Salamanders are important to the watershed’s natural areas not only for their aesthetic and educational value, but also for the ecological role they play. They contribute greatly to the forest and wetland food web, due to their numbers and their dual roles as both prey and predator as tadpoles and adults. In fact, tadpoles are top predators in vernal pools, hunting aquatic animals like insect larvae, copepods, fairy shrimp, and even other amphibian larvae. Especially beneficial to humans, the red-spotted newt eats copious amounts of mosquito larvae.



Salamander larvae live in local ponds.  
illustration: J. Wolf

## INDICATORS OF ECOLOGICAL QUALITY

Salamanders are great indicators of ecological health. They breathe through their skin, which is very sensitive to toxins and other environmental factors. They are dependent on both wetland and upland habitats. Salamanders do not reach sexual maturity for 2-7 years, depending on the species, so they need stable, intact habitats to continue their populations.

Of the 10 species inhabiting the watershed’s woods, they vary in sensitivity to ecological conditions and so the presence of certain species can be indicators of forest and wetland quality. For instance, the spotted salamander needs intact forests with small, vernal ponds present; they disappear once a forest is disturbed by cutting or the presence of invasive species. The blue-spotted salamander, on the other hand, is common in woodlands with ponds that retain water into mid-summer, and they can persist in somewhat fragmented forests. Four-toed salamander populations are uncommon and restricted to isolated colonies, so this species is very vulnerable to human activities.

## SALAMANDERS UNDER THREAT

Habitat loss from sprawling patterns of new development, water pollution, and collection for commercial purposes all pose a threat to salamander populations.

## How to Find Salamanders

The best time to see salamanders is just as it’s warm enough for the cold-blooded creatures to emerge from their hibernation burrows, but wet enough so they can make it to their breeding ponds without their sensitive skin getting too dry. Early spring typically offers these conditions, but breeding migration can continue into mid-May. The best conditions for salamander migration are often among the worst for humans: steady rain, after dark, and after a daytime high of at least 50 degrees. When conditions are just right, it seems all the salamanders of a particular species get the same idea and head *en masse* for the nearest breeding pond. Volunteer monitors for the City of Ann Arbor’s Salamander Monitoring Program report seeing hundreds of the creatures sliding through the leaf litter, heading for their breeding ponds. Other nights, volunteers come up empty, with nary a salamander observed. Needless to say, it can be difficult to catch the perfect night for a migration.

If you miss the springtime nuptials, you still have a chance to find a salamander. If you are walking through the woods, you may be able to observe salamanders by looking under logs. The best log width is 4 to 6 inches – if you decide to look, turn the log over very carefully, observe the salamander, then do your best to replace the log the way you found it (and don’t smush any salamanders!). Salamanders have very sensitive skin, so don’t touch the salamander if you’ve applied lotion, sunscreen or bug repellent to your hands.

As new development encroaches upon a natural area, roads cutting through the forest block the salamanders from their breeding ponds. Clearing for lawns and homes destroys both their upland and wetland habitats.

Most salamanders breed in “vernal pools,” which are small, shallow ponds that occur in slight depressions in forests. These habitats are vulnerable because they are too small to be eligible for protection through state and many local wetland regulatory programs.

