



# Huron River Report

Published by the Huron River Watershed Council

FALL 2019



feature story

## Enjoy the Huron River!

### *Perspectives on threats to the river and how best to handle them*

Headlines have been swirling this year with stories about new and not-so-new threats to the Huron River. Between stories about PFAS, dioxane, microplastics, and algae blooms, anyone planning to enjoy the river this summer might be feeling cautious.

#### **Is the Huron still the cleanest urban river in Michigan?**

The Huron River watershed has come a long way from when its waters ran a different color depending on what kind of paper the Peninsular Paper Company was making that day. Since the passage of the Clean Water Act in 1972—after decades of restoration, policy improvements, and continued vigilance of its residents and local governments—the Huron supports a multi-million-dollar recreational fishery, is home to numerous endangered and threatened species, a number of bogs, wet meadows,

and remnant prairies of statewide significance, and is the only state-designated Natural River in Southeast Michigan. The watershed contains two-thirds of the region's public recreational lands and provides drinking water to 125,000 residents.

While some toxins no longer enter the waterways, others still do. When considering these contaminants, it is important to factor in how they impact the overall health of the watershed and its inhabitants.

#### **PFAS**

Perfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) are synthetic chemicals that last for a long time in the environment and human body. They're associated with



*Crowds turn out to enjoy the Huron River and beat the heat with a summer paddle.*  
credit: HRWC

many health risks when ingested over time, and they have been found in the Huron River as well as waterbodies throughout Michigan and nationally.

PFAS are worrisome when they contaminate drinking water sources.

*continued on page 4*

## Whole Farms for Clean Water

### *Empowering farmers to improve water quality*

HRWC is launching a new project aimed at reducing phosphorus runoff from agricultural lands. Whole Farms for Clean Water seeks to empower farmers to minimize soil erosion and nutrient losses from their fields. The project uses a data-driven model, flexible and cost-effective

conservation techniques, and incentive payments to farmers for reductions in phosphorus. More than that, it will invest in the success of participating farms by providing each with a tailored business plan. These Whole Farm Plans will recommend new markets and long-term

approaches for profitability across the entire farm operation.

The project's innovative approach uses a nutrient flux model that relies on HRWC chemistry and flow monitoring data and local economic

*continued on page 5*

**INSIDE: UPCOMING EVENTS AND WORKSHOPS** *Peninsular Dam slated for removal | Stopping invasives | Summer interns rocked it! | Flux + Flow on Fleming | Toolkits for healthy land use*





# Rebecca's Stream of Consciousness

This summer has been a unique one for HRWC. For the first time, in more than twenty years, Laura Rubin was not in her office – that sunny little room on the Huron River whose open door and occupied chair gave us all a lot of comfort. As many of you know, Laura has taken a new role at the Great Lakes Coalition advocating for clean water throughout the region. The position is perfect for her and, since the Huron River is in the Great Lakes region, it can still be said that Laura is looking out for us and our home waters.

It only seems fitting to pay homage to Laura here at this place in the newsletter where issue after issue she spoke directly to you—our members, donors, volunteers, partners, stewards, and champions for clean water—about pressing issues, recent successes, ruminations, and celebrations of water. To the staff at HRWC, Laura was an anchor and a calm in any storm. It was reassuring to have her at the helm. And while every one of us contributes tirelessly to our mission, Laura provided a stable and nurturing workplace that allowed each individual to be successful, learn and grow. She also provided direction when we struggled, removed barriers

when we got hung up, and—maybe most importantly—stepped aside when we were clipping along just fine. She was the kind of leader I hope everyone has a chance to work with at some point in life. She will be missed.

But rest assured, the team here at HRWC has stepped up during this time of transition to ensure the organization remains healthy and productive, ensuring that the Huron River continues to have a strong advocate. This summer our volunteers have traversed 26 miles of stream in the Ann Arbor area looking for erosion as we revise the watershed management plan for these tributaries. We introduced our millage toolkit for local governments to earmark funding for land protection. We launched an educational campaign on the issue of microplastics to raise awareness and share how individuals can take action. We completed a green infrastructure and stream restoration project in Wixom to help improve conditions in Norton Creek. And we continue to engage deeply on PFAS and 1,4-Dioxane. These are just a few highlights.

HRWC also said goodbye to Rebecca Foster and welcomed Lyn



K. Paine

De Groot as our new Development Associate. And our office swelled to 42 people as we hosted 25 field interns and four fellows who made critical contributions to our programs this summer. It has been a productive few months!

