



Huron River Report

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feature
story

Two Tickets to Paradise

Paddling and pedaling the Huron River Water Trail

We had just finished bicycling along Washtenaw County's Border to Border Trail from Dexter Huron to Hudson Mills Metropark to retrieve our car, load up our bikes, and then go back to Dexter Huron for our kayaks.

"Let's do it this year," my husband Dave said after our first kayak outing of the year. By which he meant, let's do the Huron104—which entails paddling the entire length of the Huron River Water Trail (HRWT) from Proud Lake State Recreation Area to Lake Erie in one year. For paddlers who have traversed "the 104," HRWC records their names in the HRWT Register of Finishers.

Paddlers can complete the mission either in sections or continuously, in either direction (I'd love to hear from anyone who has done it upstream!). Those managing a continuous paddle receive special recognition.

Dave and I weren't hardy enough for the continuous trip with overnight camping at the four river-only access campgrounds on the Huron. We decided to break up the water trail into manageable sections of about 10 miles, each taking around 3 hours, with an 8–12-mile bike ride to return to our car or kayak each day. Most of these outings took about 5 hours, counting travel time, loading, paddling and biking. With a bit of planning and copious use of HRWC's Paddler's Companion, we (mostly Dave) planned out 15 trips, which we typically completed on a Saturday or Sunday with good weather.

Our Trip

Our first outing was the venerable Hudson Mills to Dexter Huron stretch. Super popular with everyone from

continued on page 4



Dave Moran gets ready to paddle another corridor of the HRWT.
credit: HRWC

Polluter Accountability and PFAS

Michigan's once strong pollution regulations are no more

In the early and mid-1990s, Michigan had among the most protective pollution laws in the country, the envy of other states. When a company polluted the environment, it was held responsible for cleaning up the mess it made.

In the mid-'90s—after initially supporting pollution regulations—the

Governor Engler administration flipped its allegiance. Under pressure from the Michigan Chamber of Commerce and other corporate lobbyists, lawmakers began systematically weakening environmental regulations and reducing the funding available for pollution cleanup. There are now

more than 27,000 contaminated sites in Michigan.

Without strong deterrents and enforcement options, taxpayers are forced to pay the costs of cleaning up these contaminated sites or bear the weight of living with them.

continued on page 5

INSIDE: UPCOMING EVENTS AND WORKSHOPS Willow Metropark riparian restorations
Ann Arbor Trout Unlimited | Change Makers making a difference! | Field interns get ready to wade in





Rebecca's Stream of Consciousness

Summer is the season when the watershed really shines. It's the time of year when people make plans to go see the rivers, lakes and natural areas of the Huron. Couples take a walk along the Border to Border Trail in Dexter. People ride bikes through Kensington Metropark or along the growing Airline Trail in Milford and Wixom. Families gather on pontoons and travel the chain of lakes, picnicking and swimming, waving to the other boaters. Paddlers drop their canoes and kayaks in the water and paddle through New Boston and South Rockwood. The fly fishing and rod and reel folks head out to their favorite fishing spot – but don't ask them to tell you where it is.

The river and watershed give us so much—beauty, recreation, wildlife, drinking water and more. A healthy watershed reduces flooding, improves water quality and captures greenhouse gases. We cannot take these things for granted. They are not a given. They can be degraded or destroyed if we are careless or passive. While the HRWC team works hard each day to safeguard a healthy watershed, we cannot do it alone. This edition of the Huron River Report highlights a few critical calls to action for our readers:

Leave No Trace (see callout box on page 4). When you are recreating on the river or in natural areas, please leave them as good or better than you found

them. We are all stewards of our environment; yet trash, noise and damage to our trails have been increasing. Leave No Trace principals teach people how to recreate in nature without causing harm. Learn the principles. Practice them. Teach others.

Push for Polluter Accountability (cover article). PFAS, 1,4-dioxane and hexavalent chromium are all examples of contaminants used today, or in the past, by companies that have intentionally or accidentally released them into the Huron River watershed. These are just a few examples of chemicals that have severe ecosystem and human health implications. They are not the first to impact the Huron, and they won't be the last. Especially if our laws and regulations do not change. Our PFAS article shares the importance of polluter accountability and asks you to reach out to your state elected officials to demand action.

Become a Change Maker (see article on page 10). Each year, HRWC holds workshops to teach people like you how to engage at the local level to protect our water resources. This inspiring article highlights just how much of a difference an engaged citizen can make. I hope you find this as inspiring as I do. Engagement and advocacy are two incredibly



powerful tools in our democracy; they are essential to us meeting the mission of HRWC and so many other righteous missions. Next time you see a Change Makers workshop, please sign up and join the growing number of watershed residents working actively to protect our freshwater resources.

Take time this summer to enjoy all the watershed has to offer. Feel appreciation for what we have. And, find ways to take action to ensure we protect what we need to thrive.

— Rebecca Esselman
HRWC Executive Director
@natureiswater



Make a Gift for Ages to Come

Contact Wendy Palms about your
planned gift to HRWC: wpalms@hrwc.org,
(734) 769-5123



Huron
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Grab Your Waders!

