



THE
HURON RIVER
WATERSHED
COUNCIL

PROTECTING THE RIVER
FOR OVER 30 YEARS

May 12, 1998

Dear River Stewards,

I want to thank everyone who helped with the stream monitoring in April and tell you what we found. Both the Stream Search and the ID Day went very well, and we completed 24 sites. A few sites look like they may have improved in quality. While the water level was elevated generally, there were only two sites where people had reported any problem with high water on the data sheets (Flat Rock and Portage Creek). The site at Flat Rock has a chronic problem that may cause us to stop collecting there: it is an extremely popular fishing site, and the anglers prevent good access.

Congratulations to the teams, some of whom collected many more families than were found last spring. However, many sites had low diversity last April, perhaps because of the rain.

Let me explain the enclosed table of data. For each site the table includes: the total number of individual creatures collected ("Total #"), then the number of families ("# Taxa", which is the variety, or number of different kinds); and the "# EPT", which is the number of families that are mayflies (Ephemeroptera), stoneflies (Plecoptera), and caddisflies (Trichoptera). The EPT are singled out because many, but not all, of them are sensitive to organic pollution. The "Sensitive Groups" are the families that are especially sensitive to organic pollution. (Some of the Sensitive Groups are in the EPT and some are in other insect families.) In that same column is the number of sensitive families that were found last April. The number of taxa and EPT found last April are listed on the right. Sites that have several Sensitive Groups have good quality.

Boyden Creek at Huron River Drive (#4 on the map) is located just below the dam that forms the lakes at Loch Alpine, west of Ann Arbor. The team found a sensitive family, which is rarely seen at this site, and more diversity this year (although similar to '92, '94, and '96). The only other sensitive family that we have seen here is Leptophlebiidae, a mayfly that migrates up smaller streams in the spring. Unfortunately, each of the three years that we have found a sensitive family, there has been only one individual present. While the presence of sensitive families indicates that the creek is in good condition, the presence of only single individuals is not convincing. Since the site is so close to the river, the individuals may live in the river and only strayed into the creek.

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Davis Creek at Rushton Road (#8) is also located just below a dam, the one that forms Nichwagh Lake in eastern Livingston Co. The team found many more taxa there than in either of the past two collections, and a new sensitive family. Sites below a dam often have large numbers of filter feeders (such as the net-spinning caddisfly or Hydropsychidae, and black fly larvae) which thrive on the floating food (nutrients and plankton) that pours in from the lake. Jim Fackert discovered a remarkable example of this on a couple of old bottles whose surface was carpeted with a solid layer of blackfly larvae, lined up in rows, swaying in unison. This site has been distinctive in the past; once there were 50 leeches in the collection.

Davis Creek at Silver Lake is a fairly new site located far downstream on the creek. The team added two additional sensitive families to the first collection we did last fall.

We have been concerned about **Fleming Creek**, which is located just east of Ann Arbor, because our earlier studies show that the main stem is deteriorating, and the DEQ found no sensitive families at the Warren Road site on the west branch last summer. It is heartening that the team found an increase in both diversity and EPT over the previous four collections at the **Botanical Gardens (#9)** on the main stem. Also, the team at **Warren Road (#13)** found that the population was in good shape with three sensitive families, similar to our previous collections.

The team at **Griggs Drain (#14)** in Wayne Co. reported a startling observation that became a story in the Detroit News. While they were at their site near the river, a fisherman caught a very large steelhead trout, one of the first found that far upstream since 1942 when the dam was constructed at Flat Rock. For over fifty years, potamodromous fishes such as steelhead and walleye have been unable to swim up the river to spawn. Last fall a fish ladder was constructed that provides passage around the dam for larger fish, enabling the steelhead to swim up to Griggs Drain. In addition to observing history in the making, the team brought back a population sample containing the greatest diversity and EPT of all four collections thus far.

Hay Creek (#15) in Livingston Co. was similar to last year. The team found a 7th sensitive family for this site - way to go, team! This looks like a good quality creek!

The **Honey Creek (#16)** that is in Livingston Co. was very turbid at **Darwin Road**, perhaps with soil eroded from an upstream construction site. In spite of that, the team was able to find a population similar to that from last year, adding the 6th and 7th sensitive families for this site. Hooray! Another good quality creek!

While the **Honey Creek** that is in Washtenaw Co. looked unchanged from last year, the April populations from this year and last year at **Wagner Road (#20)** were far better in diversity and EPT over the previous three years in April. This site is improving.

Our site on **Horseshoe Creek** (#21) that runs through Hamburg is sad. Again there were no sensitive families present, although it did have pretty good diversity with 20 families.

Our site on **Huron Creek** (#22) is near the river in Hudson Mills MetroPark. Faye Stoner led a team that included several children; they did a good job. The population was more diverse than last year, and similar to the previous year in all other respects.

The **Commerce** site on the **Huron River** in Oakland Co. is our second furthest upstream site. We have just begun to sample there and need more data to make any comparisons.

The **Huron River** site at **White Lake Road** (#25) is fairly close to the origin of the River in Oakland Co. This site has an outstanding population of nine sensitive families, several of which are usually collected. We continue to monitor this site for effects of recent road and culvert reconstruction.

The **Zeeb Road** site on the **Huron River** (#26) is a healthy site. The team collected another robust population sample, including three new sensitive families! That brings the total number for the site to nine, tying White Lake Road for first place.

Letts Creek at M-52 (#34) in Chelsea was badly damaged last April by a chronic oil leak which our monitoring team discovered. The DEQ found an impoverished population when they sampled there last June. This April our team found a healthy population there, including three sensitive families. It looks like the oil leak has ended.

