



Huron River Report

Published quarterly by the Huron River Watershed Council

SPRING 2017



feature story

Volunteer Initiatives

Bill Lee, Sally Rutzky, Janet Kahan, and Jesus Bautista help the Huron

As HRWC's spring field season begins, volunteers gear up to assist with programming—and their accomplishments are notable! Below are stories of a handful of talented volunteers, including details on how their backgrounds support the mighty Huron.

Bill Lee

While volunteering with the Michigan Department of Natural Resources Volunteer Steward Program, Bill Lee connected with people who had a similar interest in preserving nature. It was through those connections that he heard about HRWC; he was interested in learning more.

On HRWC's website he found the Water Quality Monitoring Program which intrigued him because of the scientific aspect, and it gave him a reason to get outside and into the water. Bill became a volunteer in 2015 and has enjoyed learning more about water quality, flow, and how to "read" the river and its tributaries. Bill describes it this way: "I like the science aspect of it, you feel like you are more involved and connecting with the river. It's like the difference between buying the cookie dough, or making the cookie dough by hand; you are a little bit more involved." He

continued on page 4



Bill Lee helps a volunteer record data.
credit: HRWC

Catch-and-Release Protects the Huron's Fish

Anglers can help offset the effects of climate change

The Huron River is considered good for fishing throughout its length and, in particular, smallmouth bass fishing is excellent from the dam at Portage Lake downstream to Barton Pond. Along the Huron, anglers may see new signs at popular fishing access points in the Ann Arbor and Ypsilanti areas with reminders about the laws regarding catch-and-release fishing during the spring months. This year, HRWC will install these catch-and-release signs as part of a bigger Climate Change Adaptation project to build the fish community's

resiliency to changing climate. By promoting catch-and-release fishing, HRWC is helping to protect local fish populations.

The Huron River is a great smallmouth bass river because it currently provides the clean water, habitat, and water temperatures that this species (and a large diversity of other species) needs to survive. As water levels and flow rates spike more frequently because of larger storms, and as water temperatures

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A beautiful example of a smallmouth bass, with exceptionally bright markings. credit: M. Schultz

● **INSIDE: UPCOMING EVENTS AND WORKSHOPS** *Water Trails improve accessibility*
Using trees to store stormwater | Benefits of a free-flowing river | Legal action on 1,4-dioxane





Laura's Stream of Consciousness



H. Buffman

While most of our work focuses on projects that advance policies and science, on-the-ground restoration, or behavior change, occasionally an issue rises to the level that requires legal action. The continuing spread of the dioxane-contaminated groundwater toward the river and its tributaries is such a case. Legal action is an unusual step for HRWC, but it's in response to an extraordinary situation.

Many of you are familiar with the historic plume of dioxane migrating through the groundwater on the west side of Ann Arbor. There is a current civil matter in the Washtenaw County Circuit Court, docket No. 88-34734-CE. The matter is between the State of Michigan and Gelman Sciences, Inc. Almost 30 years ago, the State brought legal action against Gelman to enforce the law with respect to Gelman's contamination of soils, groundwater, and other natural resources with 1,4-dioxane. The State and Gelman entered into an original consent judgment on the matter in 1992.

This past October, on the same night as the Dioxane Town Hall Meeting in

Ann Arbor, the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) issued an emergency order lowering the acceptable exposure level of dioxane in drinking water from 85 ppb to 7.4 ppb. The order offered the opportunity for parties to seek intervention in the long-running legal case (consent judgment) on the dioxane plume and get a seat at the table in the talks between MDEQ and Gelman. Using the new criteria for 1,4-dioxane, certain modifications to the consent judgment will be made.

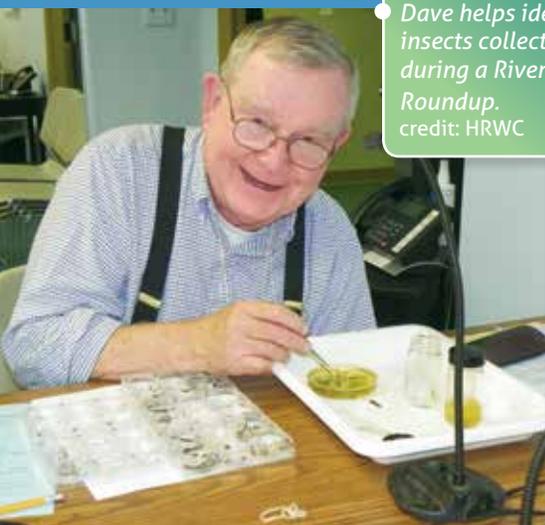
HRWC is not satisfied that the consent judgment process has achieved or will achieve the necessary protection of the Huron River, its tributaries, the relevant aquatic communities, or the recreational interests of our members. These interests are not represented, and the river system is at risk. No one has identified with precision the fate, transport, and impact of the plume, and where and when it will reach the river. For that reason, HRWC—with counsel from the Great Lakes Environmental Law Center—decided to get involved in the case.