The beauty of what Laura built is that it is enduring. Shortly, if not already, HRWC will announce our new Executive Director. I often use a river as a metaphor for life. You never know what lays around the bend. But we are excited about this next adventure and look forward to sharing it with all of you.

— Rebecca Essleman  
Interim HRWC Executive Director  
@natureiswater



*The Huron River is an invaluable resource for communities throughout the watershed, providing recreation, wildlife habitat, scenic beauty, and drinking water. The future of the river and its tributaries will depend in large part on how residents respond to environmental challenges and threats. credit: J. Lloyd*



credit: G. Hieber

# Volunteer Spotlight • Summer interns

This year 29 superb students joined HRWC. Most were part of the Aquatic Field Internship Program. Focusing on the erodibility of local streambanks, these students collected data for the update of the Ann Arbor Area Watershed Management Plan. They also worked to educate Scio Township residents on the presence of the newly found invasive stiltgrass, taught K-12 students in HRWC's STEM education program, ran the Youth Snorkeling program, deployed a pilot microplastics monitoring project, maintained local green infrastructure, and attended numerous fairs and festivals on behalf of HRWC. Other summer interns joined HRWC to work on communications and marketing, water quality monitoring, natural lands assessments, and watershed management planning.

As with the past two years, this summer HRWC hosted a Doris Duke Conservation Scholars Program Fellow. The DDCSP program works to increase the number of undergraduate students from underrepresented groups who pursue careers in conservation work. HRWC's DDCSP Fellows have worked half-time on field work with the aquatic field interns, with the other half of their time dedicated to an administrative project such as communications and marketing. This amazing partnership has led HRWC to critically evaluate program implementation, improving accessibility and applicability to diverse populations. For example, see the Spring 2019 Huron River Report article "Ensuring Safe (and Fun!) Field Outings."

—Jason Frenzel

## HRWC Interns

- Aysia Booth
- Sam Bower
- Ryan Brown
- Sophia Bryson
- Elizabeth Cazallis
- Rachel Correll
- Gerald Djajaputra
- Jesse Evers
- Krystia Faleris
- Becca Grossman
- Alexis Heinz
- Brandon Herman
- Sebastian Kasparian
- Drew Kesler
- Niklas Krantz
- Willow Krupin
- Tina Lin
- Myles Markey
- Jessica Martin
- Lily Matlof
- Juliette Nanos
- Chuanli Ni
- Chrysanthe Patselas
- Kathryne Rojeck
- Lute Smith
- Emily Spilman
- Noah Spranger
- Kyle Storey
- Tara Talbot



Most of HRWC's summer interns being trained to teach HRWC's STEM education. credit: HRWC



## \$40,000 and counting! That's how much we've raised through Books by Chance with your support.

Please donate! Proceeds from the internet sale of old and unwanted books, CDs, and DVDs helps HRWC. We like the slightly esoteric, academic, scholarly, and especially university presses. To put your "treasures" to work for HRWC bring your donation to the HRWC office, 9am – 5pm weekdays. We will handle the rest.

**QUESTIONS?** Please contact Lyn De Groot at (734) 769-5123 x 610 or [ldegroot@hrwc.org](mailto:ldegroot@hrwc.org)



## Enjoy the Huron River! *continued from cover*

The City of Ann Arbor draws 85% of its drinking water from the Huron River, prompting concern when PFAS were found at high levels in the river and in Norton Creek, near Wixom, in the fall of 2018. Since then, Ann Arbor has become a national leader in PFAS drinking water treatment. As a result, for the last several months, PFOS and PFOA—the two PFAS chemicals for which there is an EPA Health Advisory—have been at or below 5 parts per trillion (ppt) combined, within both EPA and state health recommendations.

At the same time, a major source of the PFAS contamination was identified and its discharges of PFOS and PFOA have been managed. As of April 30th, PFOS levels were reduced by 99.7% from their October 2018 levels and are now at 13 ppt in Norton Creek. That's below the recommended 16 ppt level the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes and Energy now believes is safe for human health in drinking water, but still above levels recommended by other recent peer-reviewed studies.

*The good news is that it is safe to swim, boat, and enjoy the Huron River with a few simple precautions. Do not eat fish from the Huron River, but catch-and-release fishing is okay. Avoid river foam, as PFAS concentrates in some foam. If you, your children, or pets accidentally make contact with river foam, simply rinse off with non-foamy river water and wash up when you get home.*

Scientists and regulators still have much to learn about how the thousands of chemicals in the PFAS family behave in the environment and what risks they pose to human health and ecosystems. The state and federal government need to provide more research funding to understand the dangers of PFAS and find ways to remove them from the environment. HRWC is tracking this issue very closely, is advocating for clear, strong regulation of these chemicals, and will keep the public informed as new information emerges.