It's field season in the watershed

With a robust youth education and summer intern program, HRWC provides hands-on learning designed to promote student interest in environmental science and stewardship. As the distressing impacts of wildfires, extreme drought, and intensifying weather events increase, Michigan will become a climate migration destination. Watershed planners, ecologists, and natural resource managers will be in greater demand as we strive to adapt to the challenges of an increasing population while maintaining the health of our local environment. HRWC is proud to have a long-established and sought-after education and enrichment program that energizes kids about the field of water ecology and careers in water protection.

So today, we thank you for your support of HRWC's Youth Education programs. For more information about ways you can support this life-changing program, please contact Wendy Palms.

—Wendy Palms

"My summer internship with the HRWC cemented my interest in the environmental field. Five years later I still love spending my days outdoors as an environmental scientist."

—Lara
(Intern 2018)

"I loved working with students whose fields of study were different from mine, from colleges and universities across Michigan. It made for diverse teams with different perspectives and strengths and plenty of opportunities to learn from each other!"

—Laura
(Intern 2022)

"Volunteering with HRWC helped me understand the value of conservation and environmental science. I was able to translate my skills and knowledge to a career in ocean conservation."

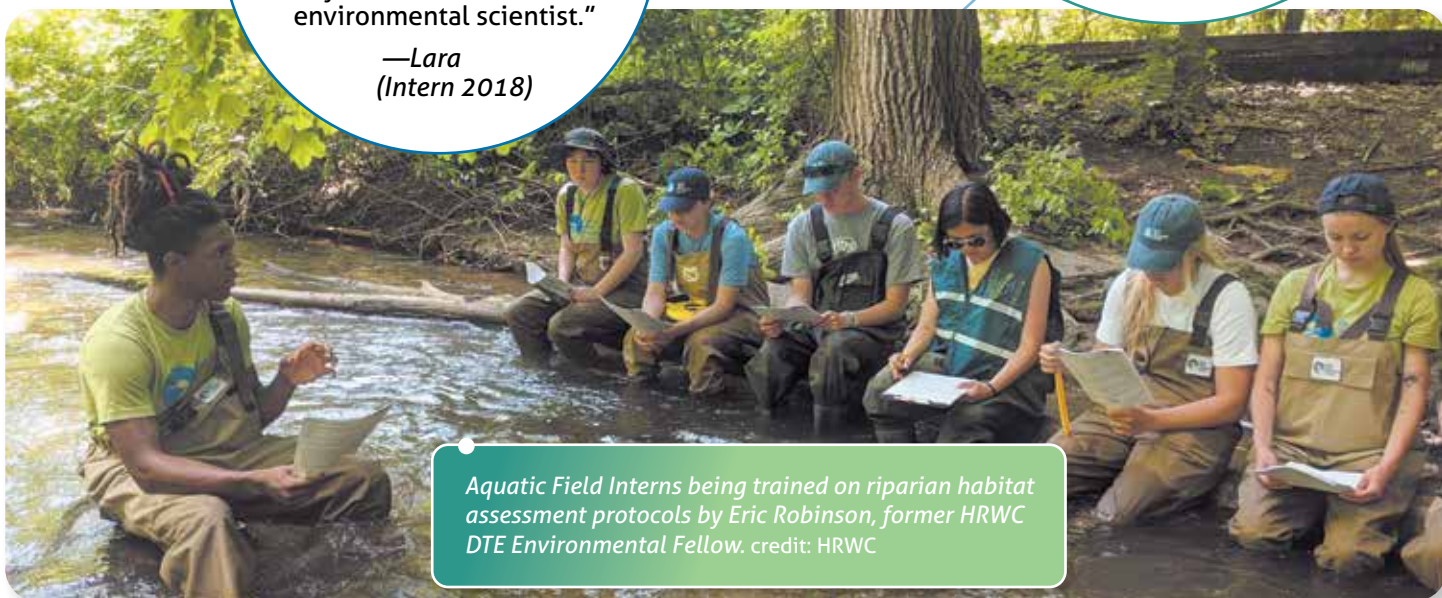
—Caroline
(Intern 2014-2015)

"The field internship at HRWC was fantastic. I learned so much about how interconnected environmental stressors damage the river. I loved working every day with wonderful interns and HRWC staff, and I felt like I was making a difference in my community."

—Susan
(Intern 2020-2022)



Laura, a former aquatic field intern, conducting a riparian habitat assessment in 2022. credit: T. Crowley



Aquatic Field Interns being trained on riparian habitat assessment protocols by Eric Robinson, former HRWC DTE Environmental Fellow. credit: HRWC



Two Tickets to Paradise *continued from cover*

diehard paddlers to families with young children, this stretch offers waters clear enough to spot fish, logs full of turtles, and tunnels of trees and wildflowers on both sides of the river. Equally pleasant, the bike back was all on the Border to Border Trail—this nearly completed multi-use pathway traverses Washtenaw County from its Northwest to Southwest border, mostly along the Huron River.