In December, 2016, HRWC secured "intervenor status" in the case. This set a new precedent. As the Attorney General's counsel, Brian Negele, stated during the proceedings, "... in our experience we've never seen a circumstance where an environmental policy group or a public interest group basically has intervened and been a participant in the negotiation of a consent judgment, whether it's the very first negotiation of a consent judgment, or in this case the fourth amendment to a consent judgment."

The next step will be to secure a written order from the judge that defines the scope of our involvement. After that, we hope to join the ongoing negotiations about revising the most recent version of the consent judgment. At those negotiations, we will advocate for a detailed commitment that better protects the vulnerable portions of the watershed.

— Laura Rubin
HRWC Executive Director

Dave Wilson, HRWC board member from Van Buren Township, long-time volunteer, and generous donor, passed away in January. He was a life-long supporter of environmental and social justice causes. As a chemistry professor at Vanderbilt University, Dave utilized the resources of the college to improve the lives of the greater community, as well as the environment.



Dave helps identify insects collected during a River Roundup. credit: HRWC

Upon retiring, Dave moved to Belleville, Michigan, immediately aligning himself with HRWC and immersing himself in numerous aspects of the organization. He participated in nearly all of HRWC's volunteer programming and was a member of the board of directors. Dave developed and deployed HRWC's youth education program. When obvious solutions did not exist to important problems, Dave always took on the tasks of creating a solution, be it creating inexpensive testing kits to determine if lead exists in homes of those without the means to access testing, creating hyper-local educational materials appropriate for local students, or amassing resources and developing ordinances to ban coal-tar based asphalt products.

Dave was the embodiment of "think globally, act locally." The Huron River, its communities, and HRWC are all stronger for his work.

We will miss him.



Plant a Tree... Today!

And store 100 gallons of stormwater

The leaves and bark of a tree retain a surprising amount of water, allowing some of it to evaporate and some to more slowly reach the ground. Depending on the size and species, a single tree may store 100 gallons or more. When multiplied by the number of trees in a community, this interception and redistribution can be significant. It is estimated that the urban forest can reduce annual runoff by up to seven percent. (source: *Tree City USA Bulletin No. 55, Arbor Day Foundation, 2010*)

Get a tree!

Want to learn what tree species are likely to do better in a changing climate? Go to our Tree Resilience Toolkit. Type "tree resilience toolkit" in the search box at www.hrwc.org.

Spring Conservation District tree sales are one source for affordable trees:

Livingston, order by April 1
www.livingstoncd.org

Oakland, order by April 29
www.oaklandconservationdistrict.org

Washtenaw, order by March 23
www.washtenawcd.org

Plant it right!

Tree resources, including siting, selecting, planting, and tree care information can be found at:

ReLeaf Michigan
www.releafmichigan.com

Michigan State University Extension
<http://msue.anr.msu.edu/>

Appreciate its benefits!

Learn more at "Hardworking Trees, low-cost watershed workers," *Huron River Report*, Spring 2014, www.hrwc.org.

—Pam Labadie

Go to www.itreetools.org/mytree and follow the directions to get a printout (sample above) highlighting the benefits of your tree.

| MyTree Benefits | |
|---|--------------|
| Serving size: 1 Maple, Red (<i>Acer rubrum</i>) | |
| Carbon Dioxide (CO₂) | \$0.93 |
| CO ₂ absorbed each year | 93.00 lbs |
| Storm Water | \$8.13 |
| Rainfall intercepted each year | 300 gal. |
| Air Pollution removed each year | \$0.10 |
| Ozone | 0.16 oz |
| Nitrogen dioxide | 0.00 oz |
| Sulfur dioxide | 0.00 oz |
| Large particulate matter** | 1.12 oz |
| Energy Usage each year* | \$4.79 |
| Electricity savings (A/C) | 34.01 kWh |
| Fuel savings (NG, Oil) | -6.05 therms |
| Avoided Emissions | |
| Carbon dioxide | -62.21 lbs |
| Nitrogen dioxide | 0.00 oz |
| Sulfur dioxide | -0.16 oz |
| Large particulate matter** | 0.48 oz |

Benefit values are estimates based on USDA Forest Service research and are meant for guidance only: itreetools.org

*Positive energy values indicate savings or reduced emissions. Negative energy values indicate increased usage or emissions.

**Greater than 10 microns



Curious to know what your tree is "worth" in terms of stormwater remediation? Calculate the stormwater, carbon dioxide, air pollution, and energy benefits of any tree at: www.treebenefits.com or www.itreetools.org/mytree credit: HRWC



Volunteer Initiatives *continued from cover*

has met some great people, and has had quality conversations with interns and other volunteers. "I wouldn't call it work, it's really enjoyable!" In 2016, Bill became a team leader in the program, guiding new volunteers as they learn about how to gather samples, field data, and measure flow.

Before retiring, Bill worked as a facilities manager and engineer for K-12 schools, then moved to an architectural and engineering firm in project management. He spent most of his time with K-12 school districts building, remodeling, and planning their facilities. He states, "I've always been able to find things that interest me; I've had a really fortunate life."

