

Volunteer Stream Cleanup Program (VSCP) 2023 Wrap Up

Compiled by Paul Steen
MiCorps Stream Program Manager
December 2023

The Michigan Clean Water Corps (MiCorps) VSCP provides small grants to local units of government to help implement trash cleanup of rivers, streams, and creeks to improve the waters in Michigan. Local units of government are eligible to get the grants, and often partner with nonprofit organizations or other volunteer groups to carry out the cleanups.

\$25,000 is made available each year in VSCP grant funding. Funds not spent in one year can be moved to a future year. EGLE's appropriation for this program originates from fees collected from the sale of the state's Water Quality Protection license plates (2000 PA 74). Eligible organizations may apply for up to \$5,000 on their project. The grants require 25% local match of the total project cost. Grant funds are disbursed on a cost-reimbursement basis, and only disbursed after satisfactory completion of the cleanup project and final reporting requirements.

10 organization received grants and completed projects in 2023: Benzie Conservation District, Branch Conservation District, City of Ann Arbor, City of Cheboygan, City of Lansing, Grand Traverse Conservation District, Muskegon Conservation District, Newaygo Conservation District, St. Joseph Conservation District, and the Van Buren Conservation District.

The Berrien Conservation District applied for a grant and was given a grant contract in 2022, but asked for an extension and finished their project this past summer.

Each of these organizations completed fact sheets that summarize their project and are included in the next pages of this report.

The City of Flint, partnering with the Flint River Watershed Coalition, was given a no-cost extension and their project will be included in the 2024 version of this report.

2023 Summary Numbers:

Money pledged in grant contracts: \$35,319.98

Total amount actually spent by grantees: \$31,523.55

Total Local Match: \$31,096.15 (99% of grant dollars; includes volunteer labor)

Volunteers Participating: 1,674

Total Volunteer Hours: 3,699

Total River Miles Cleaned: 222

Total Garbage Weighted: 31,200

Types of garbage: aluminum roasting pan, bbq grills, bicycles, bottles, cans, carpeting, cell phones, cigarette butts, clothing, confetti, diapers, dock sections, entire tool set in a tool chest, fencing, fishing line, flip-flops, food containers, food wrappers, furniture, glass, golf balls, grocery carts, highway barrels, inner tubes, kayaks, lighters, liquor bottles, lumber, lures, microplastics, paddles, paper, park bench, pizza boxes, plastic grocery bags, plastic lawn chairs, plastic penguin head, plastics, propane tank, rebar, reclining chair, rubber duck, sandals, scooters, scrap metal, shoes, sign posts, signs, softballs, styrofoam, sunglasses, tires, toddler bike, toddler car, unopened safe

Comparison to past years

	2023	2022	2021
# of Completed Projects	11	7	7
Money spent by grantees	\$31,524	\$12,363.00	\$15,510
Local Match	\$31,096	\$19,218	\$20,598
Volunteers	1,674	378	637
Total Volunteer Hours	3,699	1,194	1,080
River Miles Cleaned	222	66	142
Garbage Weight	31,200	5,200	6,698

MiCorps Volunteer Stream Cleanup Program Project Fact Sheet



Organization Name: Benzie Conservation District
Program Name: Platte and Betsie River Cleanups
Streams Cleaned: Platte River from US-31 Veteran's Park to Deadstream Road, Honor MI, 49640. Betsie River from the Homestead dam to the M-22 crossing, Elberta, MI 49628.
Watershed(s): Platte River and Betsie River Watersheds
County: Benzie
Program Manager: John Ransom – john@benziecd.org



PROGRAM DESCRIPTION:

The Benzie Conservation District (BCD) partnered with the Boardman River Clean Sweep and the Traverse Area Paddle Club to host river cleanups on the Platte and Betsie rivers in 2023. The first cleanup was on the Betsie River on June 9th. We hosted 31 volunteers (and three staff) and cleaned four sections of river starting at the Homestead Dam and finished at the M-22 crossing covering about 13 miles of river. This section of the Betsie is heavily fished during the fall salmon run and is full of fishing line and lures. These create a hazard for paddlers and wildlife alike. In total we cleaned over 100 pounds of trash from the Betsie River. The BCD provided volunteers with breakfast and a boat wash before the cleanup. We also worked with the kind folks at the Betsie River Resort who let our upstream crew take out at their launch and use their dumpsters for river trash.

On July 15th we hosted 22 volunteers for the Upper Platte River Clean Sweep from US-31 at Veteran's Park down to Deadstream Road. We split the nine river miles into two sections. Again, boat washes were available for any paddlers who had been in another waterbody within the previous two weeks. We cleared about 100 lbs. of trash from the Upper Platte River including two large sections of docks, plastic lawn chairs numerous sandals, and bottles. After the cleanup we grilled brats and enjoyed lunch in the Honor Park.