We started our next paddle at the HRWT Trailhead at Proud Lake State Recreation Area and made our way more or less down the river, picking up where we left off the last trip. The river changed character many times.

An “Up North” feeling

Much of the river runs through state recreation areas (Proud Lake and Island Lake) and Huron-Clinton Metropark lands (Kensington, Huron Meadows, Hudson Mills, Dexter-Huron and Delhi), as well as a state-designated Natural Rivers District, which stretches from Kent Lake to Barton Pond, prohibiting any building of homes or other structures within 150 feet of the river. This gives these stretches of the river an “Up North” feel. It was hard to believe we were less than 20 miles from a major city!

Downstream of the Natural Rivers District—outside of the cities of Ann Arbor, Ypsilanti, Flat Rock, Belleville, Rockwood, and South Rockwood—the river runs through four metroparks: Lower Huron, Oakwoods, Willow, and Lake Erie. These parks keep most of their river frontage in floodplain forests, swamps, prairies, and marshes, allowing paddlers to continue their “Up North” experience.

Trail towns

The river cities of Milford, Dexter, Ann Arbor, Ypsilanti, and Flat Rock are all “trail towns,” where paddlers and bikers can venture off the trail to enjoy parks, fishing and paddlesports guides and outfitters, ice cream and coffee shops, campgrounds, hotels, and restaurants.

Lakes and impoundments

Another large proportion of the river runs through flatwater paddling areas, including large lakes created by dams, including Kent Lake, Barton Pond (where Ann Arbor pulls its drinking

water supply), Argo Pond, Superior Pond, and Ford and Belleville Lakes. I have to admit, these were not my favorite stretches. These areas were where we encountered the murkiest waters, algae mats, motorboats on the larger lakes, and sometimes winds that made paddling harder. Another chain of lakes (naturally created over the history of the river’s shaping and reshaping its banks, bluffs, and sediment) flows through the river’s stretch in Livingston County. This area was a mix of lakeshore homes, folks fishing from boats and lounging on pontoon boats, and marshy flatwater areas.

The bicycling

We generally organized our ‘paddle-pedals’ by dropping off our kayaks at the launching point, then driving to our planned downstream takeout where we would leave our car, and then bike back up to the kayaks. After our paddle trip, we’d drive back to the launch point to pick up our bikes. Through most of the trip, we were able to stay on dedicated bike pathways to shuttle our kayaks, including pathways through the metroparks and Island Lake State Park, the Milford Trail, the Washtenaw County Border to Border Trail, the Lakelands Pathway, and the Down River Linked Greenways Pathway. For areas lacking bike paths, we planned our biking route along paved roads, avoiding roads with high-volume traffic and narrow shoulders.

Tips for trips

- Plan ahead to Leave No Trace!
- For trips that included one of the river’s impoundments, choose a day without too much wind.
- If you prefer quieter travel, fall is a good time to paddle the larger recreational lakes.
- Portaging the dam that creates the impoundment upstream of Flat Rock requires a call 24 hours in advance during business hours. To avoid this hassle, make this portage a take-out at the end of the Willow and Oakwoods Metroparks stretch. That way, the next trip downstream you can just put in at Flat Rock!
- HuronRiverWaterTrail.org has a wealth of planning information,

including a blog on how to break up the trip for continuous through-paddlers who want to camp. The Paddler’s Companion is also available for purchase on the site.

- You can also find more details on the hike-bike trail routes at Michigan Trails Magazine’s website, MiTrails.org.

—Kris Olsson



The 7 Principles of Leave No Trace for ethical outdoor recreation

- 1. Stick To Trails** - Travel only in the river and on designated pathways. Avoid trampling vegetation and causing erosion of riverbanks.
- 2. Leave It As You Find It** - Even twigs and rocks can be important to wildlife and insects. Leave what you find for others to enjoy.
- 3. Keep Wildlife Wild** - Give all wildlife space. The Huron River is an important refuge for many plants, animals and birds.
- 4. Know Before You Go** - Prepare for the length of your trip. Use the restroom before you go. Bring plenty of food and water, and wear clothes to protect you from the weather.
- 5. Haul Your Trash and Pick Up Poop** - Pack out what you pack in and pick up after your pet.
- 6. Be Careful With Fire** - Use only designated fire pits. Fireworks are illegal in many areas and strongly discouraged elsewhere. The use of flammable tobacco products is discouraged.
- 7. Share Our Trails and Manage Your Pet** - Give anglers plenty of space; pass others slowly and avoid making loud noise.

Learn more at:
HuronRiverWaterTrail.org/LNT

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Center for Outdoor Ethics



Polluter Accountability and PFAs *continued from cover*

The Polluter Playbook: Exploit Weak Laws to Avoid Consequences

Michigan's weak environmental regulations fail in two critical ways. First, regulators have limited authority to hold polluters accountable. Second, constrained by a lack of funding and staffing and challenged by conflicting directions within state law, regulatory agencies find it extremely difficult to exercise the authority they do have.