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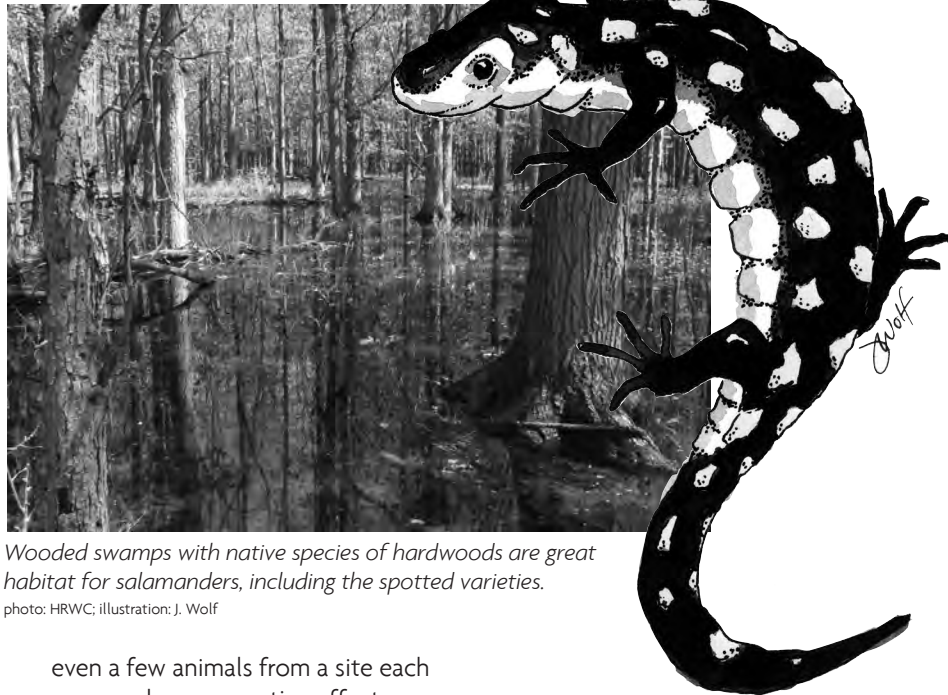
The red spotted newt transforms from tadpole, to a terrestrial eft (pictured here), then back to an pond-dwelling adult. photo: D. Mifsud

# Elusive Neighbors

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## How to protect salamanders

- Support wetland protection, even for small wetlands. Make sure your local community has a wetlands ordinance that protects wetlands of all sizes. Search “wetland protection” at [www.hrwc.org](http://www.hrwc.org) for more details.
- Support compact development in your community that does not unduly consume large amounts of natural areas. Search “compact development” at [www.hrwc.org](http://www.hrwc.org) for more details.
- Learn more about salamanders and other members of this family group. They are very sensitive to environmental changes.
- Eliminate the use of all chemicals, particularly herbicides and pesticides, in or near wetlands. These water oases are breeding grounds for fish, salamanders, waterfowl and shorebirds.
- Avoid handling these amphibians; their skin is sensitive to many chemicals including cosmetics, hand sanitizers, sunscreens, bugsprays and lotions.
- Do not use salamanders as fish bait. Do not collect salamanders as pets. These long-lived species are sensitive to population declines, and taking



Wooded swamps with native species of hardwoods are great habitat for salamanders, including the spotted varieties.

photo: HRWC; illustration: J. Wolf

even a few animals from a site each year can have a negative effect.

- Wash hiking boots between hikes and locations. Mud and dirt on boots can spread invasive seeds and diseases.
- Support amphibian population surveys. The City of Ann Arbor's Salamander Monitoring Program began as a way to help park managers protect and restore salamander populations and to educate residents about salamanders. Join them. You can also become involved with the Michigan Herp Atlas Program and

help document the presence of salamanders and other amphibians and reptiles. To find out more, go to [www.MIHerpAtlas.org](http://www.MIHerpAtlas.org).

—Kris Olsson

*Thank you to David Mifsud and the Ann Arbor Salamander Monitoring Survey for providing information for this article.*

## What's in the Honey?

continued from cover

Commissioner, Scio Township and the City of Ann Arbor, launched a new project to better understand the source(s) of bacterial contamination in Honey Creek and develop a plan to reduce or eliminate the problem. The DEQ awarded HRWC a grant of nearly \$75,000 to do the work.

### LOCATING THE SOURCES

The types of bacteria that present health concerns originate in the digestive systems of humans and other animals. The bacteria can get into streams by illicit septic connections, poorly maintained septic

fields, wildlife living in stormdrains, runoff from grazing areas, or areas with a high concentration of pet waste.

The Honey Creek project includes three major elements. First, HRWC staff and volunteers, with professional lab support, will collect and analyze water samples this spring and fall from targeted locations along the creek. Differences in bacteria counts will help determine the location of likely bacterial sources. HRWC will send a subset of water samples to a specialized laboratory for bacterial source tracking

(BST) analysis. The BST analysis will identify whether the bacteria is coming from humans, pets, farm animals, wildlife, or some combination of sources. Combining this source information with bacterial counts by location will allow HRWC to pinpoint the source(s) of bacterial contamination.