Between the two clean sweeps we had a total of 53 volunteers and cleaned out 200 pounds of trash out of the Platte and Betsie Rivers. This year was the first year that we gave away a kayak to a young river clean up volunteer in honor of our long time volunteer leader Max Bromley. We worked with Norm Fred and Max's family to be able to give a gift annually to a young river steward.

PROGRAM FAST FACTS

MiCorps Grant \$ Amount: \$1098.09

Local Match \$ Amount: \$

Volunteers participating: 53

Volunteer hours: 212

Stream Miles Cleaned: Platte 9 miles, Betsie 13 miles

Amount of Trash removed: 200 pounds

Types of Garbage Removed: fishing line and hooks, bottles, sections of dock,

Most Interesting Item Found: A rubber duck and a plastic penguin head on the Platte River.



Volunteers ready for a beautiful on the Betsie River, June 9th 2023

Cleanup highlights



Cleanup haul from the lower section of the Platte River



Volunteers ready for the Platte River clean sweep 2023



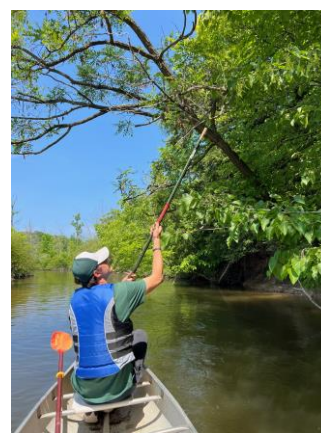
First annual Max Bromley memorial kayak give away



Volunteer Jim showing off his fancy Platte River find



A typical tangle of fishing gear pulled out of the Betsie River



Ned pulling fishing line out of the trees over the Betsie River

Funding for the Volunteer Stream Cleanup Program is provided by Water Quality license plate fees.

MiCorps Volunteer Stream Cleanup Program Project Fact Sheet



Organization Name: St. Joe County Conservation District
Program Name: River Clean Up
Stream(s) Cleaned: St Joe river from Farrand to Jackson Burg Rd. Fawn River from Fawn River Kayking to Big Hill Rd. Portage River from Portage lake to Parkville Rd. Spring Creek from homeowners house and back.
Watershed(s): St Joe River
County(ies): St Joesph County
Program Manager: Carolyn Grace
Date(s): June 12th, August 5, August 28, September 12,

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION:

The St Joseph County Conservation District held four river cleanups in the summer of 2023. Our partners this year were Fawn River Kayaking and Waste Management. They helped us tremendously this year by providing a dumpster and kayaks. We cleaned roughly 18.8 miles of river on three rivers within our county. We also took an inventory of Spring Creek from an homeowners house and were able to remove several tires and a bag of trash.

Some successes we had this year was spreading more awareness of our Conservation District and the cleanups we hold yearly. We also were able to engage with the public and build our relationships with them. We were able to take out plenty of trash on every cleanup which we consider a success.

Some challenges we faced were weather conditions and having to reschedule one of the cleanups. We also had some issues with putting our cleanups in the newspaper. Coordination was also a big challenge we had. Some groups of volunteers would cancel last second. We have a great writer for our adds but he never changes the picture and continues to use the same one year after year. Lastly, as a district we learned that small actions like our river cleanups can make a big impact.

In summary, the cleanups were very beneficial for the environment and the community!

PROGRAM FAST FACTS

MiCorps Grant \$ Amount: \$1,865.00
Local Match \$ Amount: \$1,351.05

Volunteers participating: 15
Volunteer hours: 50

Stream Miles Cleaned: 18.8

Amount of Trash removed: About 12 trash bags were removed from the rivers and 6 tires.
Types of Garbage Removed: Bottles, cans, tires, cooking/eating items, and plastics.

Most Interesting Item Found: Grill



Several tires that were found on the Portage River.

Cleanup highlights



Some volunteers



Swimming in the water to remove trash and tires



Trash removed from the rivers.



Volunteers

Funding for the Volunteer Stream Cleanup Program is provided by Water Quality license plate fees.