As a resident of Commerce Township for the past 24 years, Bill connects to the Huron River often via hikes along the riverbank and canoe trips from Proud Lake to Island Lake. He also has practiced Tai Chi for 30 years.

Bill is a key contributor to the Water Quality Monitoring Program and also is involved in other volunteer opportunities at HRWC, focusing his efforts in Oakland and Livingston counties. Bill's leadership, attention to detail, and friendly personality help make the Water Quality Monitoring Program successful.



Sally Rutzky on a plant identification hike in Lyndon Township. credit: HRWC

Sally Rutzky

Back in 2000, Sally was looking to expand her involvement in

the community. She checked out activities in the *Ann Arbor Observer*, highlighting anything of interest, and going to one each week. Sally ended up attending all sorts of activities, but the ones that held the most interest had to do with nature, including native plants, nature walks, and HRWC's Suds on the River event. From there, Sally became an active volunteer for HRWC's Bioserve project, doing field assessments to collect data on natural areas in the watershed.

When Sally moved to Lyndon Township in 2010, she saw a posting for a position at the District Library board and applied. However, there was already an incumbent for the library slot. Sally recalls, "I was asked if I would be interested in becoming a Planning Commissioner. I said 'Okay, sure!' Having taken property law as a freshman at the University of Michigan Law School in 1970, I was sure I could learn to ride that bicycle again."

Thus began a learning process for both Sally and Lyndon Township, as she and her small, rural community began to face development pressures that culminated in a proposal for a sand pit that would level a heavily wooded hill (a glacial "kame") that is the highest point in the county.

Sally turned to HRWC for help. "After a presentation by Elizabeth Riggs on lake and riparian edges," Sally shares, "we changed the setbacks and buffers in our lake conservation districts." In early 2012, HRWC held a Green Infrastructure workshop at the Township. Attendees mapped the Township's forests, wetlands, lakes, streams and other Green Infrastructure that clean the air, filter polluted runoff, replenish drinking water, and provide habitat for wildlife. The workshop underscored the importance and connectivity of Lyndon's abundant natural areas and parklands to their residents. "Parks don't pay taxes, but you could easily say parklands are our primary 'industry'. Lyndon does not have a city, town or village. We have one gas station/convenience store."

With the Green Infrastructure map as a guide, the Township continued to work on improving their policies. Then, in December 2013, the Township received an application

for a sand mine on the Cunningham property. "The kame was low hanging fruit, right on M52," according to Sally.

The pit would displace 100+ football fields-worth of forest that the township had recently mapped out as part of its Green Infrastructure network. Sally recounts, "Early in the spring of 2014, I was one of three Planning Commissioners who did a site visit. We bushwhacked as much of the property as we had the stamina to do (it is, after all a big hill!). Then we went back to the Lyndon Township Hall and sat down to rest. In front of us was the Green Infrastructure map. We stared at the hubs of Parks Lyndon, Pinckney and Waterloo. The kame is in the center of those hubs—bull's eye.

Sally continues, "When the sand pit petitioner made his presentation, he said, 'and the land surrounding the proposed site is all vacant.' He thought that meant no one cared about it. He did not recognize the economic and public interest in maintaining parkland. He did not understand the value of ecological hubs."

Lyndon Township (along with the City of Chelsea, myriad local environmental groups, and local resident and actor Jeff Daniels) continued to resist approval of the proposal despite state laws that make it difficult for local governments to prohibit mineral mining activities. Then, the owner withdrew their request in October 2016. Instead, they will lease another property from the DNR closer to their cement plants, and the kame hill will become part of the Pinckney Recreation Area. "I am very grateful to HRWC for our Green Infrastructure Plan," Sally concludes.

Janet Kahan

Now a leader in HRWC's streamside education program, Janet has been preparing to help HRWC for decades. As an Ann Arbor Public Schools Environmental Educator, Janet started volunteering with HRWC in 1995. HRWC's Adopt-A-Stream program's River Round Ups and Stonefly Searches helped her learn more about river ecosystems. Janet

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Janet Kahn in her natural habitat.
credit: J. Kahn

continued her volunteering for many years, while working at Plymouth-Canton Community Schools. Upon her retirement, she notes, "I was looking for a way to become more connected to my own local community again, so I asked Jason Frenzel if there was anything I might be able to do. He matched me up with the Streamside School Outreach program, and I've had a lot of fun with it." In fact, Janet joined the streamside education program to help revamp the learning objectives, update the teaching procedures, and upgrade the outreach materials. Janet's professional background and attention to detail was exceptionally helpful. Dave Wilson, who developed the original program materials, enthusiastically noted that Janet's work moved the program "from good to great." Dave passed away in January (see page 2), but his praise of Janet was justified;

under her leadership, the program has continued to expand.

Starting in 2013, Janet has been wrangling teachers and volunteers to grow HRWC's education program. Always modest and kind, Janet notes, "It's great to do a little outdoor teaching with the students, and I love the other HRWC volunteers. They are smart, knowledgeable, kind and dedicated. Who wouldn't want to enjoy some time outside with them?" We believe her thoughts are reflective of her own strengths.