### ELIMINATING THE PROBLEM

Second, HRWC will use the results from the sampling study to develop a plan to eliminate bacterial sources from Honey

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# Stream Muckin' and Bug Collectin'

A very strange pastime, indeed

HRWC has been collecting aquatic insects and other wiggly creatures for so long that it is easy to lose perspective on how absolutely odd this activity actually is.... For the average person not familiar with bug hunting, it must seem very strange that anyone would voluntarily don fishing equipment, jump into a river, and push rocks and logs around with a net in order to find creatures that (let's face the truth here!) are often quite ugly or scary looking. Yes, collecting stream bugs is certainly weird.

However, it is definitely fun and interesting as well! Participants in HRWC's River RoundUps and Winter Stonefly Searches get to see new and unusual places in the Huron River watershed, and meet old friends and new. Volunteers often report back, "I had no idea that there was so much living underneath the rocks in a river!" Yet, while there are many ugly bugs out in a creek, there is also great beauty; beauty that can be found in the artistic patterns on a stonefly's back, in the strength of a hellgrammite's pincers, and in the intricacies of a mayfly's gills. Searching for aquatic insects is a fascinating experience; many people are hooked from the first time they try it.

## LEARNING FROM THESE AQUATIC CRITTERS

HRWC has been studying and cataloging the diversity of aquatic insects in local

streams since 1992. A higher diversity of insects indicates a healthier stream. This is because a diverse set of organisms will have a diverse set of food and habitat requirements, and a stream that meets these diverse requirements is a stream that is functioning normally.

One of the most easily recognized signs that a stream is suffering is when it lacks diversity of organisms and habitats. A stream with only a few types of bugs, the same water depth throughout, the same-sized rocks in the streambed, and the same plants in the stream as on the stream bank likely has been harmed by human activities. Perhaps the stream was dredged or channelized in the past, or has extreme water flows that unnaturally rise and fall after storms. A healthy stream will have twists and turns, deep pools, shallow riffles and runs, and sand, gravel, silt, and boulders scattered throughout the streambed.

Some types of bugs are also very useful in checking on the water quality of a stream - that is, whether or not the



*Spring is a great time to watch the creek flow - this team is sampling a quiet location on Davis Creek. photo: G. Hammond*

water is polluted. Unlike other animals, aquatic insects are more or less stuck where they are; fish can generally move from stream to stream when faced with environmental hardship, and mammals and birds can easily leave polluted water alone. Stoneflies and many types of mayflies, for example, will not survive in a creek polluted by cow manure because they need very high oxygen levels to survive, and such pollution takes the oxygen out of the water. If you do find these bugs in a creek, then you know that creek does not meet their requirements for survival.

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## What's in the Honey?

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Creek. HRWC is scheduling several local meetings to discuss the problem and potential solutions with residents and other community stakeholders. Based on the input received from these stakeholder meetings and the monitoring results, HRWC will develop a bacteria reduction plan.

The third, and final step, will be project implementation. Depending on the ultimate source or sources of the problem, HRWC will develop educational materials and other tools to use with targeted local

groups to help reduce or eliminate the bacterial problem. HRWC will meet with these target groups to teach them how they can better control bacteria sources.

### HOW YOU CAN HELP

If you are a resident of Scio Township, you are invited to attend a community stakeholder meeting. Check HRWC's website for announcements (go to [www.hrwc.org](http://www.hrwc.org) and search: "Honey Creek") and to check the online calendar.

No matter where you reside, we will need

volunteers to help safely collect water samples. Sign up on the volunteer page at [www.hrwc.org](http://www.hrwc.org) or contact Ric Lawson. No prior experience is needed.

Learn more about ways you can help keep poop out of the water by visiting the "Take Action" section of our website. To find information about bacteria monitoring in other streams in the watershed, visit the Water Quality Monitoring Program website at [www.hrwc.org](http://www.hrwc.org) under "our work" and "programs."

— Ric Lawson



# Stream Muckin' and Bug Collectin'

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## HOW'S IT DONE?

Through HRWC's River RoundUp and Stonefly Search programs, aquatic critters are studied from over 70 locations across Livingston, Oakland, Washtenaw, and Wayne counties. Each of these sites has its own unique history, problems, and features (see the sidebar for a profile of an interesting study site). Thankfully, a huge cadre of volunteers helps HRWC carry out these studies. Looking for these organisms is an ideal volunteer opportunity: the task is focused and can be done in a single day, it is fun and adventurous, and it is a great educational opportunity for all ages.