### Dioxane

1,4-Dioxane is suspected to be cancer-causing through inhalation, ingestion, or by direct skin contact, though the type of exposure makes an enormous difference in the level of risk.

A dioxane plume currently contaminates the groundwater under much of Scio Township, Ann Arbor Township, and Ann Arbor. Those communities, along with Washtenaw County and HRWC, are currently involved in litigation against the polluter, Gelman Sciences, to slow or stop the spread of the plume and clean it up.

The dioxane plume has not reached the river. Monitoring wells are in place to track the movement of this plume. At this time, however, dioxane is not affecting the safety of recreational users.

### Microplastics

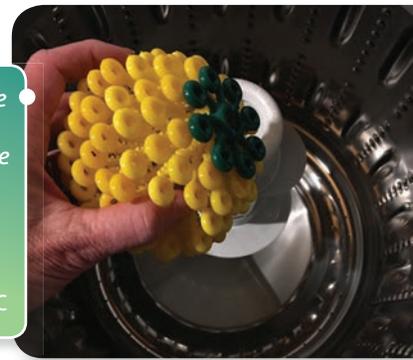
Microplastics are tiny pieces of plastic that are less than 5 millimeters and mostly invisible to the naked eye. The U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) studied microplastics in 29 Great Lakes tributaries and found the highest concentration of microplastics to be in the Huron River.

Microplastics can be harmful to humans as well as wildlife. Fish and birds can suffer digestive obstruction and impaired reproduction. Plastic additives have been linked to cancer and endocrine disruption issues. Microplastics can also pick up pesticides and pathogens during their journey through waterways. They are found in all surface waters throughout the planet, yet research to determine the impacts on human health is lacking. Given that people are ingesting microplastics via food products and inhaling them as a form of air pollution, more research is needed on sources, impacts, and solutions.

In the Great Lakes, 70% of microplastic pollution comes from synthetic fibers, according to the USGS study. Microplastic pollution can be decreased at the local level, and HRWC is reaching out to residents to share actions each person can take to accomplish this, including:

- use filters or laundry devices designed to capture synthetic

Devices like this Cora Ball capture synthetic/plastic fibers in laundry. credit: HRWC



fibers (such as nylon and polyester) before they wash down the drain;

- pressure clothing manufacturers to develop and implement solutions; and
- let politicians know that this is an important issue.

By focusing on synthetic fibers and reducing one's overall 'plastic footprint', individuals can help reduce microplastic pollution in the Huron River.

### Maintaining a healthy river

The health of the Huron River requires addressing many threats. HRWC is taking action on the specific contaminants addressed here. At the same time, the organization is committed to addressing long-standing threats to the system including stormwater runoff, loss of natural lands and habitat degradation. While PFAS, dioxane, and microplastics are receiving a lot of attention in the media, and importantly so, these existing threats also warrant considerable attention.

HRWC will continue to work with local governments, businesses, and residents to address the issues critical to the health of the river. And the work that has been done to date has made its mark. By many critical measures, the condition of the Huron is improving and it remains a recreational amenity in southeast Michigan. HRWC encourages watershed residents to continue to enjoy the river responsibly and celebrate its pleasures.

— Kris Olsson, Daniel A. Brown, and Anita Daley



## Whole Farms for Clean Water *continued from cover*

information. The model can predict the expected phosphorus reduction from a specific conservation practice applied to any field the farmer chooses.

### All eyes on algae

Water quality problems such as excess phosphorus and nitrogen, resulting in part from agricultural runoff, have remained stubbornly difficult to solve. These nutrients promote the overgrowth of algae. A cascade of effects can result—toxic excretions from algae, depletion of dissolved oxygen, fish kills—shutting down water supplies, closing beaches, and hurting tourism.

Lake Erie experienced record algal blooms in 2011 and 2015. Smaller blooms like the one that caused the 2014 Toledo water crisis are no less toxic. Here in the Huron River watershed, algal blooms have plagued Ford and Belleville lakes—as well as other inland lakes—for many years.

### Solving the problem

Under a non-binding agreement in 2015, Ohio, Michigan, and Ontario committed to a 40% reduction in phosphorus flowing to Lake Erie by 2025. Additionally, HRWC and its partners have committed to eliminating the state-designated

nutrient impairment for Ford and Belleville lakes. Tremendous progress has been made to reduce urban and stormwater runoff by 40%, but agricultural runoff has not improved. This project seeks to reduce 10.5 tons of phosphorus runoff per year.