Janet continues to volunteer at River Roundups and Stonefly Searches. Her education and engagement skills show—every time she returns from the field with a group of new volunteers, they can't stop talking about the amazing things they've learned. And she always recruits them to help on another project or two.



Jesus Bautista stops in at the office to get supplies.
credit: HRWC

Jesus Bautista
A Biochemistry student at Eastern Michigan University, Jesus joined HRWC's "creekwalking" program for the summer of 2016. He wanted to expand on his laboratory work in

school with field research and get experience working with a nonprofit agency. Jesus quickly became a natural leader on the team. "I was pleasantly surprised that the most valuable skill I improved on was actually teamwork and team leadership." Creekwalking requires upwards of four hours of wading and data collection. Jesus notes, "Developing good communication and leadership skills was vital in finishing the task at hand with efficiency and our sanity still intact."

When asked if the internship was a valuable experience for him, he replies, "Volunteering for HRWC also helped me fully understand how environmental problems can originate anywhere. It's completely different to actually observe and experience going through a creek or stream with environmental problems, rather than just reading it in a text book or data report."

Reflecting on his time, Jesus also notes, "The best part of volunteering for HRWC, or any nonprofit organization for that matter, is the ability to see your work directly help the cause you are working for. It truly is a unique experience when you can walk along the Huron River and be reminded that your help and work is one of the reasons the Huron River has remained in such a protected and great condition."

—Stevi Kosloskey, Kris Olsson, and Jason Frenzel

Huron River Watershed Council Board of Directors

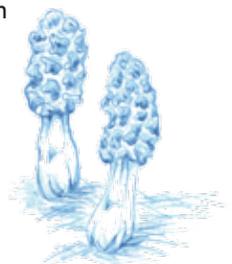
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Catch-and-Release Protects Fish *continued from cover*

warm due to climate change, it will become harder and harder for the Huron River fish community to thrive.

Building resiliency

To prepare the river for climate change, it is important to create the strongest, healthiest system possible. A healthy system is better able to bounce back after events that negatively impact the river, such as extreme flooding and drought. To build this resilience, HRWC is working on education (among property owners along the river) and township policies to maintain vegetation and trees along river banks. HRWC is also working with dam operators to see how dams can be used to level out highly damaging storm flows that can wipe away fish nests and eggs. In 2015, HRWC restored woody-debris habitat in the river in Ypsilanti as part of this climate change project as well. This habitat provides critical shelter during severe weather events.

A fourth component of the project addresses the direct interaction between humans and fish. In addition to killing the fish, catch-and-keep severely compromises fish populations during the early-to-middle spring season when many species are reproducing (spawning). Even after spawning, a fish removed from its nest leaves its eggs susceptible to predation. When a fish is taken during the breeding season, both the current and future reproductive potential of the fish is destroyed. Healthy fish communities will be in a better place to resist climate change effects than fish communities already stressed by catch-and-keep fishing.

Regulations

Across Michigan, the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) does not allow catch-and-keep of smallmouth or largemouth bass prior to the Saturday before Memorial Day. In one section of the Huron River (Mast Road Bridge downstream to Delhi Road Bridge) the MDNR does not allow keeping those

species during any time of year—it is catch-and-release only. For people who have spent their lives fishing, MDNR fishing rules are engrained and second nature. However, for new anglers and for those from outside the state, complete ignorance of Michigan's fishing regulations is common. Reviewing the regulations

Signs assist anglers

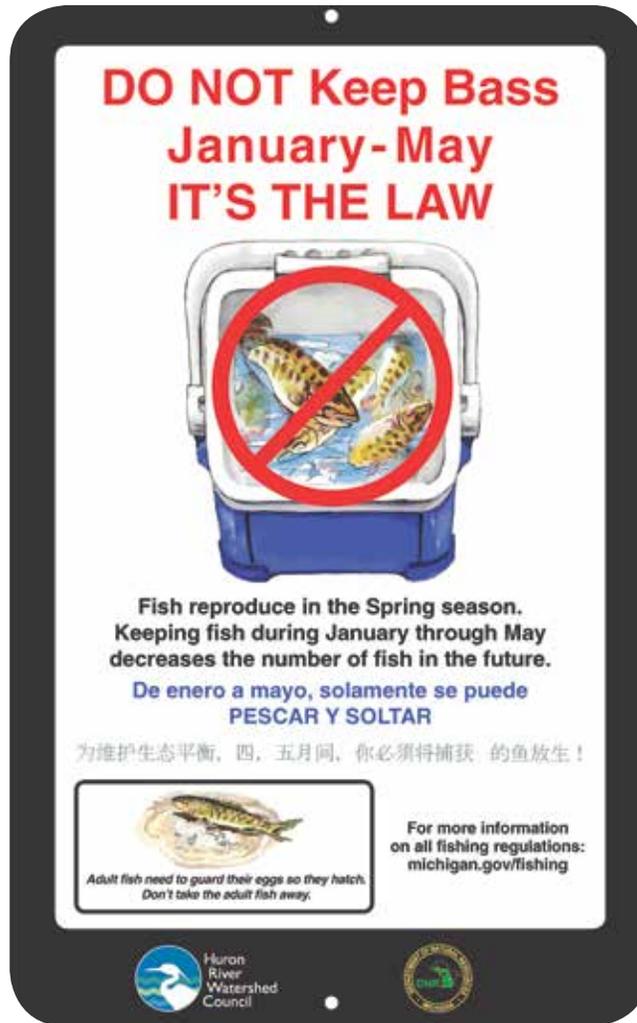
HRWC's new signage is designed to help everyone understand the regulations. The signs specifically address smallmouth bass as the Huron's primary sport fish, rather than causing confusion by including information on every sport fish; give a general time frame for the catch-and-release season rather than specific dates; and explain that the law requires anglers to give fish a break during spring because it is spawning season. Chinese and Spanish sections amplify the message.