After signing up, a volunteer joins a team at HRWC's office on the day of the event. The team carpools to one of our study sites, where a trained team member collects bugs from the stream, and the rest of the team picks bugs from white sorting trays. Then, the team travels to another site and repeats the process. Normally teams are sent to a healthy stream as well as an impacted stream, so they can see the environmental consequences of unwise human decisions.

At the end of the day, the aquatic insects are brought back to HRWC. If our volunteers have an unexpected discovery (for example, if they found that a normally healthy creek seems to have an unusually poor insect population), HRWC follows up immediately by revisiting the site to make sure there is not a chemical emergency. Thankfully, this has only happened once since monitoring began. In Lett's Creek, volunteers detected oil entering the creek upstream of the Chelsea corridor and



photo: J. Lloyd

## Narrow Gauge Creek

A tributary to Millers Creek

It may just be a trickle of water, but this is a very beautiful and secluded place, given that it flows through a highly populated residential area in Ann Arbor.

This tributary is the healthiest stream in the Millers Creek watershed, and in the whole of the city of Ann Arbor, as evidenced by the presence of multiple families of stoneflies. The creek is a trickle of water that seeps out of the ground and flows for about 200 feet before merging into a larger Millers Creek tributary. HRWC has been sampling this creek since 2002.

The creek's entire watershed (all 2,000 square feet of it!) flows through a natural area named Narrow Gauge Way, which was identified as a potential conservation area in the 2004 Millers Creek Watershed Improvement Plan due to the high quality of the stream and the biodiversity present in the surrounding oak forest.

The City of Ann Arbor purchased Narrow Gauge Way in 2009 for \$1.8 million with funds from the Greenbelt Program (approved in a 2004 millage).

Much of the property was once owned by Dr. Harold Allen who was an Aeronautical Engineering professor at the University of Michigan, a pilot, veteran, world traveler, and avid hiker.

In 1962, Dr. Allen began building a one-third-size narrow-gauge railroad on the property, eventually operating four steam locomotives, including two that he constructed himself. The railroad reached almost a mile in length and eventually lent its name to the natural area and its bordering street. Dr. Allen passed away in 2001, and the railway has been removed.

*Credit (partial): Natural Area Preservation Newsletter; Volume 15, Number 1*

— Jason Frenzel and Paul Steen

were able to track the spill to a business bordering the creek. Those responsible for the accidental pollution quickly fixed the problem.

The week after the River RoundUp, volunteers work with HRWC staff to identify the bugs to learn how many different types were found, and HRWC tracks how the insect populations have changed over time. The long-term data reveals patterns of sustained degradation such as fine sediment or nutrient accumulation, or a slow loss of in-stream habitat.

Armed with this data about the aquatic insect populations, HRWC is better equipped to make smart management decisions, such as where to conduct a stream restoration project, what areas need to be managed to protect high quality streams, and which areas of the watershed need more attention from HRWC staff and local and state government.

## WHAT NOW?

Now is the time to sign up for the next River RoundUp and contribute to this long term scientific study! All ages are welcome; children 12 years and under must be accompanied by an adult. The next River RoundUp is April 21, followed by ID Day on April 29. Volunteers are not required to attend both events. Go to [www.hrwc.org/](http://www.hrwc.org/) volunteer to register. See you there!

— Paul Steen

# SUMMER 2012 HRWC EVENTS



## BIRDING

With City of Ann Arbor Ornithologist Dea Armstrong  
Canoe Livery, Gallup Park, 3000 Fuller Rd, Ann Arbor  
Free, all ages. No registration required.

**Friday, May 11, 6 – 8 PM**  
Evening Bird Walk

**Saturday, June 9, 7:30 – 9:30 AM**  
Early Morning Bird Walk

## FLY FISHING LESSONS

With Mike Mouradian of Ann Arbor Trout Unlimited  
Wooden Shelter, Gallup Park, 3000 Fuller Rd, Ann Arbor

**Saturday, June 2**  
FAMILY Fly Fishing Class **9 AM – noon**  
Children 11 or older. Adults must accompany children.

WOMEN'S Fly Fishing Class **1 – 5 PM**  
For women only

**Sunday, June 3**  
WOMEN'S Fly Fishing Class **9 AM – noon**

GENERAL Fly Fishing Class **1 – 5 PM**  
Open to adults 16 years and older



## WALK ALONG THE HURON

With Fred Hanert, HRWC Board, and Kris Olsson, HRWC watershed ecologist  
**Saturday, June 23, at 10 AM – noon**  
Huron Meadows Metropark  
8765 Hammel Road, Brighton

