



# Huron River Report

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SUMMER 2015



feature  
story

## HRWC's First 25 Years

*Part 2 of a series celebrating 50 years of history, growth and achievement*

After HRWC's founding in 1965 (see "Tracing HRWC's Roots, The Huron River Watershed Council at 50" *Huron River Report*, Spring 2015) the organization tackled many of the issues it was formed to address. There was a growing awareness that as population growth exploded in Southeast Michigan, the region neglected its water resources. HRWC was seen as the research and educational agency to solve these problems.

The public was fed up with the decline in water quality. On April 20, 1967 the *Old News*, a newspaper which preceded the *Ann Arbor News*, published "Mounting Agitation for Cleaner Waters Voiced," which led with the quote, "People are getting tired of wallowing in filth"! Fred Hubbard, program director of the federal Water Pollution

Control Administration, made that statement at an HRWC annual meeting. A similar statement in HRWC's 1969 annual report read, "Pollution of the Huron River and its tributaries reached crisis proportions last summer." People wanted actions to improve water quality.

### The Early Years

From 1965 to 1975, HRWC worked with local and state governments on utilities policy and planning in the Huron River watershed and Southeast Michigan. HRWC convened many long meetings (many nearly five hours long!) to establish strategies for servicing large sections of the watershed with water and sewer service. New treatment plants were built and major

*continued on page 4*



Rebuilding of the  
Geddes Dam,  
1971.

credit: HRWC  
archives

## Middle Huron Progress • *Investments yield results*

In 1996, the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) established the state's first policy to control nutrient loading in the middle section of the Huron River watershed. Nearly 20 years later and with tens of millions of dollars invested, what does the region have to show for it? According to results from long-term monitoring over the period, the watershed is on the cusp of

meeting the limits imposed by the original policy—a significant achievement.

### State of the Huron in 1995

In the fall of 1994, DEQ staff convened a meeting of representatives from 17 Washtenaw County communities to discuss the condition of Ford and Belleville lakes (dammed

impoundments at the downstream end of the middle Huron watershed) and requested that they develop a voluntary strategy to reduce phosphorus loading. Prior to that, the impoundments regularly suffered the effects of algae/toxic bacteria blooms throughout the summer months. Those blooms were likely similar to

*continued on page 6*

**INSIDE: UPCOMING EVENTS AND WORKSHOPS** *Natural River District | Great Michigan Collaborations | Stewardship Awards | Recollections with Paul Cousins | [www.hrwc.org](http://www.hrwc.org)*





# “You Mean We’re Drinking Your Pee?!”

## Huron River oral history project continues with Paul Cousins

### A Tradition of Teaching

Paul Cousins, a long-time HRWC board member, former high school biology and environmental studies teacher in Dexter, and fierce advocate for the Huron River is often asked to speak at high schools on the topic of the Huron River watershed.

*“I ask the kids, and get them to think about—where do they get their water? A lot of them say, ‘Out of the tap.’ We then discuss where it comes from before the tap. I tell them that Ann Arbor gets 85% of their water out of the river. And then we talk about where the waste goes. They inevitably say, ‘In the toilet – we flush it.’ But I ask them where does it GO? A lot of them have no clue. The kids who have a septic tank understand. Not so, the rest of them. Then I tell them that it ultimately ends up in the river, which flows through Dexter where I live before flowing through Ann Arbor. And that’s when some kid exclaims, ‘You mean we’re drinking your pee?!’”*

Paul loves playing this game with the teens, and finally they get it. “We all need to think about what we put in the river,” he says, “and what we’re taking out and that it needs to be cleaned the right way. Because if not, it’s going to make you sick.”

### A Passion for Preservation

Paul Cousins described HRWC as the love of his life during his interview for the Oral History Project. He moved from Indiana to Dexter in 1963 with his wife and first son to be closer to family and to teach biology and



environmental studies at the high school, with a second son arriving almost on moving day. (A third son arrived a year and a half later). Behind the high school where he taught was Mill Creek, the Huron River’s largest tributary, and it, as well as 17 acres of adjacent land, became the outdoor laboratory for his classes. Paul says it was an absolutely perfect place for his class to learn about biology and the environment.

HRWC started in 1965, and Paul knew little about it or the Huron River. That was soon to change. In 1969 or 1970, when Paul and his family moved from Dexter to Webster Township, he was asked to be the township board representative to HRWC. Paul said yes and has never left. When his family moved back to Dexter, he became a board representative for Dexter. For over 40 years, he has served in various positions, even during his hectic restaurant days when he only had time to attend meetings. (Paul founded and ran the well-known Cousins restaurant on Dexter’s main street for years.)

### An Observation at the Mill

Among Paul’s remembrances is the cider mill in Dexter. After pressing the apples, the mill used to dump all the leftover skins and pulp into the river at Mast Road and Central Street. They even built a ramp for this purpose and would load the apple detritus into a wheelbarrow, run it up the ramp and plop it into the Huron River.

*“And for probably 200 feet or more there was nothing alive there at all because of the high acidity of the skins. It was amazing. You could see life upstream and way downstream but in that area it was completely void of any life. Even the plants were dead. It was rocks and nothing else. When that (dumping) stopped...it took a few years for the river to recover. But that’s important. Rivers recover...and have the ability to flush (and renew).”*

This experience raised Paul’s interest in the waste that was going into the Huron River from other municipalities, most of which only did primary treatment of waste...