Anglers are encouraged to go a step further in protecting the fish community by refraining entirely from fishing during the spring season when fish are spawning. Catch-and-release fishing is much easier on the fish population than catch-and-keep, but there is still a mortality rate in released fish, ranging from 0-70% depending on species, hook, bait choice, and of course, angler experience. Artificial flies are thought to have the lowest mortality rate (4-10% in rainbow trout according to one study), while using live bait is significantly more likely to result in the fish swallowing the hook, causing organ damage upon removal (32%-64% mortality in rainbow trout). In any case, accidental fish death is all the more punishing on the overall fish community during the spawning season.

If you are an angler, enjoy your time out on the Huron River this spring and summer. Let's work together to keep our fish communities abundant and healthy!

—Paul Steen and Anita Daley

Source for mortality rates: www.westernsportsman.com/2014/01/fish-mortality-catch-and-release/



and understanding the rules can be onerous because the MDNR rulebook is 68 pages long! For example, different species have different schedules, approved sizes vary by species, and these species/size rules change depending on what stretch of the river is being considered. While the rules are designed to make fishing as open as possible, this means that a substantial variety of conditions need to be defined in order to set allowances and restrictions.



Benefits of a Free-flowing River

Dam removal is an essential strategy for river restoration

A river, by definition, is free-flowing. Water moves downstream to meet up with other rivers on its path to its receiving waters. Fish, insects, and mussels move throughout river systems to meet their needs for food, habitat, and reproduction. But since the industrial revolution, people have dammed rivers with such zeal there are very few free flowing rivers remaining in the United States and a diminishing number worldwide. The Huron River is no exception. There are more than 100 dams on the Huron River system, effectively fragmenting the river and its tributaries into many isolated segments. While many significant gains in water quality have been made, river flow and connectivity remain largely unaddressed elements of river restoration.

Elements of a river ecosystem can persist in a dammed river, but aspects of that ecosystem cannot continue in the manner they did historically, if at all. For example, freshwater mussels rely on fish hosts to disperse their young to new areas of the river. As fish movement is limited, mussel populations are isolated and vulnerable to other threats such as drought or toxic spills. As a result mussels are among the most endangered freshwater organisms. Similarly, migratory fish—those that move long distances to fulfill different parts of their lifecycle—cannot maintain healthy populations in a dammed river. In the Huron, walleye from Lake Erie cannot make it past Flat Rock dam, just 10 river miles from the lake.

Status of Huron River dams

The 100 dams of the Huron vary widely in size, age, purpose, and ownership. Many of the larger dams have reservoirs that are utilized for recreation, as well as having many lakefront land owners. A few are still active hydropower dams. But others persist simply as a relic of another time—many with unclear ownership, no current purpose, and falling into increasing disrepair. There is an untapped opportunity here in the Huron to reconnect large portions of the river and its streams through the

removal of unwanted dams.

Benefits of Dam Removal

Dams are notoriously difficult to remove, requiring considerable planning and cost. Yet when dams come out, evidence shows the system recovers quickly. Two significant dam removal projects in the US tell beautiful stories of the resilience of river systems: the Elwha River in Washington; and the Penobscot in Maine. The removal of dams on the Elwha brought the prompt return of a burgeoning salmon run and restored the river delta which had been starved of sediment for a century. Two dams were removed on the Penobscot in 2012 and 2013, reconnecting the river to the sea and returning migratory fish in remarkable numbers to a river that was closed to them for over 100 years.

The Story of Mill Pond Dam

Closer to home, the Huron has its success story with the Mill Pond Dam, an old mill dam in Dexter on the largest tributary of the Huron. The removal of Mill Creek Dam in 2008 (see *Huron River Report* Spring and Fall, 2008) reconnected the main stem of the Huron River to the 226 miles of tributary streams in Mill Creek, with the exception of a few small tributary dams. In the eight

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Right: *Laura Rubin talks with a group in 2008, during the dam removal.* credit: HRWC

Below: *Mill Creek Park in Dexter has won numerous awards, with good reason.* credit: M. Ackmann

- 2010 American Council of Engineering Companies Michigan Award of Merit for Engineering
- 2013 American Society of Landscape Architects Merit Award
- 2015 Michigan Recreation and Park Association Design Award
- 2015 Keep Michigan Beautiful President's Award