Several government programs already exist to support farmers in making changes that reduce phosphorus runoff. Historically these programs provide standardized payments for a set of proscribed conservation practices regardless of the local field conditions or expected outcomes. This new project will provide incentive payments based on the amount of modeled nutrient reductions.

### Plans for a growing business

Whole Farms for Clean Water seeks to empower farmers to play an active and long-term role in meeting water quality goals by connecting those goals to the farm's business goals. Farms participating in the project will be eligible for a Whole Farm Plan: a comprehensive, forward-looking plan for the land and farm operation developed by a team of professional agronomists. Each plan is tailored to the individual farm and is dedicated to measurable outcomes. The plans detail the farm's history and condition. They

make recommendations for land use, resource management, tenancy and revenue streams. They also propose the best-suited conservation approaches and existing incentive programs available to help.

The project team will provide farms with technical support as they implement the practices that reduce phosphorus. It will also work to develop markets with local and regional agricultural buyers for new crops resulting from adopted conservation practices. For example, some specialty botanicals used in area restaurants can be grown within stream buffers or filter strips.

Interested farmers can learn more and sign up at [hrwc.org/wholefarms](http://hrwc.org/wholefarms). This fall, HRWC will hold workshops where farmers can meet the project team and learn how to enroll.

—Ric Lawson and Pam Labadie

*The US EPA is providing financial support in the amount of \$649,353 to HRWC for the Whole Farms for Clean Water project. Principal project partners include Environmental Consulting and Technology, Ohio State University, Solutions in the Land, and the University of Michigan.*



*(Above) Filter strips act as a natural buffer along water corridors such as this one. The strips trap soil and fertilizers before they can drain into the water. credit: USDA NRCS*

*(Right) Farms like this one will be eligible to receive incentive payments for nutrient reduction practices. credit: S. Brown*



# The Huron River Watershed

## MISSION

The Huron River Watershed Council protects and restores the river for healthy and vibrant communities.

## VISION

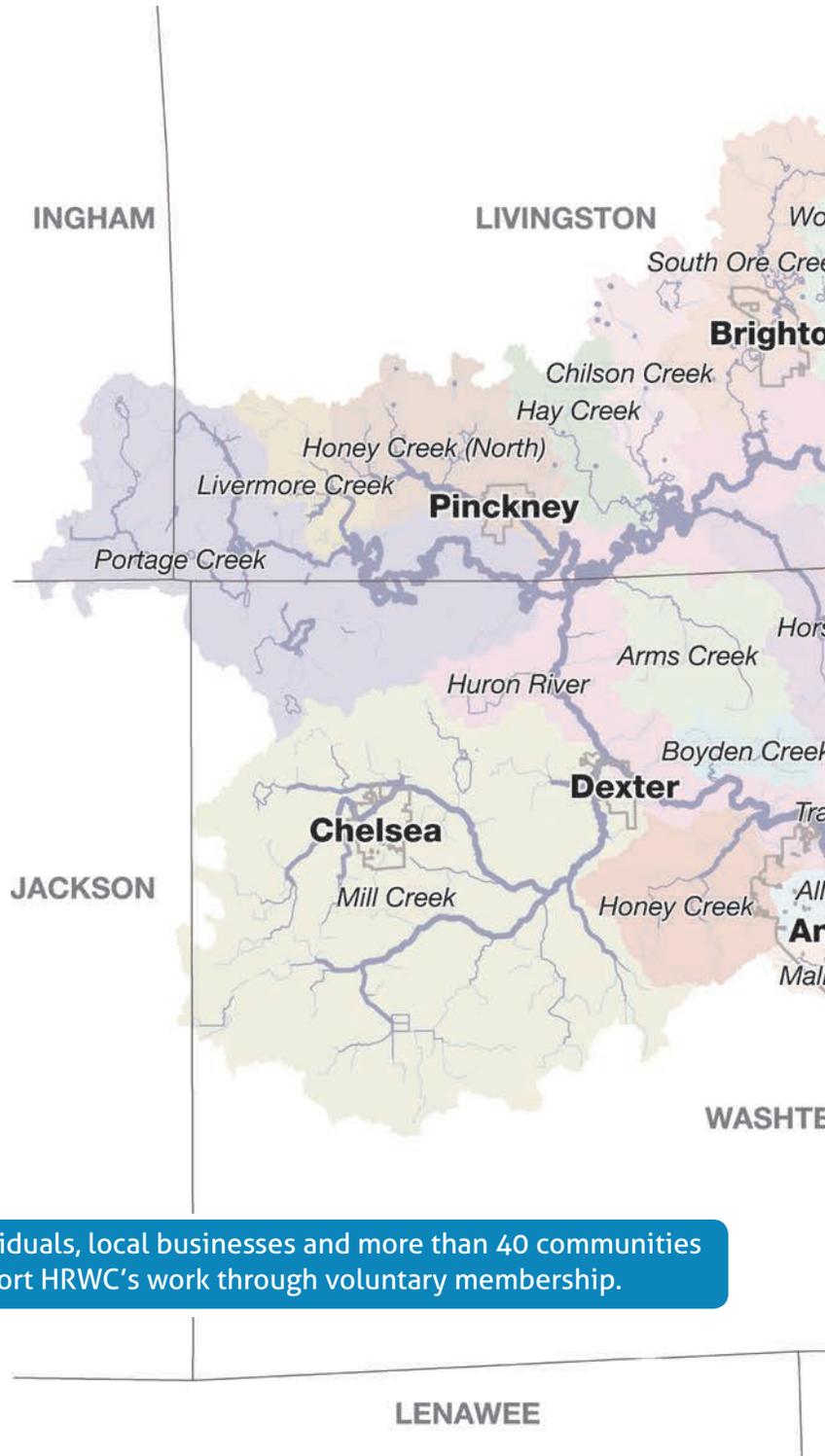
We envision a future of clean and plentiful water for people and nature where citizens and government are effective and courageous champions for the Huron River and its watershed.