*“Which means they cleaned out, excuse me, the large parts and they let the rest of it go in the river. When we changed that in the 1980s, the waste went into not just a secondary but also a tertiary plant. It took out not just the large chunks, as they say, but also a major portion of the phosphates. Some claimed you could drink the effluent. I never tried it myself.”*

*continued on next page*

## Shared Stories

HRWC is celebrating 50 years! To help celebrate, Karen Snyder, a volunteer committed to preserving our natural resources, is compiling our oral history, interviewing HRWC “old timers” and “new timers” to capture precious stories that are part of our past.

HRWC will share excerpts from these oral histories over the next year. All transcripts and photos will be turned over to the Bentley Library at the University of Michigan for preservation.





# The 18<sup>th</sup> National Water Trail

## Huron River Water Trail joins network of exemplary trails



This January, the National Park Service designated the Huron River Water Trail as the 18<sup>th</sup> trail in the National Water Trails System. The Huron River Water Trail joins a network of national exemplary water trails from Puget Sound to the Hudson River. The National Water Trails System is an inter-agency collaborative effort administrated by the National Park Service. To be considered for designation, HRWC completed a rigorous application demonstrating

that the trail met criteria in seven management practice areas.

The Huron River Water Trail designation will reap many benefits, including: national promotion and visibility; mutual support and knowledge sharing as part of a national network; and opportunities to obtain technical assistance and funding for planning and implementing water trail projects. As a result of the designation, Water Trail partners hope to gain positive economic impact

from increased tourism, assistance with stewardship and sustainability projects, and assistance with recognition and special events highlighting the trail. Already this spring, liveries on the river have reported a significant increase in calls from out-of-state paddlers!

— Elizabeth Riggs

### You Mean We're Drinking Your Pee!? *continued from previous page*

HRWC became instrumental in cleaning up the entire river, including pollution from spills, intentional or accidental. At HRWC's initiative, TV cameras were run down the drains and sewers to identify sources of pollution, such as gas stations and homeowners dumping oil and gas down the drains.

*"There are still people who do stupid things, like dump their oil when they change it, but a lot of people in this area are aware about that. You might try it, and a neighbor will holler at you or turn you in if you do it."*

Paul tells another story of the Huron River changing colors in days gone past. The Peninsula Paper Plant in Ypsilanti used dyes for their paper and, depending on the day and the dyes used to print, would turn the river blue, green or yellow.

That kind of pollution has been almost entirely eliminated now, Paul says, and HRWC has the data to prove it, thanks to staff and HRWC volunteers who regularly track the river quality via scientific measurements of bugs and larvae that indicate river health.

#### A Lifetime of Service

Paul continues to serve as the HRWC board representative from the City of Dexter (formerly the Village of Dexter), as well as on the executive committee. That's over 40 years of helping to make the Huron River and its watershed places to be proud of!

— Karen Snyder

#### CORRECTION

*The Winter 2014 Huron River Report cover article "Toxic Bacteria Impacts Lake Erie Communities" incorrectly reported the western Lake Erie population impacted by the drinking water ban of August 2014. It was 500,000 not 500 million.*

**Suds on the River**

2015

**SAVE THE DATE!**

**Thursday, September 10, 2015  
6 to 9 pm**

regional water supply authorities were established. Many municipalities opted in to the Detroit Water Board, as it was called, while others established smaller systems or smaller shared systems. This issue was extremely contentious at the time and had lasting impacts.

The State of Michigan established water quality standards in the late 1960s with HRWC being an important advocate. In order to get federal funds to build water and sewer infrastructure, states needed to develop standards for various water quality parameters in which to measure water quality for the future. These water quality standards helped identify polluted waters and set goals for restoration.

Recreation also played a big part in HRWC's history. A canoe race from Island Park in Ann Arbor to Lake Erie, for professional paddlers, was a big event. A Recreation Resource Study identified key recreational hubs and linkages needing further development. Improved access continued to be a priority identified in numerous meetings and reports.

Flooding was also a major concern for HRWC and residents. HRWC led a "Flood Damage Avoidance program"

and purchased numerous rain gauges to gain a more accurate measurement of rainfall and as a first step toward the development of a flood warning system for the entire watershed. HRWC convened all of the dam operators on the main river under the Flow Advisory Network, which met regularly to discuss changes in river levels and dam management.

While some of the discussions around regional water utilities continued to simmer, the early 1970s brought the passage of the Clean Water Act in 1972 and local efforts by HRWC to pursue a State Natural River Designation. After three years of work, the State declared the Huron a Natural River in May 1977, designating 38 miles of the river and three associated tributaries as part of the State's Natural Rivers system. This designation requires that vegetation be maintained along the river and that buildings be set back from the river (see "Protecting a Regional Treasure" on page 13).

## 1965 - 1990: HRWC STAFF AND BOARD OF DIRECTORS

*Executive Secretaries and Directors:*  
Jerome Fulton, Owen Jansson, Roger Copp, Marcia Dorsey, Ellen Scavia, Bruce Monson, Warren Miller and Paul Renstchler.