## HURON RIVER DAY GEOCACHE

With Bob Hospadaruk and Michigan Geocachers  
**Sunday, July 15, noon – 4 PM**  
Gallup Park, 3000 Fuller Rd, Ann Arbor



## SWIM BASELINE LAKE

With Laura Rubin  
**Sunday, July 15, 8:30 AM**  
Baseline Lake, Michigan Sailing Club, Dexter (1-mile and 2-mile swim)



**Saturday, June 16**  
Fly Fishing Tournament  
[www.hrwc.org/flyfishingtournament](http://www.hrwc.org/flyfishingtournament)  
for details and registration.

## PADDLE TRIPS

With Ron Sell, Barry Lonik and Gerry Neumeier  
Exact location of each put-in will be sent to participants after they register.

**Saturday, May 19**  
Proud Lake State Recreation Area to Island Lake State Recreation Area  
With City of Ann Arbor ornithologist Dea Armstrong  
Put-in time is 10 AM

**Saturday, June 9**  
Huron Meadows Metropark to Zukey Lake  
Lunch at Zukey Lake Tavern  
Put-in time is 10 AM

**Tuesday, July 31**  
Full Moon Paddle  
Pickerel Lake through the channel to Crooked Lake and back  
Put-in time is 6:30 PM

**Saturday, August 11**  
Unadilla to Hell  
Lunch at Dam Site Inn  
Put-in time is 10 AM

**Saturday, September 15**  
Flat Rock to Point Mouillée  
Put-in time is 10AM

## Most events are FREE!

Participants must register in advance.

GO TO [WWW.HRWC.ORG](http://WWW.HRWC.ORG) FOR MORE DETAILS.

# Know Your Board Representative

Scott Barb, Livingston County

One of HRWC's current board members is Scott Barb. He is a Principal Planner with the Livingston County Department of Planning and has served as a planner with Hartland Township.

Scott earned a B.S. in Urban and Regional Planning with a minor in Science from Eastern Michigan University. He is a Registered Professional Emergency Manager for the Michigan State Police.

He and his wife, Julie, have two sets of twins – Tanner and Logan, age 7, and Mallory and Preston, age 4. One of Scott's hobbies is traveling with his family. His favorite place to visit is the southwest United States, specifically Utah, where opportunities for outdoor activities are plentiful. Scott enjoys fishing, camping, mountain biking, and reading. Favorite

fishing spots include the Shenandoah River in Virginia and the Snake River in Idaho.

Scott became interested in water conservation and clean water initiatives because he wants his children and future generations to be able to enjoy this important natural resource. One of his favorite examples of how planning and water conservation can work in harmony is Frank Lloyd Wright's house "Falling Water" which is situated over a waterfall in southwestern Pennsylvania. Through careful planning and building practices, this home exists in a nearly natural state with free flowing streams beneath the foundation. By teaching others and sharing examples, Scott believes water conservation can become a standard practice for others to follow.



photo: S. Barb

Livingston County residents should call Scott at (517) 540-8730 if they have questions, comments or suggestions regarding county planning issues. For more information or to volunteer, call HRWC at (734) 769-5123.

— Eunice Burns

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# Laura's Stream of Consciousness

An update on HRWC projects and activities

## DELAYS IN NEW STORMWATER POLICY

For over a year we have been anticipating changes to stormwater regulations by either the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) or the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ). EPA has been working on new stormwater rules under a settlement agreement with the Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF), who sued the agency for not complying with requirements under the Clean Water Act. The settlement originally required EPA to release a draft rule for review by September 30, 2011. But, after several delays, EPA renegotiated with CBF to release the draft later this year. It seems unlikely that EPA will act prior to the November elections. The new rule is highly anticipated as it will likely include new stormwater control standards. At this time, most stormwater is currently unregulated, and the new rule may extend some regulations beyond the current urbanized area boundaries, benefiting waters across the state.