## CORE VALUES

We work with a collaborative and inclusive spirit to give all partners the opportunity to become stewards.

We generate science-based, trustworthy information for decision makers to ensure reliable supplies of clean water and resilient natural systems.

We passionately advocate for the health of the river and the lands around it.



## HRWC BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Janis Bobrin  
Paul Cousins  
Matthew LaFleur (Treasurer)  
Dick Norton (Chair)  
Diane O'Connell  
Evan Pratt  
Steven Wright

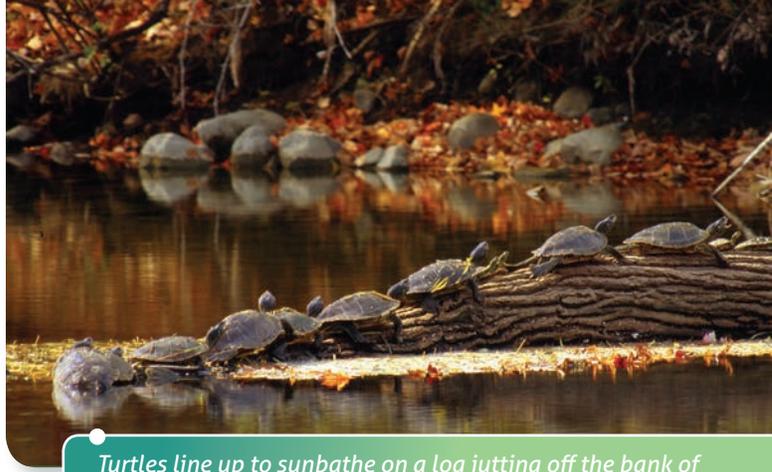
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Individuals, local businesses and more than 40 communities support HRWC's work through voluntary membership.

Visit [www.hrwc.org](http://www.hrwc.org) for detailed maps, monitoring data and creekshed status updates.





Turtles line up to sunbathe on a log jutting off the bank of the Huron River near Bell Road. credit: M. Akemann

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### Suds on the River!

Thursday, September 12, 6 - 9pm

*Kick off your fall with this favorite HRWC event. Enjoy specialty beers, delicious food and great company as you celebrate the Huron River.*

Details and tickets: [ldegroot@hrwc.org](mailto:ldegroot@hrwc.org), (734) 769-5123 x 610

### Ypsilanti Fall River Day

Sunday, September 22, Noon - 3pm, Riverside Park (north end), Ypsilanti  
*Paddle trips to Ford Lake, free family-friendly activities and exhibits, a nature walk, and more. This event is hosted by the Ypsilanti Parks & Recreation Commission and features HRWC and the Huron River Water Trail, Leslie Science & Nature Center, City of Ann Arbor Canoe Liveries, Washtenaw County Parks & Recreation, the Huron Clinton Metroparks, and others.*

Information: [www.ypsiparks.org](http://www.ypsiparks.org)



### River Roundup

Saturday, October 12, 9am or 10:30am, lasts 3-4 hours, start at NEW Center in Ann Arbor and travel throughout the watershed