*Staff Members:* Delia Reeves, Wayne Say, Allan Dines, Linda Nckamua, Martha Mehta, Mark Mitchell, Scott McEwen, and Mary O'Donohue.

*While not comprehensive, the following is a list of board members who have contributed to the organization during the first 25 years:* John Dillon, Doug Crary, Hans Haugard, Ellis Amerman, John Cartwright, James Cooper, Kenneth Keeton, Virginia Denham, Eunice Burns, Guy Larcom, Lyle Crane, Shirley Axon, Steven Wright, Mark Van Putten, Bill Stapp, Patrick DeLong, Mike Bitondo, Paul Cousins, Herb Munzel.

*I may have missed someone. Please contact me to let me know of your involvement.*

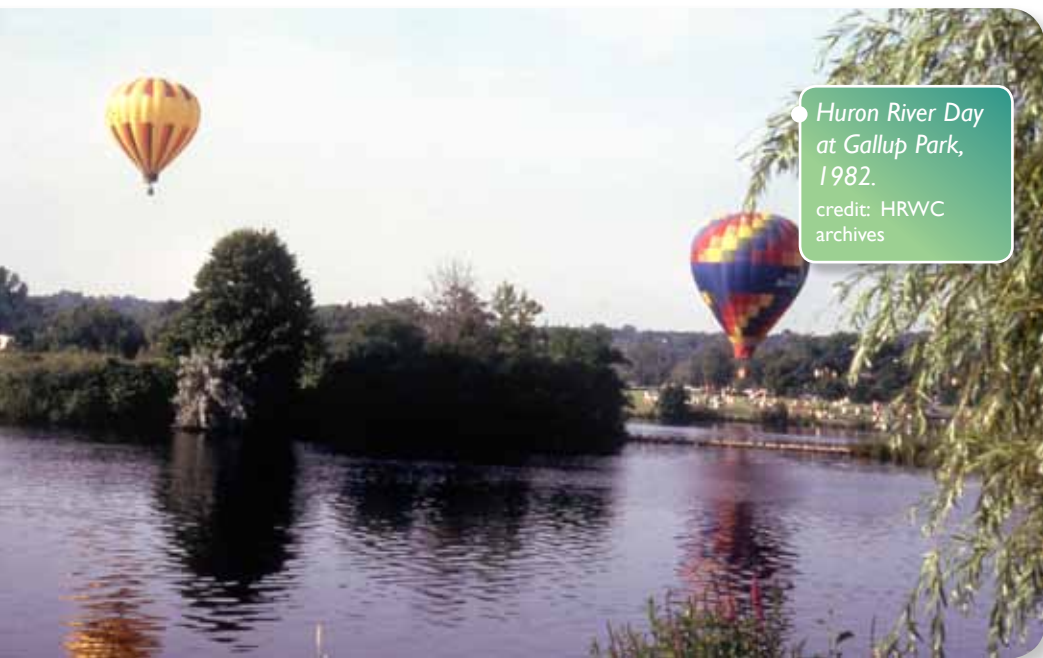
—Laura Rubin

## Progress on Many Fronts

Other notable achievements during this time include:

- Creekshed reports detailing the geology, land use, water and natural resource quality, and natural features of many of the Huron's tributaries
- Information and education programming in partnership with member governments
- A collection of water quality monitoring programs
- Policy review of pollution discharge permits and other major land use permits

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### The Middle Years

In the 1980s, water quality in the lakes of the watershed suffered noticeably and received greater attention. With development around the lakes and its associated stormwater runoff increasing, the Huron River waters suffered from expanding pollution sources. Notable examples include fish kills in Limekiln and Nichwaugh lakes, bacterial blooms in Ford and Belleville lakes, and declining water quality in Brighton, Kent, Portage, Whitmore, and Ore lakes. HRWC secured federal funding under the National Clean Lakes Program to address these problems while expanding public education and outreach.

In the mid 1980s Bill Stapp (board member) and Mark Mitchell (staff) spearheaded HRWC's volunteer water quality monitoring program. The program, initially called "Adopt-A-Waterway," worked closely with school groups. This effort signaled the beginning of the Global Rivers Environmental Education Network (GREEN) that continues today across the world. HRWC also began clam and fish studies to find solutions to water quality problems.

### Success

Overall, HRWC established itself as a place where stakeholders came together to discuss collaboration and coordination between local units of government, businesses, and citizens on water management policies and programs. These discussions resulted in instrumental reports that governments and agencies used to direct policies related to wellhead protection, pollution prevention, land use planning, flood forecasting and warning, phosphorus reduction, and overall watershed management.

HRWC also played a vital role in the development and passage of statewide legislation to protect water resources. The Inland Lakes and Streams Act, the Natural Rivers Act, the Clean Water Act and its reauthorization, the Goemare-Anderson Wetland Protection Act, the Michigan Soil Erosion and Sedimentation Control Act, the Michigan River Basin Management Act, and many others benefited from HRWC's expertise and involvement.