The State of Michigan has been slow to act as well. Currently, those areas covered by stormwater regulations are following

an expired, nine-year-old general permit. The DEQ withdrew its 2008 revision attempt following legal action by some southeast Michigan municipalities. Over the last year, HRWC staff participated with municipalities from across the state to advise DEQ on needed changes to the stormwater permits. DEQ has yet to release a draft or schedule for a new permit. Change is needed to incorporate lessons learned over the past nine years. Such delays maintain a status quo insufficient to improve and protect the water quality of the Huron and other Michigan rivers.

## AGING INFRASTRUCTURE: DAMS

In October, Governor Rick Snyder delivered an address on Michigan's infrastructure needs. Among the topics of transportation – roads, bridges, bus, rail, posts, sewer and water – was the removal of dams. Here is part of Governor Snyder's comments on dams within the state:

*There are nearly 2,600 dams around the state. Most of these were built by private owners decades ago for power, milling, and recreation.*

*The American Society of Civil Engineers recently gave Michigan a "D" in its 2009 Dam Infrastructure report card, stating, "Over 90 percent of Michigan's dams will reach or exceed their design life by 2020. Many dams are abandoned, no longer serve any useful purpose, and pose safety hazards to downstream residents."*

*In Michigan, 74 percent of dams are privately owned. Repairs often exceed six figures. Removal can cost millions of dollars. Most private owners cannot afford fixes or removals.*

*I have directed the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality working with the Departments of Natural Resources, Agriculture and Transportation to identify, prioritize and streamline efforts to remove problem dams.*



Laura enjoying the watershed in its frozen form. photo: HRWC

Governor Snyder focused on a pressing cost and safety problem to small and large dam operators, private and public. The Huron has nearly 100 known dams, most of them having reached or reaching the end of their 40-year average life expectancy, thereby requiring large maintenance costs, posing safety threats, and impairing water quality. As we respond to this pressing problem and the issue of dam management on the Huron, this commitment from the Governor and the State government is key to our progress.

Over the last year, HRWC evaluated dam prioritization and removal work done by different groups across the Midwest, merged pre-existing state and national dam databases, and made corrections as necessary, in order to have a better sense of the current state of dams in the Huron River Watershed. HRWC also developed a database screening tool that enables staff to evaluate the potential dam removal across the watershed, and is now talking to representatives from DEQ and DNR about the screening tool, future directions, and partnerships in moving to the next step in this process.

— Laura Rubin



The Huron River has nearly 100 known dams. photo: HRWC

# River Stewards Speak Up

Members share their river connections

## BARRY LONIK

*Barry has been a member since 1996. He lives in the Mill Creek 'shed, and is one of HRWC's river guides for summer paddles on the Huron River.*

From his first summer on this planet, my son Wesley has enjoyed the waters of the Huron, whether swimming in the pristine lakes of the Pinckney State Recreation Area or floating the main river. We are blessed to not only have a natural resource of excellent quality, but also one which has abundant access. Every year we paddle the Huron from Hudson Mills Metropark to Delhi Metropark with friends and their kids, stopping at the old dam site just upstream of Zeeb Road at the Washtenaw County Burns-Stokes Preserve to hang out in the rock "tub," body surf the rapids and help rescue wayward paddlers. Knowing the water is clean and safe allows me to assure our friends and creates lasting memories. It's been a joy to see Wes, now

12 years old, become a confident paddler and swimmer in the Huron's waters.

I've been blessed through my professional work – first with Legacy Land Conservancy and now as a land protection consultant to several Washtenaw townships with dedicated millages for land preservation – to have had a hand in protecting thousands of acres of land in the Huron River watershed. Many of those properties have wetlands and streams and slopes that feed to the river. It feels good to know that these lands will now never be developed. Through that effort and those of HRWC, the kids (and adults) of tomorrow can have the same quality experiences that we enjoy today.



Donna, Stu and Daisy enjoy walks at Delhi MetroPark, along the Huron. photo: D. Snyder

We were attracted to the Ann Arbor area fifteen years ago because of its quality of life, and have been pleasantly surprised by the abundance of clean water in the area.

I also enjoy recreation in and on water – for example, swimming, sailing, and kayaking. I feel fortunate that I can do all of these things with the same water

that I drink, here in the Huron River Watershed.