MiCorps Volunteer Stream Cleanup Program Project Fact Sheet

Organization Name: Van Buren Conservation District
Program Name: Paw Paw River Clean Up
Stream(s) Cleaned: East Branch Paw Paw River from Kalamazoo Street to Ismons Pond, Paw Paw 49079; South Branch Paw Paw River from Maple Lake Dam (51st Street) to County Road 665, Paw Paw 49079; South Branch Paw Paw River from I-94 to Ampey Road, Paw Paw, MI 49079
Watershed(s): Paw Paw River Watershed (East and South Branches of the Paw Paw River)
County(ies): Van Buren County
Program Manager: Jacob Diljak, Outreach@VanBurenCD.org
Date(s) of Cleanup event: September 16, 2023



PROGRAM DESCRIPTION:

The Van Buren Conservation District (VBCD), in partnership with the Two Rivers Coalition, conducted a river clean up event on the Paw Paw River on September 16, 2023. The event coincided the weekend after Paw Paw's Wine and Harvest Festival for optimal trash collection.

Over three miles of the Paw Paw River were cleaned of trash and debris by two groups on the water and another group from the river bank. The two groups on the water used watercraft to discover and collect trash. The volunteers removed 18 full trash bags and many large items from the river.

The Paw Paw River Clean Up was the first river clean up event the VBCD held in four years and the first river clean up run by Outreach Coordinator Jacob Diljak. There was lots of enthusiasm and desire to partner for the river. Municipal partners contributed to disposal costs. Thirteen volunteers contributed their time and resources to the event.

Some challenges and lessons learned from this event were the need of more waders, mini-rakes to collect trash from watercraft, and to schedule the event for three hours. We also had to leave scrap metal that was too heavy to transport and a plan should be made ahead of time in how to deal with this.

PROGRAM FAST FACTS

MiCorps Grant \$ Amount: \$1,493.51

Local Match \$ Amount: \$440.55

Volunteers participating: 13

Volunteer hours: 26

Stream Miles Cleaned: 3.06 miles

Amount of Trash removed: 18 trash bags plus 15 large items

Types of Garbage Removed: furniture, tires, carpeting, tent, lawn chairs, road sign, metal, construction wood with nails and metal

Most Interesting Item Found: reclining chair



Lisa Adams with items collected from the Paw Paw River.

Cleanup highlights



Volunteer Victor Boyd collecting a shovel. Outreach Coordinator Jacob Diljak with trash bag.



Paw Paw River Clean Up group photo with staff and volunteers!

MiCorps Volunteer Stream Cleanup Program Project Fact Sheet



Organization Name: Branch County Conservation District
Program Name: Volunteer Stream Cleanup Program
Stream(s) Cleaned: The Sauk River from Chicago Street to Butters Ave. and Fisher Creek from Wolf Road to Camp Lake
Watershed: St. Joseph HUC code:04050001
County(ies): Branch
Program Manager: Jennifer Wortz 517-278-2725 ext. 5
Date(s) of Cleanup event: June 24th and September 19th



PROGRAM DESCRIPTION:

What did you do? We held two river clean up days in Branch County with two different volunteer groups. The Sauk River clean up involved a local girl scout troop of 10 volunteers along with 3 district staff. The Fisher Creek Clean up involved 45 Branch Area Career Center students, two teachers, along with two district and two NRCS staff.

Successes: We collected nine large bags of trash in the Sauk River which is along a heavily traveled walking trail. At Fisher, we cleaned up and collected several bags of trash and debris. We saw a great decrease of total suspended sediment (TSS) after removal of debris.

Challenges: More supervision was needed with the younger group of students that volunteered. The second location was difficult to navigate in and out of the river. We encountered obnoxious weeds like stinging nettle and poison sumac. We also had highly erodible banks and thick brush.

Lessons Learned: In the future locations are best in areas that are easier to access from parks or mowed down trails to access to the river. The highest quantities of trash can be found at intersections with roads or highly traveled walking trails.

PROGRAM FAST FACTS

MiCorps Grant \$ Amount: \$1,323
Local Match \$ Amount: \$1,350

Volunteers participating: 60
Volunteer hours: 230

Stream Miles Cleaned: 1.1 miles

Amount of Trash removed: 12 large trash bags. Child size outdoor toy. Large pieces of sheet metal.

Types of Garbage Removed: Diaper, bottles, Styrofoam, pizza boxes, food containers and wrappers, confetti, cans and pop bottles

Most Interesting Item Found: Little Tikes toy



Trash and Metal Collected from Fisher Creek

Cleanup highlights



BACC Students getting snacks and drinks after Fisher Creek clean up.



Student Volunteers picking up trash in Fisher Creek



Branch Area Career Center Environmental and Agriculture Students

Funding for the Volunteer Stream Cleanup Program is provided by Water Quality license plate fees.