On an administrative front, during its first 25 years, HRWC's annual budget ranged from \$15,000-\$37,000. The executive secretary position, which changed to the executive



Dexter in 1966. credit: HRWC archives

director, was the sole employee (half-time) for most of this period, with occasional temporary staff. A core of 16 – 25 local governments sustained the membership and the board consisted mainly of local elected officials, university faculty members, and interested citizens and activists.

Tune in to the next issue to see the substantial growth and expansion of programs brought by the next 25 years.

— Laura Rubin

*Thank you to the University of Michigan Bentley Historical Library for serving as HRWC's historian and archivist. Thank you also to the Ann Arbor District Library's archived and digital records of newsprint articles.*

## Best Wishes, Jen!

With appreciation, we thank Jen Fike for over eight years of dedicated service as Finance Manager. Her conscientiousness and insights contributed to HRWC's fiscal efficiency and overall effectiveness. Jen is now the Operations Manager for the National Wildlife Federation's Great Lakes Regional Center.

## Welcome, Anita and Carolyn!



credit: HRWC

HRWC is pleased to announce the addition of two new staff members. Anita Daley (at left) is serving in the new position of Marketing Specialist, working closely with the marketing department on public education and outreach. Carolyn Raschke is the new Finance Manager, working to continue HRWC's long tradition of fiscal responsibility. Please join HRWC in welcoming Anita and Carolyn!





the one experienced last year in Lake Erie near Toledo, and some resulted in extensive fish kills.

Following the initial meeting, DEQ contracted an initial water quality study that included phosphorus sampling at sites throughout the middle Huron watershed, as well as the development of a phosphorus loading model. This model was the basis for a phosphorus control policy called a Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL). The model (and TMDL policy) estimated that to eliminate harmful algal/bacteria blooms, the summer phosphorus concentration in Ford Lake would need to be below 50 µg/l. At the time, the average concentration in Ford Lake was measured at 56 µg/l, with a concentration of 77 µg/l entering the lake. In order to meet the new phosphorus limits, the TMDL required about a 50% reduction in phosphorus loading from all sectors: industrial and municipal waste water treatment plants (WWTPs) as well as general (non-point source) runoff from all areas of the watershed.

### Huron Communities Rally

Recognizing the impacts from the harmful algal/bacterial blooms and acknowledging the need for significant action, the 17 middle Huron communities, along with the Washtenaw County Drain Commissioner, HRWC and DEQ, formed the Middle Huron River Watershed Initiative. Representatives began working on a voluntary agreement in 1996 that established commitments by all participating municipalities and organizations to reduce phosphorus loading in the watershed and return the river and impounded lakes to full health and ecological integrity. In 1999, this ground-breaking agreement was signed by 21 agencies and organizations, launching the unique Middle Huron Partnership.

### \$10 Million Plus in Value and Investment

In 1996, HRWC led the participating partners to develop a plan and projects to meet phosphorus loading reduction goals. HRWC facilitated partnership meetings twice a year to develop and refine plans, share information, and report on progress. The group developed two phosphorus reduction plans: one for the major WWTPs in Ann Arbor, Dexter, Chelsea and Loch Alpine, and one for municipalities and county agencies to reduce phosphorus from general non-point source runoff. The four WWTPs got to work improving plant designs and operations to more effectively eliminate phosphorus from plant effluent. The Ann Arbor plant, the effluent from which accounted for 96% of WWTP phosphorus loading in 1995, invested several million dollars in plant upgrades to provide additional phosphorus removal. The result is that the plant effluent, on average, is 39% below their annual loading target. The City of Dexter has invested \$3.5 million in upgrades and capacity enhancements to reduce their phosphorus effluent by 60% from 1,000 µg/l to 400 µg/l.

In addition to these point source reductions, the partners have invested in a number of important treatment projects, policy and management changes, and educational initiatives:

- Redesign of Mary Beth Doyle Park regional detention facility in Ann Arbor, transforming that facility into a wetlands complex, resulting in a significant reduction in peak stormwater flow and an increase in phosphorus uptake in Malletts Creek – a heavy source of phosphorus;
- A project to add treatment, underground storage, and infiltration of stormwater in Allens Creek under Pioneer High School;
- Monitoring of Ford Lake and rerouting of dam outflow to maintain bottom oxygen levels in the lake while foregoing electricity

generation;

- Local ordinances prohibiting development within a “buffer” around waterways to encourage phosphorus uptake;
- Local phosphorus-free fertilizer ordinances, and leadership in discussion that culminated in a statewide law regulating fertilizer;
- Internal management policy to include design for stormwater infiltration in all future road projects; and
- In addition to all these investments, partnership municipalities enacted significant stormwater controls following state regulations in 2003.

One of the most significant partnership investments was a broad program managed by HRWC to educate watershed residents about actions they could take to reduce phosphorus and other pollution. The campaign produced the bi-annual watershed calendar, a series of annual



*Greater frequency and intensity of storms cause more phosphorous loading due to increased runoff and erosion. credit: A. Cesere, AnnArbor.com*

advertisements, development of news stories for media coverage and participation at watershed events. Over 250,000 calendars alone have been distributed to watershed residents. The result of this campaign has been a significant increase in knowledge and behavior change.