My first volunteer activity with HRWC was with Liz Elling's Huron River swim. I kayaked with her a couple of days on her 100-mile swim, where she so effectively demonstrated the cleanliness of the Huron River. These

past few years, I have been pleased to help with the community swim across Baseline Lake, further demonstrating how clean the lake and our river is – HRWC does great work for the watershed and I am proud to play a small part.



Wes Lonik in his canoe. photo: B. Lonik

## DONNA SNYDER

*Donna and her husband, Stu, have been members since 2004. Donna helps HRWC organize the Baseline Lake swim every summer.*

Water is important to me for a number of reasons. First, I drink a lot of it. And I drink it without additives or flavorings, such as carbonation, coffee, tea, etc., so I want it to be clean and taste good.

## BOOKS BY CHANCE

### REMINDER:

1. Take extra, old and unwanted books, CDs, and DVDs to HRWC
2. Feel good about a cleaner home with less clutter, while raising funds for HRWC
3. Tell friends and neighbors about Books by Chance

Bring your goods to HRWC between 9:00 AM and 5:00 PM weekdays. Books by Chance will sell them over the internet and donate the proceeds to HRWC. Books that sell very well are non-fiction, scholarly, technical, current medical and science, quilting/sewing, engineering, law, political, very current fiction, and textbooks.

### THANKS!



# New Monitoring to Start

Program expanding to lower Huron

HRWC is expanding monitoring this season to lower Huron sites in eastern Washtenaw and western Wayne counties, as well as sites in the Ecorse Creek and Combined Downriver watersheds. This expansion builds on the success of the Water Quality Monitoring Program, which has generated highly useful water chemistry data for streams in the middle Huron and Chain of Lakes watersheds.



*We need you to help us study water quality.* photo: J. Lloyd

The effort will rely on volunteers to collect water samples from wadable stream sites and measure stream flow. The Ypsilanti Community Utilities Authority (YCUA) will donate laboratory analysis for several parameters including total phosphorus, total suspended solids

and *E. coli*. The Alliance of Downriver Watersheds (ADW) is providing program funding. Wayne County staff are also assisting in program management to allow for expansion beyond the Huron River watershed.

HRWC will add data from this effort to the ADW's growing set of monitoring data and fill the gap of missing water chemistry information. HRWC and the ADW will use the results to target investments in stormwater infrastructure and other runoff control strategies.

We need volunteers to collect samples beginning in April. Visit the program website at [www.hrwc.org/our-work/programs/water-quality-monitoring/](http://www.hrwc.org/our-work/programs/water-quality-monitoring/) for

more information and to sign up. Initial training is scheduled for March 24 at 1 pm.

— Ric Lawson

## Support the Huron River Watershed Council

### Ways You Can Help

1. Make a Donation
2. Host an Event
3. Read HRWC.org Blog
4. Volunteer
5. Donate CDs, DVDs & Books

### *Our strength is in our numbers*

The success of our river protection work is guided by science, and relies on the support of individuals like you.

*Please contact Margaret Smith if you have a question, (734) 769-5123 x 605 or [msmith@hrwc.org](mailto:msmith@hrwc.org).*

### Donate: Make a Difference

*I would like to make a donation to HRWC in the amount of*

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|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$35 <b>Mayfly</b>             | <input type="checkbox"/> \$500 <b>Salamander</b>         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$50 <b>Crayfish</b>           | <input type="checkbox"/> \$1,000 <b>Smallmouth Bass</b>  |
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| <input type="checkbox"/> \$250 <b>Soft Shell Turtle</b> | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____                     |

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Please make your check payable to HRWC and mail it with this form to 1100 N. Main Street, Ann Arbor, MI 48104. Online donations may be made through our secure website at [www.hrwc.org](http://www.hrwc.org). Thank you!





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## Thanks to Our Volunteers!

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

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**Gayle Thomas** for providing marketing expertise and assistance on Save Water, Save Energy and the H<sub>2</sub>O Heroes campaign.

**Bethany Troy, Maurita Holland** and **Tricia Jones** for improving our online Flickr Plant Guide.

**Nicole Beaverman, Lindsay Hagan,** and **Chatura Vaidya** for their ongoing support in the HRWC offices.

**Kathryn Thostenson** for her leadership in creating HRWC's Oral History Project.

**Jana Smith** for her help at the Tu B'Shevat Festival in February.