The laws as they stand now are a stark contrast to the logical liability laws most of us are used to regarding property ownership. Keeping the condition of a house safe, for example, is the responsibility of the current owner. The owner has clear liability for care and maintenance of their structure. But Michigan's pollution laws do not automatically assign responsibility to the owners of pollutant sources. Rather, the state must prove that the current owner is responsible for the original pollution and that they explicitly took on liability for it, or that they have created additional pollution since taking ownership.

This convoluted legal structure allows companies to play a shell game. For example, they can pollute a site then sell the land to another company or declare bankruptcy, giving ownership without liability for existing pollution to a new company that adds their own additional pollution. Created by corporate lobbyists, the framework of our current laws makes for a tangled, legal and regulatory nightmare. In some cases, it's impossible to know which landowner polluted and when. Sometimes the responsible business is long gone. The result is that there are now more than 14,000 orphaned sites that have become the responsibility of either state or federal agencies, and the government can only afford to cleanup a tiny fraction of the total number of contaminated sites.

Weak laws tie regulators' hands

Even in the most clear-cut cases, weak laws make it nearly impossible to demonstrate liability. If a chemical user dumps their hazardous waste into, say, the Huron River, state agencies are required to prove,

beyond any shadow of a doubt, exactly where, when, and how the dumping took place. Even if there is no other possible source of the contamination, the expensive burden of proof falls entirely on regulatory agencies.

Meanwhile, polluters spend their resources fighting enforcement actions in court, delaying cleanups and shifting the expenses of investigation, cleanup and litigation to taxpayers. The Gelman 1,4-dioxane plume under the Ann Arbor area is a painful example of this strategy. There are hundreds of similar cases across Michigan where the polluter has already been identified, yet Michigan taxpayers are still paying for the pollution cleanup years later. At the end of it all, a polluter may settle with the state for a total cost that is far less than the amount required to complete the cleanup. For corporate polluters, dishonesty is cheaper than protecting their neighbors.

PFAS are more toxic and widespread than previously thought

As we confront the growing PFAS crisis, the need for action is as urgent as ever. Strong pollution prevention laws are critical to protecting public health. PFAS are extremely toxic and don't break down in the environment. The problems they cause will only get worse until we stop using PFAS in our products and manufacturing processes, and until PFAS polluters are held accountable.

Several recent studies all point in the same, alarming direction. PFAS are more dangerous and more pervasive than previously thought. In 2021, the Center for Disease Control found that PFAS are in the blood of 97% of Americans¹. PFAS are in Great Lakes rainwater², in different animal species³ around the globe, and in remote locations like the Arctic⁴ and on Mount Everest. An Ecology Center study⁵ supported by HRWC and Friends of the Rouge found PFAS in every single fish sampled from both the Huron and Rouge River watersheds.

The Environmental Protection Agency released updated PFAS health advisory levels in June 2022, confirming that some PFAS are more



Unfortunately, PFAS foam is becoming a common site in regional waterways. This foam was identified along Portage Lake. credit: HRWC

than a thousand times more toxic than previously thought. The EPA's proposed drinking water standards, released in March 2023, further highlight that no level of PFAS is safe and that we need to reduce our exposure to PFAS as much as possible.

Take action and hold polluters accountable

Recent efforts led by former state Representative Yousef Rabhi and state Senator Jeff Irwin reinvigorated the discussion to hold polluters accountable. With the new 2023 Michigan Legislature, there is an opportunity to correct the environmental mistakes of the past four decades.

Call your state representative and senator. Tell them that clean air and water are top priorities. Tell them they should support and co-sponsor legislation that holds polluters accountable and makes them pay for the messes they make. Tell them to give regulators the authority they need to deny high-risk permits, to enforce the laws we have, and to levy strict penalties against corporate polluters.