### The Results

So, has all this investment of time and effort resulted in improved water quality? The short answer is yes. The overall result is an estimated annual

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Investments like this wetland restoration in Mary Beth Doyle Park have reduced phosphorus runoff. credit: HRWC

phosphorus loading reduction of 6.3 tons. That is 6.3 tons of phosphorus each year that does not enter Ford or Belleville Lake, nor Lake Erie downstream. Further, algal/bacterial blooms now occur rarely, much less severely, and for much shorter lengths of time in the lakes.

The more complete answer to the question, though, is that it's complicated. The Middle Huron Partners have funded HRWC's Water Quality Monitoring Program since it began in 2002. Under the program, stream flow and chemical components (including total phosphorus) are measured regularly at river and

tributary stream sites. Data from the program shows that phosphorus concentrations went down consistently until about 2009, when they started inexplicably going up again. However, deeper analysis reveals that average river and stream flows increased over this same time period, mostly due to a greater frequency of intense storms. Those storms resulted in greater runoff and erosion, and with it, greater phosphorus concentrations. After adjusting for stream flow, the analysis shows that phosphorus concentrations entering Ford Lake have declined 2.4% per year.

### What Remains to Do?

This reduction is significant and an important achievement for the voluntary efforts of local governments and agencies. However, the nutrient problem has not been solved. Ford and Belleville lake phosphorus concentrations are close to, but not yet below targets. Much of this is due to the occasional release of phosphorus from bottom sediments that cannot be completely controlled by dam management. But phosphorus loading from upstream has not been eliminated either. While most of the urban tributaries show similar reductions in phosphorus over time, the opposite is true upstream. Phosphorus concentrations in Mill Creek (the largest and most heavily agricultural tributary watershed) are increasing at a rate of 6.7% per year. Little has been done to control agricultural phosphorus sources in the watershed. Also, the Middle Huron Partners are now giving new focus to Green Infrastructure approaches to stormwater management (see "Green Infrastructure Innovation" *Huron River Report*, Fall 2014), which are included in several policies, including newly-initiated county stormwater standards. The Partners need to continue to meet to track progress, share successes, and plan for future refinements.

— Ric Lawson

### In Remembrance

Renowned local photographer Ted Nelson passed away in April. Ted, along with Marc Akemann and Keith Matz, contributed many beautiful photos to HRWC's watershed calendars, including the photo at right. Ted is also the author of the acclaimed "The Nature of Kensington" featuring the flora and fauna of Kensington Metro Park. His patient, keen eye captured wildlife at its most interesting, connecting generations to the natural beauty that is close at hand. Ted's generous spirit will be missed, and HRWC appreciates the legacy of stewardship that his work inspires.





Founded in 1965, the Huron River Watershed Council (HRWC) protects and restores the river for healthy, vibrant communities.

HRWC coordinates programs and volunteer efforts that include pollution prevention, hands-on river monitoring, wetland and floodplain protection, public outreach and education, and natural resources planning.

Individuals, local businesses and more than 40 communities support HRWC's work through voluntary membership.



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[instagram.com/huronriver](https://instagram.com/huronriver)

The Huron River Report is published quarterly. Its content is prepared by HRWC staff and does not necessarily reflect the opinion of board members.

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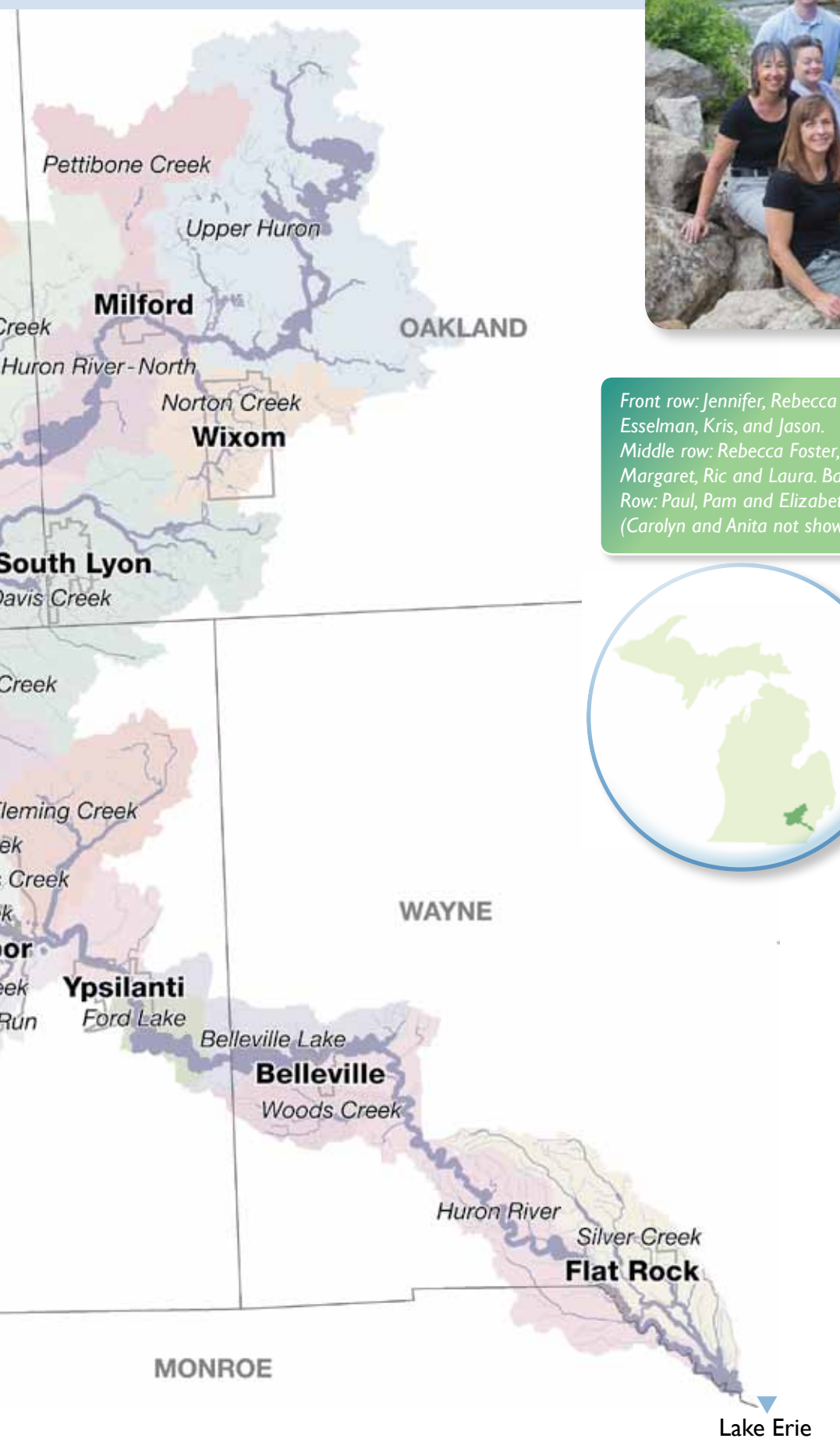
Illustrations and quarterly design:  
J. Wolf, Laughing Goat Arts © 2015