MiCorps Volunteer Stream Cleanup Program Project Fact Sheet



Organization Name: Berrien County Conservation District
Program Name: Ox Creek Stream Cleanup in Benton Harbor
Stream(s) Cleaned: Ox Creek adjacent to Hall Park and heading SW toward Britian Ave. From Hall Park at Highland Ave & 2nd Street down 2nd Street to Water Street. Both sides of the creek were included where accessible near Hall Park. zip code 49022. Another group went to a portion of Ox Creek behind the Meijer behind Planet Fitness on Mall Drive heading to Pipestone Road.
Watershed(s): Ox Creek Watershed is a sub watershed of the St. Joseph River Watershed
County(ies): Berrien

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION:

This grant was used to organize and execute a stream cleanup (visible trash) on Ox Creek in the St. Joseph River Watershed. This was originally scheduled for summer of 2022 but the morning of the cleanup there was a severe storm in the area so I postponed it. MiCorps extended my grant deadline to September of 2023 and we waited to reschedule it to spring 2023. Over the winter I was approached by one of my partners, Marcy Hamilton, who asked if I would like to have the cleanup in conjunction with an Earth Day Festival at Hall Park which borders part of Ox Creek. By combining advertising with this event there was a lot of coverage and the Earth Day committee also helped get the word out about the stream cleanup. My other original partner, the Sunshine Rotary Club, was also very happy to bring their members to the stream cleanup and to the festival. This was very successful: combining the two events, picking up trash and providing a bit of water quality education, and seeing the number of children eager to help! I was hopeful to get 30 volunteers when I wrote the grant, but I got 63! I

It was definitely a family event. The volunteers were so dedicated; the day started out mild and sunny but it ended up being very cold, windy, and rainy. We had to ask people to come back to the park as we needed to pack up but many continued to look for trash in the rain.

The only challenge was really the weather-having to postpone it the first time, and then to have it turn nasty as we were finishing up. I had more match for this grant than needed, and some of it is not recorded on the budget because I did not have a monetary value for it. The city provided trash pickup with a driver and garbage truck instead of me having to charge a dumpster to the grant. I could not get a dollar value for this service. Lessons learned would be that I spent a lot of time on this, more hours than reflected on budget sheet. If I apply for a grant in the future I will budget accordingly if wages are allowed.

PROGRAM FAST FACTS

MiCorps Grant \$ Amount: 2050.95

Local Match \$ Amount: 2876.31

Volunteers participating: 63

Volunteer hours: 190

Stream Miles Cleaned: .6

Amount of Trash removed: Approximately 500 to 600 pounds of trash collected and 50 pounds of recyclables taken, plus 5 Tires collected.

Types of Garbage Removed: Mostly fast-food containers & wrappers, liquor bottles, pop cans & bottles, baby diapers, plastic Meijer bags, cardboard Meijer signs, also unidentified pieces of metal, and tires.

Most Interesting Item Found: Credit Card



Mom & daughter after they worked, girl holding appreciation gift



Volunteers signing liability waiver.



BCCD Table with cleanup supplies, volunteers signing in



Volunteers coming & going from creek



A very helpful volunteer



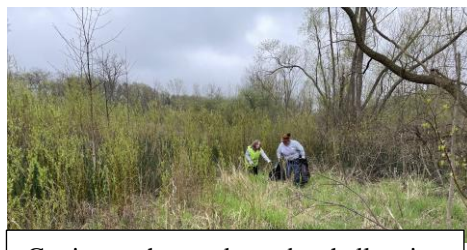
Ox Creek



Volunteers in distance



Family participation



Getting to the creek can be challenging



Ox Creek Cleanup



Ox Creek Cleanup brave volunteers



Some of the trash collected



Tires collected

Funding for the Volunteer Stream Cleanup Program is provided by Water Quality license plate fees.

MiCorps Volunteer Stream Cleanup Program Project Fact Sheet



Organization Name: City of Ann Arbor
Program Name: Give365, A2 Keeping the River Clean
Stream(s) Cleaned: Huron River from [Argo Livery](#) to [Gallup Pond](#), ~4 miles, Ann Arbor MI 48105 & 48104
Watershed(s): Huron River
County(ies): Washtenaw
Program Manager: Erika Smith, Ryan Poling
Date(s) of Cleanup event: 24 events 6/1/23 through 9/29/23

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION:

We scheduled **34 river-clean up events** on the Huron River in Ann Arbor, focusing on the very busy and beloved 3.7-mile stretch between Argo Livery and Gallup Livery and the area of river around Gallup Livery. We had **ten** groups cancel on us due to weather, air quality, and other reasons, (two different groups were businesses or branches that were dissolved or laid off!) so 24 river clean-up events were completed during the grant's term. Last year we resolved to plan more events to try and take full advantage of the grant. We certainly planned a lot more, but there were many cancellations, but we still got more done than last year.