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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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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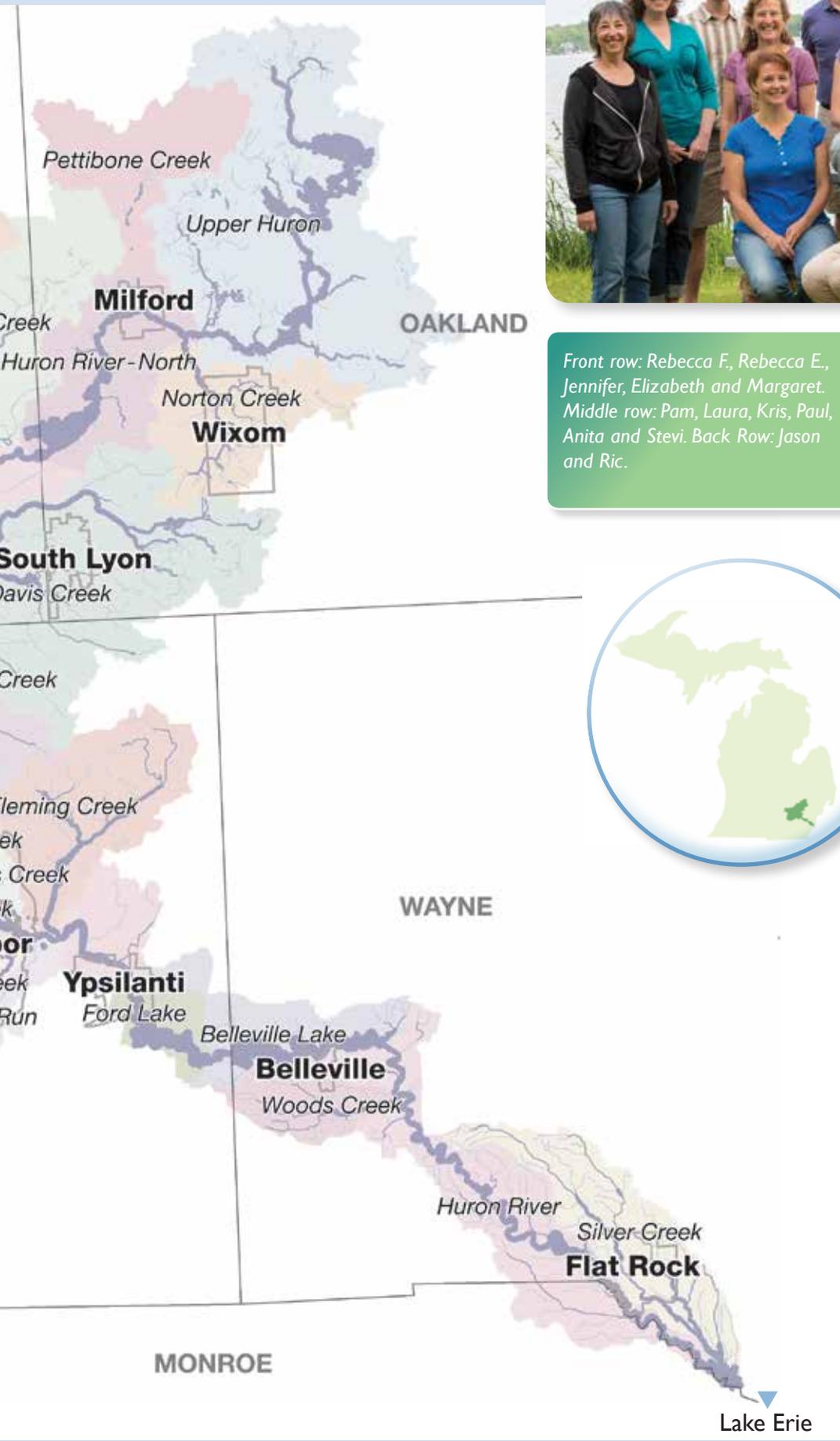
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The Huron River Watershed



For additional, detailed maps please go to: www.hrwc.org/the-watershed/maps



Anne Savage Photography

Front row: Rebecca F., Rebecca E., Jennifer, Elizabeth and Margaret.
 Middle row: Pam, Laura, Kris, Paul, Anita and Stevi.
 Back Row: Jason and Ric.

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calendar
of events



HRWC Events and Workshops

MARCH • APRIL • MAY • 2017

Quiet Water Symposium

Saturday, March 4, MSU Pavilion for Livestock and Agriculture Education, East Lansing

Join the Huron River Water Trail at this day-long expo to plan your Michigan summer paddling adventures. Talks, demonstrations and exhibits from outdoor recreation providers, experts and outfitters.

Details: www.quietwatersymposium.org

Huron River Water Trail Partners Meeting

Wednesday, March 15, 4 – 6pm, NEW Center, Ann Arbor

Planning, information sharing, and training related to the Huron River National Water Trail.