Huron River Report © 2015

# The Huron River Watershed







A. Savage

Front row: Jennifer, Rebecca Esselman, Kris, and Jason.  
Middle row: Rebecca Foster, Margaret, Ric and Laura.  
Back Row: Paul, Pam and Elizabeth.  
(Carolyn and Anita not shown)



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## Creek Walking Training

Thursday, June 4, 7 - 9 pm, NEW Center

*Scout a local stream with a protective eye, looking for potential problems. We'll teach you what to look for!*

Information and registration: [hrwc.org/volunteer/creekwalker](http://hrwc.org/volunteer/creekwalker)

## Stormdrain Art at the Ann Arbor Mayor's Green Fair

Friday, June 12, 6 - 9 pm, Main Street, Downtown Ann Arbor

*Come try your hand at decorating one of these curbside connections to the Huron or volunteer to help others do so!*

Details: [hrwc.org/adoptastormdrain](http://hrwc.org/adoptastormdrain)

## Board Meeting

Thursday, July 16, 5:30 pm, Portage Yacht Club

Contact: Laura at [lrubin@hrwc.org](mailto:lrubin@hrwc.org)

## Single Fly Tournament

Sunday, July 19, 10 am start at Schultz Outfitters, Ypsilanti

*Choose a fly and use it until you lose it.*

Details: [hrwc.org/events/single-fly-tournament](http://hrwc.org/events/single-fly-tournament)

## Measuring and Mapping Training

Sunday, July 26, noon - 4 pm, NEW Center

*Learn to read the river by characterizing the bed, banks, and other indicators of stream health. Conduct a study at a creek or river sometime during the month of August with a team of 3-4 people.*

Details: [hrwc.org/volunteer/measure-and-map](http://hrwc.org/volunteer/measure-and-map)

## River Cleanups

Sunday, August 16, Milford at 7 am; Flat Rock at 9 am

*Help collect and remove tons (literally!) of trash from the river.*

Details: [hrwc.org/volunteer/river-cleanups](http://hrwc.org/volunteer/river-cleanups)

## Detroit Institute of Arts Inside|Out Meets the Huron River

August – October in Milford, Dexter, Ann Arbor, Ypsilanti, and Flat Rock

*The five Trail Towns of the Huron River Water Trail will host an exhibition of masterpieces from the DIA's collection. Enjoy reproductions of 15 works of art at riverside outdoor venues in each community. Trail Town events will highlight the Water Trail and these special artworks.*

Details: [huronriverwatertrail.org](http://huronriverwatertrail.org)

## Full Moon Paddle

Friday, July 31, 8 pm; Pinckney State Recreation Area

*Bring your own boat. HRWC will provide the bonfire and s'mores fixings.*

Information: [hrwc.org/recreation](http://hrwc.org/recreation)

Make a date  
with the Huron for  
Sunday, July 12

## River Appreciation Day!

Get out and enjoy  
the river in honor of  
HRWC's 50th  
Anniversary. Activities  
throughout the water-  
shed include free canoe,  
kayak and paddleboard  
rentals, hikes led by  
HRWC staff, bike rides  
on riverside trails,  
birding walks, fly fishing  
lessons, swimming and  
celebrating!