—Daniel Brown

¹ www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4483690/

² pubs.acs.org/doi/10.1021/acs.est.2c02765

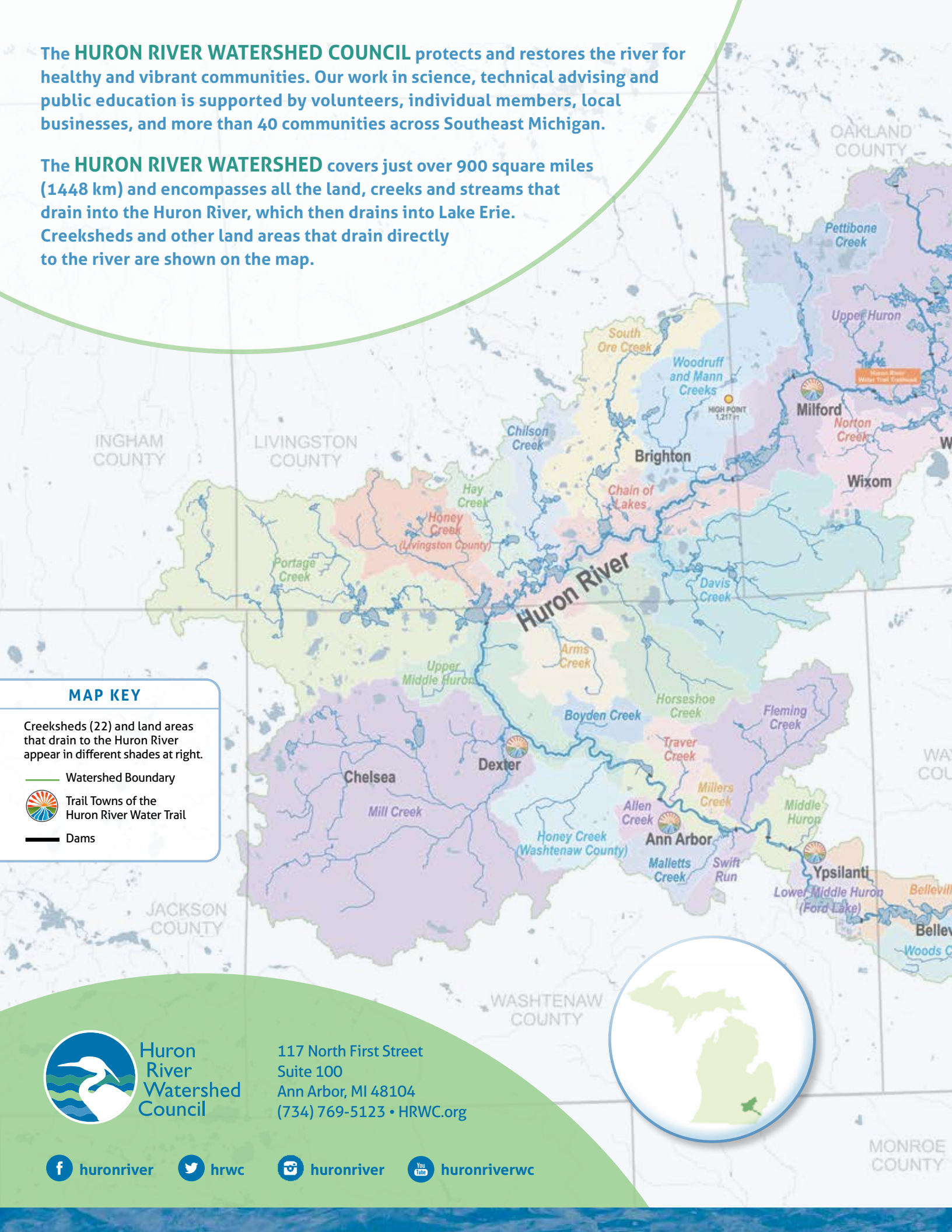
³ ewg.org/news-insights/news-release/2023/02/groundbreaking-map-shows-toxic-forever-chemicals-more-330

⁴ pubs.acs.org/doi/10.1021/acs.est.1c01676

⁵ www.ecocenter.org/sites/default/files/2023-02/Fish%20Report%202023%20V2.pdf

The **HURON RIVER WATERSHED COUNCIL** protects and restores the river for healthy and vibrant communities. Our work in science, technical advising and public education is supported by volunteers, individual members, local businesses, and more than 40 communities across Southeast Michigan.

The **HURON RIVER WATERSHED** covers just over 900 square miles (1448 km) and encompasses all the land, creeks and streams that drain into the Huron River, which then drains into Lake Erie. Creeksheds and other land areas that drain directly to the river are shown on the map.



MAP KEY

Creeksheds (22) and land areas that drain to the Huron River appear in different shades at right.

- Watershed Boundary
- Trail Towns of the Huron River Water Trail
- Dams



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credit: K. Paine

Front row, left to right: Paul, Kate, Marisa (former Marketing Associate), Rebecca, Andrea, Allie, Kris, Anita, Heather. Back row, left to right: Wendy, Jennifer, Pam, Jason, Ric, Daniel, Melina.

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Helping Willow Metropark, Naturally

Projects tackle shoreline erosion and restore a creek

One new restoration project is underway and another is planned by the Huron-Clinton Metroparks for two areas in Willow Metropark in the lower Huron River watershed. Metroparks is partnering with HRWC to make the best restoration choices and gather input from the public.

Big Bend gets restored and Green Infrastructure added

Willow Metropark is the middle of three Metroparks (the other two being Lower Huron and Oakwoods) situated along the Huron River between Belleville Lake and Flat Rock. Totalling 1,532 acres of low-use recreation mixed with natural areas along the Huron, these parks are important for the quality of the river as they protect riparian lands and the river banks. As a result, the lower Huron River has better water quality compared to other urban streams in the area according to monitoring data collected by HRWC volunteers.