Contact: eriggs@hrwc.org

Native Plants and Rain Gardens

Friday – Sunday, March 18 – 20, Washtenaw Farm Council Grounds

Home, Garden, and Lifestyle Show

Classroom Training for Water Quality Monitoring

Saturday, March 25, 1 – 3pm, NEW Center, Ann Arbor

Help measure the quality of local rivers and streams this spring and summer! Collect water samples, measure stream flow, and sample runoff from rain storms. Stream sites are in Washtenaw, Livingston, and Wayne counties. Commitment is two or more hours per month, April through September, depending on availability and interest. We have a strong need for volunteers to work downriver and upstream of Ann Arbor. Additional hands-on training will occur in the field during the first week of sampling.

Details: www.hrwc.org/water-quality-monitoring

Registration: www.hrwc.org/volunteer/water-sampling

River Roundup

Saturday, April 22, 9am or 10:30am, lasts 4 to 5 hours, NEW Center and throughout the watershed

Volunteer with us this EARTH DAY! Join a small team with your friends and family for our Huron River study. Collect a sample of the bugs and other creatures (benthic macroinvertebrates) that live in our streams.

Registration (required): www.hrwc.org/roundup

HRWC Annual Meeting

Thursday, April 27, 5:30 – 7:30pm, Traverwood Branch Library, 3333 Traverwood Drive, Ann Arbor

Join us for program updates and celebrate our annual Stewardship Award honorees. Meet staff, board and volunteers as we share HRWC accomplishments and future plans. Light refreshments served. Open and free to the public.

Bioreserve Field Assessment Training

Saturday, May 6, 10am – 4pm, Independence Lake County Park, Webster Township

Get outside, meet new people, learn about local natural areas through this unique program. After the training, volunteers inventory ecologically important natural areas throughout the watershed. Commitment entails performing (as part of a team) two or more assessments during the spring and summer. People with plant identification skills especially welcome.

Registration: www.hrwc.org/volunteer/bioreserve-field-assessments

Bug ID Day

Sunday, May 7, Noon or 2pm, lasts 2 hours, NEW Center

Discover what kinds of bugs were found at the recent River Roundup. Separate them into look-alike groups, and then an expert will identify them with you. You record the data and compare the results to past years.

Registration: www.hrwc.org/id-day

River Rally 2017

Monday, May 8 through Thursday, May 11, Amway Grand Plaza Hotel, Grand Rapids, MI

This national conference attracts hundreds of river and watershed protection enthusiasts and experts from across the country to learn from each other, share what works, get inspired, and celebrate success. Registration is required.

Information: www.rivernetwork.org/events-learning/river-rally/about/





years since removal, the river has changed substantially.

The Mill Creek Dam removal has resulted in many biological, economic, recreational, and civic benefits. The old pond behind the dam in the middle of downtown Dexter had become overgrown, stagnant, and completely cut off from public access. Now, Mill Creek Park is the centerpiece of Dexter. People utilize the park, trails, and river year round. "There are people down there every day" says Courtney Nicholls, Dexter City Manager. Walking, biking, picnicking, kayaking, fishing—even public yoga classes are common sights along the creek. The park plan also includes stormwater treatment and the protection of wetlands, thus reducing pollution that may otherwise reach the stream. Courtney regularly hosts visitors from other communities eager to learn more about the dam removal and park development. The project also received several state and national awards. She recalls receiving an email enumerating everything that could go wrong if they were to remove the dam. "None of that came to be."

As for the ecosystem itself, before-and-after invertebrate data shows steady improvement. As a part of HRWC's River Roundup (www.hrwc.org/volunteer/roundup), volunteers regularly sample nine sites on Mill Creek. Four of these sites show significant improvements in the macroinvertebrate populations, indicating improving water quality and habitat. Shield Road in particular, just upstream of the old dam site, is doing quite well with several highly diverse samples taken since the dam removal. Samples in the early 2000's were particularly poor, with only two or three families found. Now, volunteers are regularly finding six or seven insect families recolonizing the area including Baetid mayflies, Isonychia mayflies, Leptophlebia mayflies, and the Philopotamid caddisfly.

Bill Phillips, Trout Unlimited

The person who arguably keeps his eyes on the fish most is Trout Unlimited member Bill Phillips. Bill has been organizing efforts to establish Mill Creek as a trout stream. Brown trout were introduced to the Huron as a sport fish, and these

DID YOU KNOW?

Mill Creek in Dexter has some famous residents. Locals who spend time there know "Fred the Friendly Mink" who can be seen hunting near his home by the Main Street Bridge; "Wilber" the brown trout (an On Golden Pond reference for those of you who know the movie) who eludes even the most skilled fly fisher; and "Thing One and Thing Two", the beavers who have taken up residence in the Sloan Preserve. Rumor has it there may be a little "Thing Three" now.

The Making of Mill Creek Park can be viewed at www.youtube.com/user/HuronRiverWC

populations require a cool stream with good habitat and a lot of food (bugs). Mill Creek had these attributes after the dam removal—water temperatures decreased and the

invertebrate community increased. Stocked since 2011, the trout are surviving and thriving and supporting a large fly fishing community. Because Bill keeps his eyes on the river, he has been able to see the return of healthy populations of many native fish. Before the dam came out, Bill would only see "blue gill, pike, and bass above the dam and smallmouth below." Today, fisherman regularly report catching walleye, hognose and white suckers, large and smallmouth bass, catfish, and pike, along with the trout.