*Join a small team with your friends and family for this popular event. Collect a sample of the bugs (benthic macroinvertebrates) that live in our streams. Like canaries in a coal mine, these creatures tell us the health of the river.*

Registration (required): [www.hrwc.org/roundup](http://www.hrwc.org/roundup)

### Board Meeting

Thursday, October 24, 5:30 pm, NEW Center, Ann Arbor

Contact: [jkangas@hrwc.org](mailto:jkangas@hrwc.org)



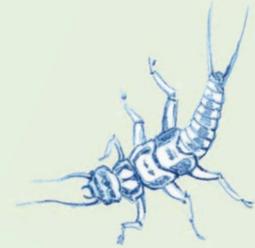
### ID Day

Sunday, October 20, Noon or 2pm start, lasts 2 hours, NEW Center, Ann Arbor  
*Discover what kinds of bugs we found at the River Roundup, separate them into look-alike groups, and then an expert will identify them with you. Record the data and compare the results to last year.*

Registration: [www.hrwc.org/id-day](http://www.hrwc.org/id-day)

### SAVE THE DATE!

*The next Huron River Report will publish in March 2020. Please note these upcoming activities on your calendar and check [hrwc.org](http://hrwc.org) for more information.*



### Stonefly Search

Saturday, January 25

### Quiet Adventures Symposium

Saturday, February 29  
[quietwatersymposium.org](http://quietwatersymposium.org)

### River Givers Gathering

Sunday, March 8

### Chemistry and Flow Monitoring Orientation

Saturday, March 21



credit: E. Wolf

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





# Thanks, Rebecca. Welcome, Lyn!

## HRWC's new Development Associate



credit: HRWC

Development Associate Rebecca Foster has an infectious laugh that has filled our hallways and hearts with joy since 2012. During her time at HRWC, she sold hundreds of Suds tickets, processed thousands of membership reminder letters and contributions, and baked many delicious treats for our meetings; all of which will be greatly missed. Rebecca has decided to pursue other goals—including clearing her calendar for her role as Pinckney Village Trustee. We are grateful to Rebecca for her many years of service in making sure members were renewed, tickets were sold, and that our database was at least humming, if not in fact singing, with correct information. On behalf of the board, staff, and members we wish you all the best, Rebecca!

In late June, Lyn De Groot joined HRWC's team as the new Development Associate. She will work on securing funding for HRWC's operations to protect and restore the Huron River and ensuring HRWC's financial sustainability through donor communications, prospect research, record

keeping, and special event management. Prior to HRWC, Lyn spent eleven years with REI Co-op, most recently as their Outdoor Programs & Outreach Coordinator for the Metro Detroit area. A Michigan native, she fell in love with Ann Arbor after moving here to attend the University of Michigan. In her free time, she can be found hiking, camping, paddling, or in her backyard garden. Lyn lives near the Huron River in Ypsilanti.

—Margaret Smith



credit: HRWC

## Three Easy Steps!

### Stop the spread of invasive species in the watershed

Scientific monitoring is essential for learning more about our environment, but scientists and volunteers can accidentally transfer invasive species from one place to another.

Starting this year at all volunteer and intern monitoring events, HRWC will be using decontamination kits to stop the spread of invasive species. The kits make it easy for staff and volunteers to remember the process: inspect, remove, disinfect, and dry.

HRWC is not the only group using these kits. Earlier this summer, HRWC created and distributed 178 kits to 25 organizations across Michigan. Going forward, it is hoped that all Michigan water volunteer monitors will do the right thing and prevent the spread of invasive species!

In collaboration with 7 Cylinders Studio, HRWC created a video that talks about invasive species and how to use the decontamination kits. Check it out at [hrwc.org/decontaminate/](http://hrwc.org/decontaminate/)

—Paul Steen

Each kit contains a wide variety of tools to fight those pernicious invasive species! credit: HRWC



#### STEP 1: Inspect

Check out all your gear and clothes to make sure no plants or critters are being taken from the study site.

#### STEP 2: Remove

Kits include brushes, picks, lint brushes, and towels so volunteers can physically remove unwanted plant and animal hitchhikers.

#### STEP 3: Disinfect and Dry

Volunteer monitors often directly go from one water body to another, and it is in these situations where the danger of spreading invasive species is the highest. The kits contain a diluted bleach solution as a disinfectant. Volunteers can spray down nets, waders, and anything that could be hiding invasive species, and then allow the equipment to sit for 10 minutes before rinsing the bleach off and towel drying.