The Metroparks and HRWC identified two areas in the park that were causing erosion and nutrification problems—Big Bend

and Washago Pond. Big Bend is a picnic and recreational area with a canoe/kayak launch at the Huron River where, as the name suggests, the river carves a substantial bend. At the start of this bend, the force of the river has eroded away a hillside (releasing sediments along the way) threatening park roads and trails. HRWC monitoring suggests that the bend delivered 12% more phosphorus to the river than is found further downstream. Phosphorus is an important nutrient for algal and plant growth and can cause harm to waterways through eutrophication, or excessive plant growth. Because phosphorus can bind to sediments, excess erosion is often a cause of eutrophication.

With support from HRWC, Metroparks secured a grant from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation to stabilize the shoreline and reduce further erosion using a variety of natural restoration techniques. First, to address the severely eroded bank at Big Bend and redirect the river's energy, Metroparks installed toe wood (from surrounding fallen trees)

into the bank. Toe wood describes a technique of inserting tree trunks into a streambank along the actively eroding base (or "toe") of a bank bend. It gets backfilled with soil on top of the logs. The new bank is planted with live willows and native plants to create a natural shoreline. The toe wood deflects energy from the river's edge and directs it toward the center of the river preventing additional erosion and providing cover habitat for fish and other aquatic wildlife.

In the upland section of the park area, Metroparks removed an unused parking area and created a native prairie. To help catch stormwater runoff, they sculpted four bioswales. Like rain gardens, these drainage areas are depressions planted with native, water-loving plants that keep the runoff moving slowly where it can be absorbed and infiltrated by the landscape over time. Additionally, Metroparks is expanding the riparian buffer area from the bend to the launch. All combined, the restoration work will annually capture 1.8 million gallons of runoff, reduce 156 tons of sediment, and eliminate 13.2 pounds of phosphorus from the river.

Washago Creek to be restored

Washago Pond was once a popular feature in the middle of Willow Metropark. Made by damming a Huron River tributary called the Regan Drain, the pond was constructed to provide areas to fish and paddleboat; activities that declined over time. In 2021, runoff from a large storm overwhelmed the outlet structure and caused a breach in the dam. The pond slowly drained, leaving a dry bed behind with the stream running through it. Because dams generally alter a stream's chemical, physical and biological processes, we supported Metroparks in their review of the environmental impacts of the dam to surrounding habitat and the river. Following consultation with HRWC and other stakeholder groups, Metroparks has decided to restore the stream habitat throughout the former pond instead of rebuilding the dam. Restoring the stream will reconnect fish habitat from the Huron River upstream to potential spawning locations and restore important floodplain habitat. The working concept for the project was approved by the Metroparks Board of Commissioners in September of 2021, but final plans are still being developed through the permitting process. Metroparks staff are controlling invasive species in the interim. To provide anglers with alternative places to fish, Metroparks



Bank of Big Bend before (showing bank encroachment towards the road) and an aerial view after the restoration. Note toe wood at the water line and a flat planting bench just above.
credit: Metroparks



continued on next page



HRWC Events and Workshops

JUNE • JULY • AUGUST • 2023

HRWC Board Meeting

Thursday, July 20, 5:30 - 7:30pm, HRWC Office

Contact: Rebecca at resselman@hrwc.org

Summertime River Cleanups

Various dates and locations

River cleanups throughout the summer will be posted to [HRWC.org/events](https://hrwc.org/events).

Learn more about the cleanups by going to the contact link below.

Contact: for DIY cleanup info head to [HRWC.org/DIYcleanups](https://hrwc.org/DIYcleanups)

SAVE THE DATE!

Drop these events onto your calendar and watch for event details in the next issue of the Huron River Report.

SUDS on the River

Thursday, September 7

Ypsi Fall River Day

Sunday, September 24

River RoundUp

Saturday, October 14

#huronriver



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EXTERNAL EVENTS

Check out these fun community-based activities!

Native Plant Expo & Marketplace

Saturday, June 3

washtenawcd.org/npem

Dexter-Ann Arbor Run

Sunday, June 4

dxa2.com



A2ZERO Week

June 4-10

a2gov.org/a2zeroweek

Great Lakes Fresh Water Week

June 3-11

michigan.gov/egle

Dexter Daze

August 11-12

dexterdaze.org

Helping Willow Metropark, Naturally *continued from previous page*

is pursuing a Department of Natural Resources Trust Fund grant to install an accessible fishing platform where the Regan Drain meets the Huron River and Big Bend.

Opportunities for Public Input

Prior to completion of plans for the Big Bend project, Metroparks held four stakeholder group meetings and conducted a public survey to gather input on design concepts and gage future use of the Big Bend area. This resulted in the restoration work you can see today. A community open house at Big Bend will be held in the summer of 2023 for public engagement and input on the improvements to the area. There is still an opportunity for stakeholders

to assist with the restoration design to naturalize the stream through the bed of the former Washago Pond. HRWC and Metroparks will post public feedback opportunities in the near future.

We are happy to see this great new work by Metroparks to restore these critical areas along the Huron River. Not only will they improve the quality of Huron River waters, but they will create important habitat for a variety of aquatic and terrestrial species that depend on the river for their survival. Keep up the great work, Huron-Clinton Metroparks!