Let's Get to Work

Residents, visitors, and wildlife are enjoying this free-flowing stretch of river restored by the removal of an old mill dam. There are more opportunities in the watershed to replicate this effort. It is important that these opportunities are identified and pursued. Only in its free-flowing state can a river be all it was meant to be.

—Rebecca Esselman

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Huron River Watershed Council

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RiverUp!

RiverUp! is a campaign to restore and revitalize the Huron River. It is the Huron's signature place-making initiative that seeks to transform the river corridor into a premier destination in Michigan and the Great Lakes. HRWC leads this public-private partnership and executes projects that improve river health, recreation access, and water-based investments in local economies. www.riveruphuron.org

Making a More Accessible River

The Huron River Water Trail (HRWT) partners—and many users and would-be users—would like to see the water trail become more accessible with launch sites for paddlers of all abilities and mobilities. Last fall, as a first step to realizing this outcome, HRWC hired Access Recreation Group, LLC to review 35 access sites on the HRWT. Each location was photo-documented and given a detailed description and assessment of current conditions for accessibility. HRWC is sharing the reviews with the 15 land owners and managers where the access sites are located and advocating for a well-distributed network of universally accessible sites along the water trail.

“Universal design” is the design of products and environments to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialized design on the part of the user. Currently, universally accessible canoe and kayak stations on the HRWT are at Ann Arbor’s Gallup Park and Belleville’s Horizon Park. Each of the 35 access sites was evaluated based on specific site design features and amenities, such as:

- Universally accessible canoe/kayak launch system, such as the EZ Launch, connected to an accessible route
- Wide, accessible routes with slopes less than 5 percent from parking to restrooms, water fountains, information kiosks, picnic areas, and launch sites
- Accessible parking space(s) including both car and car/trailer parking spaces
- All accessibility features indicated on maps, websites, and print materials

The site assessments will be available at www.huronriverwatertrail.org in time for the 2017 paddling season. HRWT web and print materials will be updated as site amenities and features become fully accessible. To learn more about this exciting work, contact Elizabeth Riggs eriggs@hrwc.org or 734-769-5123 x 608.

Trail Ambassadors Keep a Look Out

Water trails, like their land-based counterparts, require maintenance of trail infrastructure. Often, a cadre of trail enthusiasts step up to perform this critical function along with community parks staff. In March 2016, HRWC welcomed 20 paddlers who served as the first class of a new volunteer-led program that monitors the river for recreation. These Huron River Water Trail Ambassadors adopted sections of the river to check conditions for safe and accessible paddling.

What does an Ambassador do?

Ambassadors check river conditions in the early spring before most paddlers are out on the river, as well as at the end of the paddling season in the fall. Their efforts make the river more enjoyable, protect its health and scenic beauty, and assist HRWC and the water trail partners with prioritizing improvements. The Ambassadors cover most of the water trail with sections ranging in length from 3.5 to nearly 10 miles. Along their assigned section, Ambassadors make general observations about the conditions of water trail launches, signs and portages, the shoreline, woody debris, spills and how people are using the river. They represent HRWC by answering questions from the public, helping people out on the river, and teaching responsible river use. Ambassadors photograph areas of interest or concern, and submit information to HRWC. Ambassadors clean-up trash and, in some cases, measure water temperature and conductivity with HRWC equipment.

How to recognize an Ambassador?

Look for the brimmed hats with the water trail logo and the “Ambassador” title. Ambassador Graham Battersby attracted notice of the local media during a survey of his section that includes Kensington Metropark and, as a result, helped to get the word out about the HRWT and this dedicated group of volunteers. Mission accomplished!

Interested in becoming an Ambassador?

Training for the program begins soon. Contact Jason Frenzel if you’d like more information: jfrenzel@hrwc.org or 734-769-5123 x 600.

— Elizabeth Riggs



Launch assist solutions, like this one at Gallup Park, benefit paddlers of all ages and abilities. credit: HRWC





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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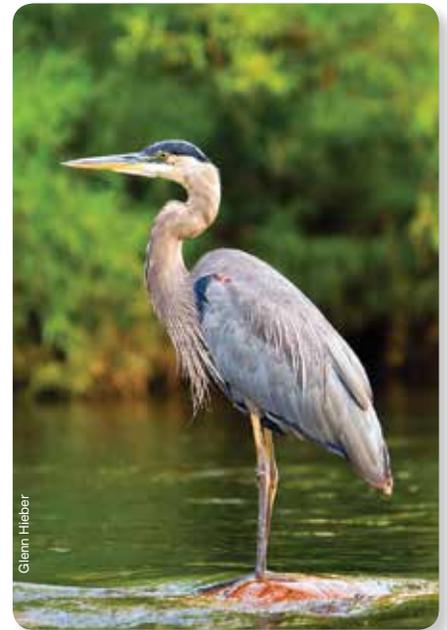
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