Teams that sample **Mallets Creek** (#27) always have a challenge. This team met it well by collecting the most diverse April population in four years.

There seems to be a problem in **Mill Creek at Jackson Road** (#33). The creek is very large at this site (more than four times the size of most of our sites) and should have more diversity and sensitive families than smaller sites in the Huron system. The team collected plenty of creatures but, like last year, they found less diversity than is found at most of our other sites. Other characteristics that we have measured here do not indicate a problem: the physical structure of the site is fairly good although it has minimal habitat diversity, the conductivity is at the high end of normal (averaging 730 μ S), and it has both families of winter stoneflies in January. We would like to explore upstream of the site, when someone is ready to undertake such a project.

The team at **Portage Creek** (#37) managed well in deep water, finding a population similar to last year's. The creek is in good shape here.

South Ore Creek is one of our better creeks at Hamburg Road (#40). This year we sampled two new sites upstream of Hamburg Road. The site at **Lake Ridge Road** is just below the dam on Brighton Lake, which is in the city of Brighton and receives the treated

wastewater from Brighton. The population at this site is certainly impoverished compared to the site at **Bauer Road**, which is about 1,000 yards downstream of the lake.

At its upstream site, **Traver Creek** is the best of the creeks in the city of Ann Arbor, but the site downstream at **Broadway** (#42) is in poor shape, unable to sustain sensitive families. While it is pleasing that the team collected the most diverse April population since we began monitoring in 1993, it is sad that they observed oily ooze underfoot when they stepped on the mud.

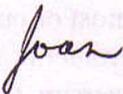
The **Maxfield Road** site on **Woodruff Creek** (#44) is one of our smallest sites, draining only 2.3 miles. We are delighted that the team found a stonefly for the first time; we have failed to find any winter stoneflies in the past two January hunts. We have sampled there only twice before and need more data to make any comparisons.

To highlight this survey, it is heartening to find that over half of the sites on the Huron River system have sufficiently good quality to have resident Perlodid stoneflies, while it is disturbing that six sites had no Sensitive Groups at all. This April survey highlighted several newer sites that appear to be in good shape: Hay, Honey, and South Ore Creeks in Livingston County, and the Huron River at Zeeb Road in Washtenaw County.

Please let me know if you would like more information, or if you have questions about this report. My hope is to make the reports clear to everyone who reads them. I would enjoy hearing from you.

Please note the dates on the enclosed calendar and circle them on your calendar. There are several sites that need to be "mapped" in August or September. If you can help to study the characteristics of the creek sites, please come to the training for that on August 15 or let me know if you are interested but that date is not possible for you.

Sincerely yours,



Joan Martin

1998 APRIL Stream Search Results, w data from April, 1997, for comparison

CREEK SITES	Total #	# TAXA	# EPT	Sensitive Groups	# in '97	97 TAXA	97 EPT
Boyden Creek: Huron R Dr	144	18	5	Corydalidae	(0)	12	4
Chilson Creek: Brighton Rd	97	15	6	Leptophlebiidae		(new site)	
Davis Creek: Rushton Rd	168	17	3	Gomphidae	(1)	10	3
Davis Creek: Silver Lake Rd	125	19	7	Periodidae, Brachycentridae		(new site)	
Fleming Creek: Bot. Gardens	128	18	7	Gomphidae	(0)	(96) 12	(96) 4
Fleming: Warren Road	108	20	8	Periodidae, Leptophlebiidae, Corydalidae	(3)	(96) 22	(96) 6
Griggs Drain at the mouth	98	15	7	Periodidae	(1)	9	5
Hay Creek @ M-36	92	13	7	Periodidae, Leptophlebiidae, Brachycentridae	(2)	12	6
Liv-Honey Creek @ Darwin	89	18	7	Periodidae, Leptophlebiidae, Brachycentridae, Athericidae	(4)	17	8
Honey Creek: Wagner	111	19	6	Nemouridae, Isonychiidae, Corydalidae	(2)	18	6
Horseshoe Cr: Hamburg Rd	259	20	4	none	(0)	19	5
Huron Creek near mouth	168	14	6	Nemouridae, Periodidae, Corydalidae	(2)	9	5
Huron R.: Commerce	95	15	4	none		(new site)	
Huron R.: Flat Rock	55	14	4	Periodidae (very high water)	(0)	12	6
Huron R.: White Lake Rd	177	15	7	Periodidae, Ephemerellidae	(5)	(96) 16	(96) 9
Huron R.: Zeeb Rd	122	20	8	Periodidae, Leptophlebiidae, Isonychiidae, Ephemerellidae, Athericidae	(4)	21	9
Letts Creek: M-52	63	16	7	Ephemerellidae, Periodidae, Athericidae	(0)	2	0
Mallets Creek: Chalmers	46	9	1	none	(0)	3	1
Mill Creek: Jackson Rd	215	11	3	none	(1)	12	3
Portage: Dexter-TownHall Rd	130	22	8	Peridae, Periodidae, Brachycentridae (deep)	(3)	21	8
S. Ore Creek: Bauer Rd	135	20	8	Periodidae, Leptophlebiidae, Ephemerellidae, Gomphidae		(new site)	
S. Ore Creek: Lake Ridge Rd	54	9	2	none		(new site)	
Traver Creek: Broadway	86	11	2	none	(0)	7	1
Woodruff Creek: Maxfield Rd	65	14	4	Periodidae, Leptophlebiidae	(1)	19	4