### Special events include:

The City of Ann  
Arbor's Huron River  
Day Celebration,  
Gallup Park, Ann  
Arbor, noon - 4 pm

HRWC's Baseline  
Lake Swim (1 or 2  
miles) at 8:30 am,  
from the UM Sailing  
Club in Dexter

Capture your love for  
the Huron by  
connecting and  
sharing it with us on  
Facebook, Twitter and  
Instagram. Use  
#huronriver50  
to mark your posts!

Details: [hrwc.org/events/river-appreciation-day](http://hrwc.org/events/river-appreciation-day)



# Stewardship Awards

## Zachery Gizicki, Bridge Builder

Zac, an up-and-coming environmental leader, has participated in a number of HRWC volunteer programs including: River Roundup, Stonefly Search, Bug ID Day, and Adopt-A-Stormdrain. He continually inspires his University of Michigan classmates in the Program in the Environment, Ecology and Evolutionary Biology, as well as the School of Natural Resources and the Environment to participate in HRWC's stewardship events. As a leader of the student organization Circle K—he is chair of its environmental committee—Zac has solidified and bolstered its relationship with HRWC. His efforts have considerably increased mutual cooperation between HRWC and Circle K, which continues to benefit the Huron River.



## Luke Blackburn, Bridge Builder

Luke began volunteering for HRWC's Measuring and Mapping project in 2009, and then joined the Water Quality Monitoring team the following spring. Soon after, HRWC was discussing the possibility of adding chemical and flow monitoring for the Alliance of Downriver Watersheds. In order to make that financially and technically possible, an analytical laboratory was needed. Luke stepped up and offered the possibility of the lab he worked with at Ypsilanti Community Utility Authority (YCUA). Luke facilitated negotiations that ended with a new partnership between HRWC, YCUA and the ADW member communities, launching water quality monitoring in the ADW in 2012. That partnership continues today, providing ADW communities with vital information on the quality of streams in the watershed and the success of improvement initiatives. Last year, Luke led a tour of the YCUA facility to provide HRWC volunteers with a new perspective on modern waste processing and its impact on our waterways.



## Magda Herkof, Herb Munzel Lifetime Achievement Award

Magda's stewardship contributions to HRWC and the watershed community are broad, spanning ten years. She began her volunteer career with HRWC in January 2005 by helping with the Millers Creek Film Festival. From there, Magda was inspired to participate in numerous River Roundups (as both volunteer and leader), Winter Stonefly Searches, the habitat measuring and mapping program, Bioreserve field assessments and water quality and flow monitoring. In all, Magda has contributed 110 volunteer hours and participated in over 60 HRWC events. Magda is pleased to note that along the way she has made many friends!

— Jason Frenzel and Ric Lawson



A great time was had by all at HRWC's 50th anniversary celebration in words and music. Photos, left to right: Chris Good singing Gentle Arms of Eden; Panoka Walker performing Canoe Traveling Song; The Chenille Sisters; and Laura Rubin singing Moon River with Chris Good on piano.

credit: Doug Coombe

# Rivering at the Ark





# Recipe for Conservation Success?

## Ingredients for a Great Michigan in the 98th Michigan Legislative Session



credit: Colin Hoodenwerf, MLCV

Quick fixes are rare in the world of river protection. HRWC has earned a reputation for taking a holistic approach to challenges facing the Huron River system and looking for long-term solutions that increase understanding and stewardship. Whether tackling nuisance algal blooms or restoring critical habitat, HRWC responds with a multi-pronged, multi-disciplinary strategy: collect, analyze, and report on field data; facilitate conversations with stakeholders; draft policies and advocate for their adoption by local governments; and design easy-to-follow tips for residents to do their part.

Most of HRWC's work stays local, but once in a while it ventures into the state and national arenas when need and opportunity dictate.

### A Common Blue/Green Agenda

Great Michigan presents an opportunity for HRWC to raise the profile of key complex challenges

facing the Huron River in Michigan's capital. Great Michigan is a collaborative priority-setting process among Michigan's environmental and conservation community. Through Great Michigan, HRWC and more than 30 groups create a common agenda, communicate top legislative goals to address pressing environmental challenges facing the state, and provide realistic policy solutions.

Over six months, HRWC engaged in developing the platform of issues and honing in on priority actions needed. Six priority issues emerged for the 2015-2016 Legislative Session:

- Land Conservation
- Oil Pipelines
- Transportation
- Nutrient Pollution
- Energy
- Recycling

*Lisa Wozniak, HRWC Board Member for Ypsilanti, and others prepare for conversations with state legislators in Lansing about the Great Michigan platform of issues.*

credit: MLCV Education Fund



### Nutrient Pollution Solutions

HRWC serves among the topic experts on nutrient pollution, a role that includes outreach to legislators and to the public. Actions needed for addressing nutrient pollution include enacting legislation that enables municipalities to develop stormwater utilities, enacting legislation to prohibit application of manure on frozen fields, and establishing a uniform Michigan septic code and requiring inspection of septic tanks at time-of-sale and at regular 3-5 year intervals throughout the life of the septic system. The Huron River system and its communities stand to benefit from implementation of these actions.

Become part of the solution!