—Ric Lawson, HRWC
Jason Bibby, Metroparks



The creek (Regan Drain) running through what was once Washago Pond. Metroparks will soon restore the floodplain to natural habitat. credit: HRWC



Change Makers Push for Protection

HRWC Boot Camps teach local advocacy for clean water

Dozens of watershed residents who participated in HRWC's Change Makers Program are making a difference in their communities by advocating for river-friendly policies and practices.

When proposals appear for new subdivisions, shopping centers, and businesses, local governments are responsible for making sure the new development impacts the river and its watershed as little as possible. Local government entities need to carefully review development proposals and rely on existing ordinances and master plans to guide them toward a goal of minimal negative impacts to water and the environment. With 68 municipalities in the Huron River watershed, HRWC relies on residents in those places to advocate for river-friendly policies.

Since 2018, HRWC has conducted several "Boot Camps," or 2-hour workshops, all across the watershed for residents to learn about the basics of river and watershed ecology, how development impacts water quality, and how to advocate for local river-friendly policies. As of this writing, over 100 residents have attended Change Makers Boot Camps!

Change Makers are making a difference!

From submitting comment letters to their planning commissions to running for elected office (successfully!), Change Makers are making a difference all over the watershed:

- A Change Maker since 2018, Kay Stremmer is now on Webster Township's planning commission as well as HRWC's Board of Directors. The planning commission is the body that reviews proposed developments for compliance with township ordinances, reviews and adopts ordinances, and reviews and updates master plans every five years. In Kay's time there, Webster Township has adopted requirements that prohibit developments near waterways, created a master plan that directs development away from



Change Makers can teach you how to limit this kind of development and protect the river through smart land-use planning decisions. credit: iStock

forests and wetlands, formed a natural features committee to review development proposals, and increased awareness of the importance of protecting land as a means to protect water. Kay states, "Participating in the Change Makers Boot Camp and Program helped me to understand that local governments really want everyday citizens who care about their community to participate in formulating and implementing land use and water protection policies, and that expert support, focused training, and substantial resources are available to me on an ongoing basis. I have greatly appreciated and enjoyed five years of community participation and continuous learning as a Planning Commissioner."

- Kate Mehuron, class of 2018, is now serving on Chelsea's City Council. Before moving to Chelsea, she served on Dexter Township's planning commission and HRWC's Board of Directors.
- Eleven Change Makers have become members of elected boards, planning commissions, and other committees and commissions for their local governments.
- At least three Change Makers have used the Land Use for a Healthy Watershed guidebook to review their local government's existing policies and submit comments to their planning commission.
- Five Change Makers have run for local office and three were elected.

- Thirteen Change Makers have submitted public comments urging the passage of ordinances in their local governments that would protect water quality.
- At least four Change Makers are participating in their local government's master plan updates.
- Several Change Makers have urged their local government (Dexter, Sylvan, and Northfield Townships) to place a proposal on the ballot to raise funds for land protection. One local government received over 60 letters in favor of the ballot proposal. Residents in all three municipalities passed land protection millages thanks to Change Makers' campaigning and advocacy.

Become a Change Maker

You are invited to join HRWC's Change Maker community, even if you have no intention of running for office or serving on a local government commission. Go to HRWC.org/ChangeMakers to learn more and register for our next Boot Camp in the Fall!

—Kris Olsson



Land Use for a Healthy Watershed

As part of the Boot Camp curriculum, HRWC developed this companion guidebook.

Available for free at HRWC.org/ChangeMakers, the guidebook describes a host of policies that municipalities can adopt to minimize development impacts.

Volunteer Spotlight: A2 Trout Unlimited!



credit: C. Hieber

In my first month of work at HRWC, over 12 years ago, Laura Rubin (then Executive Director) suggested I go to the Trout Unlimited Banquet. Knowing no one in the room, I was greeted by numerous members who were excited to meet another HRWC staffer. This welcoming and positive relationship building has continued with all of the interactions I've had with Ann Arbor Trout Unlimited (AATU) for the past dozen years. Their board, volunteers, and members are continually supportive of HRWC and our common mission to protect and restore the Huron.

Sharing the joys of fly fishing

Mike Mouradian, then AATU President, was the first person I spent much time with. Mike, a gregarious, jovial, and playful sort, has helped HRWC connect with the fishing community in numerous ways. He's supported youth fishing initiatives for years, including HRWC's new summer camp program launched in 2022. Kids love to learn fly casting! As Mike says, "AATU has been working with HRWC for years, acting as the voice of fishers using the watershed resource. As one of many stakeholders in the health of the watershed, the fishing community can see firsthand the quality of the Huron River. It's hard to separate the goals of AATU and the HRWC."