# Peninsular Paper Dam Slated for Removal

## *Ypsilanti City Council votes for removal*

On May 7, the Ypsilanti City Council voted 5-1 to take a huge step toward river restoration. Removing a dam is one of the best things a community can do to improve the health of a river for residents and the environment, but every case is unique. Each dam removal requires careful consideration. In the case of Peninsular Paper (Pen) Dam, the benefits of removal far outweigh the challenges and HRWC strongly supports the council's decision.

### Removal improves public safety

Dams can be a drowning hazard and, if they fail, they pose a risk to those downstream. The city has been unable to secure enough insurance coverage due to the expected damages to life and property if the dam were to fail. Removing Pen Dam will relieve Ypsilanti of this major public safety vulnerability. It will also reduce maintenance costs to taxpayers over the long term.

### Restoring the natural river flow

A stretch of free-flowing river all the way through Ypsilanti to Ford Lake will give several fish species more room to swim. Veteran anglers and experts from the Michigan Department of Natural Resources expect the quality of fish habitat and fishing to improve in the first five

years after removal. Once the dam is gone, the current impoundment will likely become a meandering floodplain meadow with the river about as wide as it is near Riverside Park in downtown Ypsilanti.

### More options for recreation and access

The changing shoreline profile will increase the size of Peninsular Park, give the city more options to increase public river recreational access, and create a park that benefits nearby residents. Many Ypsilanti residents voiced support for preserving the iconic Peninsular Paper powerhouse and sign. Removal of the dam will not directly affect the structures in the park, and their restoration will be considered separately.

### Understanding the process

The City of Ypsilanti and HRWC hired engineering firm Princeton Hydro to conduct a feasibility study to better understand the process of removal. The Friends of Peninsular Park provided additional financial support. Along with Superior and Ypsilanti townships, each party had representatives on a steering committee to oversee and advise the feasibility study.

The study, released in November

of 2018, addressed three potential impacts common to dam removals:

- sediment contamination above the dam could flow downstream;
- potential effects on downstream bridges; and
- possible changes to property boundaries.

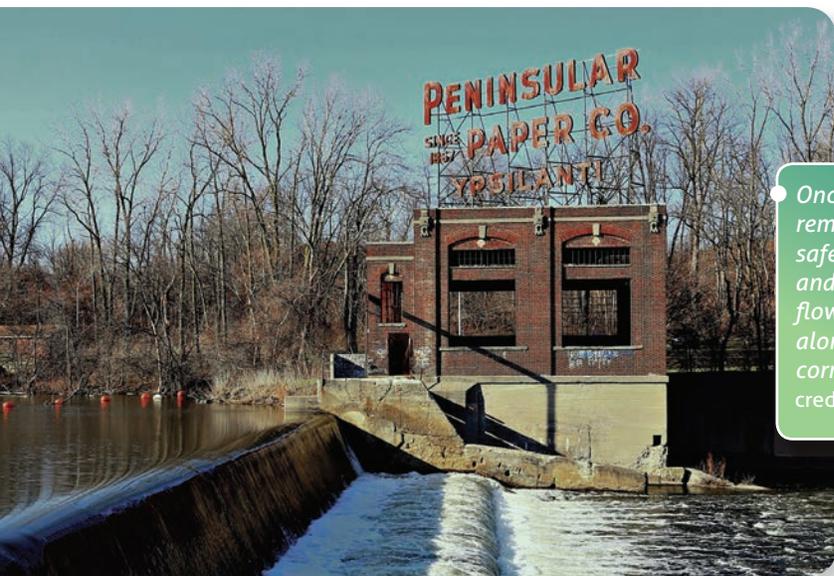
The study concluded that the removal of Peninsular Dam was highly feasible. Similar conclusions were drawn by additional experts whom HRWC consulted. They all strongly favored removal. HRWC will work with the city and experts to make sure the proper steps are taken to protect people, wildlife and the entire Ypsilanti community throughout the removal process.

### Next steps

Repairing or removing dams is expensive. Under state law, Pen Dam is not compliant with safety standards and the city is legally obligated to fix it or remove it. The repair cost was estimated to be \$807,000, and it was unclear how long the repairs would last. On the other hand, Princeton Hydro estimated the one-time cost of removal at \$2.7 million. Despite the higher cost of removal in the near term, over the long term, it relieves the city of future costs associated with the dam. Additionally, there are numerous funding opportunities available that defray costs of dam removal.