For more information on the topics, visit [www.greatmichigan.org](http://www.greatmichigan.org). Use the social media icons to stand with Great Michigan and share the priority actions for the issues via Facebook, Twitter, and Google+. Low-tech sharing via phone calls to legislators will also make a difference for Michigan's land, air, and water.

— Elizabeth Riggs



**\$20,000 and counting. That's how much we've raised through Books by Chance with your support!**

Learn how you can turn your old books, CDs and DVDs into funds for river protection. Contact Rebecca Foster (734) 769-5123 x 610 or [rfoster@hrwc.org](mailto:rfoster@hrwc.org).





# Protecting a Regional Treasure

## *The Huron's Natural River District*

Anglers and paddlers love to boast about the “up north” feel of the Huron River, especially as they float or cast along the upper stretches of the river. One important reason for this is that the Huron River and parts of Arms, Mill, and Davis creeks have enjoyed designation as a “Natural Scenic River” since 1977. The State of Michigan established the Natural Rivers Program in 1970 to preserve, protect and enhance Michigan’s finest river systems.

### Keeping the River Beautiful and Healthy

Within the Natural River District, most development activities within 400 feet of the river, as well as the clearing of vegetation within 50 feet of the river, require a permit.

The requirement that houses and other buildings be set back away from the river and that landowners keep a natural forested buffer along the shore helps the Huron to maintain not only its natural look, but its ecological health. Setbacks and buffers allow polluted runoff room to filter through yards and natural plant root systems, which filter out chemicals and nutrients and also keep the river and streams shaded and cool.

### Natural Rivers Permitting Program

The Huron River Natural River District flows through five communities; Green Oak and Hamburg townships in Livingston County, and Webster, Dexter and Scio townships in Washtenaw County. Green Oak, Hamburg, and Scio have adopted their own zoning ordinance provisions to reinforce the Natural River District standards. In Webster and Dexter townships, the Michigan Natural Rivers Program has jurisdiction and reviews permits. For residents and businesses with properties within the Natural River District in the three locally zoned townships, the natural river



### The Natural River District at a Glance

Prohibited activities within 400 feet of the river:

- Most new commercial or industrial uses
- Dredging or filling in high groundwater areas
- Mineral exploration
- Clear cutting within the forested buffer

| Setbacks:                 | Huron River | Arms, Mill or Davis Creek |
|---------------------------|-------------|---------------------------|
| Building setback          | 125 ft.     | 50 ft.                    |
| Minimum lot width         | 150 ft.     | 150 ft.                   |
| Natural vegetation buffer | 50 ft.      | 50 ft.                    |
| Septic setback            | 125 ft.     | 125 ft.                   |

map graphic: HRWC

requirements are addressed as part of regular site plan review and building permitting. For those in the “state zoned” townships, any activity within the Natural River District requires a permit from the State. More information and details are available at [hrwc.org/the-watershed/watershed-protection/legislation/federal-and-state](http://hrwc.org/the-watershed/watershed-protection/legislation/federal-and-state).

### HRWC and the Natural Rivers Program

HRWC was integral in the designation of the Huron’s Natural River District in 1977 (see “The First 25 Years” on the cover). This year, with funding from the Wildlife Conservation Society, HRWC is working with the State Natural Rivers Program and the five

Natural Rivers Program communities to increase awareness of the program for their residents and improve implementation of the program’s provisions.

### How Can You Help?

If you reside within the Natural River District, be sure to follow the guidelines. If you see building or cutting as you paddle down the river, notify HRWC or the Michigan Department of Natural Resources at (989) 732-3541 x 5088.

— Kris Olsson



HRWC would like to extend our gratitude to everyone who helped protect the Huron River by giving of their time, talent, in-kind contributions, and financial resources.

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may correct our records.  
Contact Margaret Smith at  
msmith@hrwc.org or  
(734) 769-5123 x 605.





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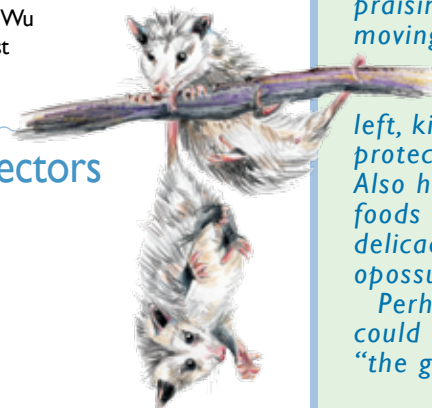
*North America's only marsupial could use some help in the public relations department. Is it the face, the tail, the waddle or the hiss that is off-putting to many? Common in the watershed and throughout the region, the opossum gets little credit for the good deeds it does on its nightly rounds.*

*An article in the May, 2015, Ann Arbor Observer notes that opossums love to eat ticks. The article cites scientist Rick Ostfeld praising these slow-moving creatures for "...hoovering up ticks right and*

*left, killing over 90%... protecting our health." Also high on the list of foods considered delicacies by the opossum? Slugs.*

*Perhaps the opossum could be rebranded as "the gardener's friend."*

*—Jennifer Wolf*



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*It all begins with clean water, that's why rivers matter to a community.*

*I wish to join your efforts to protect the Huron River in the amount of:*

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