Connecting the community around Mill Creek

HRWC and AATU collaborations increased notably ten years ago, primarily related to Mill Creek, which has been proven to support a trout fishery. Driven primarily by Bill Phillips, an adept "cat wrangler", AATU successfully fostered dozens of community connections with organizations and individuals including Ducks Unlimited, Dexter Schools, Michigan DNR, and numerous others. Indeed, Bill won HRWC's 'Bridge Builder' award in 2018. One to always point out others' strengths, Bill notes, "As a former high school teacher and an administrator, I was very impressed with the 'open and

encouraging to all' attitude of HRWC. A great attitude backed up with excellent scientific skills! HRWC is one of the most effective and 'open to outsiders' organizations that I have either worked with or observed!"

Soon after the Mill Creek trout project took off, Steve "Z" Zawistowski joined the group, bringing expert research and analytic skills to AATU. "Z" observes that, "HRWC has been a great partner for AATU as we have worked to develop Mill Creek as a brown trout fishery. We know that what is good for the watershed is good for the fish, and what is good for the fish is good for the watershed." "Z" is currently helping bring the next phase of leadership to AATU.

One such emerging leader is Terry Sharik, Ph.D. Terry's initial work with AATU was a collaborative tree and shrub planting project along Mill Creek, where the old impoundment has left almost no native or woody plants. A perfect project for a retired forestry professor. Terry is also an amazing "bridge builder", identifying ways that AATU and HRWC can collaborate with more individuals and organizations—most notably identifying Michigan Tech Research Institute as a novel partner for researching sediment transport and temperature fluctuations through in-stream and remote sensing. Terry notes, "HRWC's long-term monitoring of the watershed and the relationships they have developed with people living in the watershed

are invaluable as we move forward with collaborative restoration efforts."

Casting a bright future

The collaboration looks forward to considering future stream and wetland restoration projects and specific fish habitat improvements. Many of these discussions have been facilitated by another newer AATU board member, Tania Evans, who notes, "In the last year, we have zeroed in on several exciting projects. AATU appreciates HRWC's collaboration and knowledge of research, grants, and permits."

It's impossible to mention all of the amazing AATU board members and volunteers who have worked with HRWC. Here are a few more: Ken Spears, Madeline Drake, Ethan Cramer, Ray Kelley, Robert Schultz, John Zolan, Doug Gorby, David Neal, Dan Jackson and Len Lofstrom, who adds, "I was most curious to know what was living in the river. I was able to help monitor the health of the river and improve my fishing at the same time. Trout Unlimited and HRWC certainly complement each other very well."

AATU, HRWC, and all partners mentioned are closing in on a suite of potential projects to help improve Mill Creek in the coming years. Please let us know if you'd like to be involved.

—Jason Frenzel

Mill Creek Park, in Dexter, established following removal of the Mill Pond Dam on Mill Creek.

credit: Todd Marsee, Michigan Sea Grant





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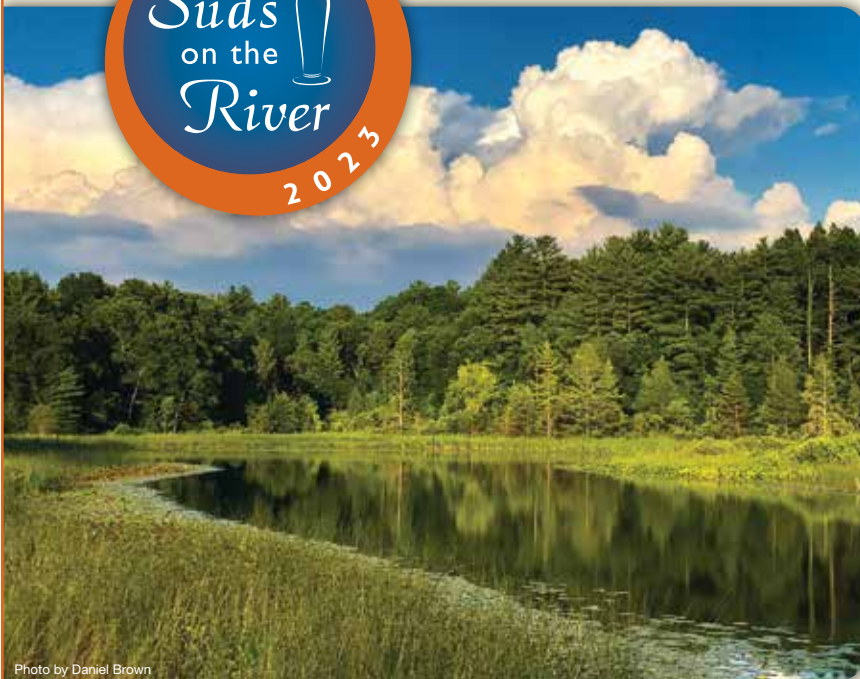


Photo by Daniel Brown

Join us to celebrate the Huron River

*All are invited to raise a glass
to our home waters at our
annual fundraiser event*

**Thursday, September 7
6-9pm**

Enjoy locally brewed artisanal beer
and gourmet fare from your favorite
local chefs. Learn to cast a fly rod,
enjoy live acoustic music, and catch
up with fellow friends of the river!

SAVE THE DATE!

Tickets available soon!

Visit [HRWC.org/suds](https://hrwc.org/suds)



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