The city committed \$500,000 toward removing the dam and will seek additional funding from outside sources. HRWC will provide expertise and project management support to the city throughout the process and will work to ensure the ecological restoration of the river. HRWC is also committed to working with Ypsilanti groups to rebuild this portion of the Huron River Water Trail in a way that creates a place for all residents to celebrate Ypsilanti's restored natural resource. For more information, go to [hrwc.org/pendam](http://hrwc.org/pendam).

—Daniel A. Brown



• *Once the dam is removed, public safety will improve and the river will flow naturally along the Ypsilanti corridor.*  
credit: Rantes, Flickr



# Healthy Land = Healthy Water

## HRWC releases land protection toolkit

Among the Huron River watershed's many blessings are its forests, wetlands, and fields that still make up 40% of the watershed's 588,000 acres. These natural areas clean polluted runoff, keep runoff water cool, and soak up rain, which can then infiltrate into groundwater to recharge the river and drinking wells. Yet projections show that almost half of these natural lands could be converted to residential and commercial development in coming decades.

### Local decisions, local control

In Michigan, local governments have the power to determine land use and land protection strategies within their own boundaries. Several of the watershed's local governments have recognized the importance of land protection to the health, safety, and welfare of their residents and to local water resources. In the past ten years, five property tax-funded land protection programs (a.k.a. "millages") have successfully protected about 10,000 acres of natural lands in the Huron River watershed.

To spread the use of this important tool throughout the other 62 local

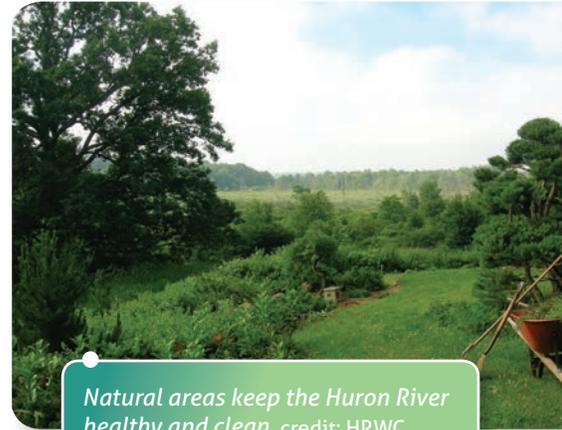
governments in the watershed, HRWC has created a step-by-step *Conservation Millage Toolkit* ([hrwc.org/millagetoolkit](http://hrwc.org/millagetoolkit)) to guide communities and local activists through the process of campaigning for and passing a millage.

On June 17, twenty-three watershed residents and local government officials gathered to learn about the toolkit and discuss:

- The environmental, health, and economic benefits of land protection
- The feasibility of a land protection millage in their community
- Steps to get a millage on the ballot
- Budgeting, recruiting, and planning for a campaign
- Communicating messages to voters
- Getting out the vote
- Setting up a land protection program

### Local success

Ann Arbor Township Trustee John Allison was on hand to share his township's successes with their millage program and advised



Natural areas keep the Huron River healthy and clean. credit: HRWC

attendees that, "This [toolkit] is an incredible resource. Based on my experience, the advice it contains is spot on. Read it and do it."

With 67 local governments in the watershed and the need to protect land, the river needs many more communities to take on a land protection program. HRWC is willing to provide support to any communities or residents, including GIS mapping, meeting facilitation, and research. Together we can ensure the protection of natural lands critical to maintaining a healthy Huron River.

—Kris Olsson

## Flux + Flow at Fleming

### Discovering a creek through play

Inspired by the power of water and an historic mill, Flux + Flow has come to life on the banks of Fleming Creek at Parker Mill in Washtenaw County. Flux + Flow is dedicated to the work of Janis Bobrin, who served as Washtenaw County's Water Resources Commissioner for over 20 years, and it captures the spirit of Janis's environmental stewardship.

—Pam Labadie

A stainless steel sluice mimics the mill race.

First, pump water into the basin and let it splash and spill into one of two channels.

Next, follow the water as it makes its way down the sluice.

Then, observe the water flowing onto the millstone and into Fleming Creek. The stone represents Parker Mill's history as one of the oldest grist mills in Washtenaw County. credit: HRWC





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# Together We Protect Our Home River

Please give back to the river that has given us so much

Since 1965, we have led the change we want to see – taking the mantle and advocating at the LOCAL level, collecting and interpreting science, informing action, policy, and outreach, strengthening local laws and regulations, implementing innovative solutions such as natural resources planning, climate readiness, and real-time monitoring.



**Donate at [hrwc.org/donate](https://hrwc.org/donate)**

HRWC depends on your support to protect our clean water for people and nature.

Questions about how your dollars can help?

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