We weigh litter taken from the river with a hand scale. We removed over **1600 pounds of litter** from the river this year. One group, Tenneco, spent over 6 hours volunteering with us and removed 345 pounds in one Argo-to-Gallup event. Despite the huge number, this year we focused less on heavy items but more on having volunteers remove plastic waste, trying to get every little bit of plastic, which degrade into microplastics, and every cigarette butt we could find.

We have been running this program for over 10 years in partnership with the **Argo & Gallup Canoe & Kayak Liveries**, and it is a very popular volunteer project within our program. Volunteers LOVE getting a chance to get on the water and help clean up! Every year we have a waitlist of groups that would like to work on river clean-up projects with us next year. We mostly work with volunteer groups but we have continued making events for individuals and smaller groups to come help clean, that we brand as "Love The River Day" events, which we started last year. This year we had 4 of these events and 59 individual volunteers came out for them! (About 15 volunteers per event.)

Last year we used the grant's materials funding to acquire new reusable trash bags, to minimize the amount of plastic that we are using and work toward being as sustainable as possible. We have been using these bags all year and they have been working great.

PROGRAM FAST FACTS

MiCorps Grant \$ Amount: \$3,491.00
Local Match \$ Amount: \$7,723.37

Volunteers participating: 295
Volunteer hours: 573.75

Stream Miles Cleaned: 4-mile stretch

Amount of Trash removed: 1611.4 lbs

Types of Garbage Removed: bottles, cans, plastic wrappers, cigarette butts, fishing lures, shoes, flip-flops, inner tubes, a *lot* more

Most Interesting Item Found: Tractor (?) tire



2023 Cleanup highlights

Google volunteers on the river every year! This year they were our first Argo-to-Gallup trip, and then found some pretty weighty litter.



Element also cleaned along the Argo-to-Gallup stretch, recovering a paddle that belongs to the liveries along the way!



The Sustainability Scholars in UM's Summer Bridge Program helped us clean the Argo Livery area!



We hosted 4 of our Love the River Day events, inviting individuals and smaller groups to come out on the water with us!

6/22



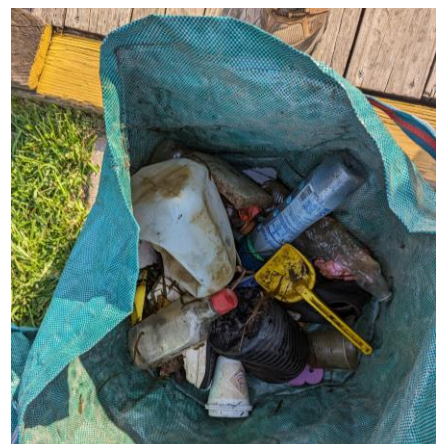
7/17



8/23



9/20



Funding for the Volunteer Stream Cleanup Program is provided by Water Quality license plate fees.

MiCorps Volunteer Stream Cleanup Program Project Fact Sheet

Organization Name: City of Cheboygan
Program Name: Cheboygan Clean Waters Challenge
Stream(s) Cleaned: The Cheboygan River from the river mouth to Lincoln Ave.
Watershed(s): Cheboygan River Watershed, Lake Huron Watershed
County(ies): Cheboygan County
Program Manager: Casey Clear; Anna Watson
Date(s) of Cleanup event: 8/19/2023



PROGRAM DESCRIPTION:

We held a successful cleanup on the streambanks of the Cheboygan River. Holding this community cleanup in Cheboygan was a new cleanup location for the Watershed Council. This provided an unexpected challenge with drawing volunteers, as any new event often experiences. We did not meet the amount of volunteers we were hoping for, however, by moving the cleanup to a new location, we engaged 96% new volunteers. We were successful in recording the types and amount of trash that was picked up and properly disposed of. Volunteers had some interesting finds during the cleanup, including a tire, a sign post, many food wrappers, and even more microplastics. Our volunteers cleaned up 1,623 pieces of trash, weighing about 180 lbs.

We were glad to partner with several local businesses to bring this event to Cheboygan. Cheboygan Coffee Roasters and Cheboygan Brewing donated beverages for the cleanup. We purchased pizza from BC Pizza, who gave us a generous discount. A few downtown businesses, Dairy Queen, Bittersweet, and Mulligans, provided raffle prizes for us to do a drawing for cleanup participants. GFL Environmental donated the waste services necessary, and the local Walmart donated a giftcard to purchase other cleanup supplies. Partnering with businesses is something that brought success to the cleanup and we would like to continue in the future. In the future we hope to engage even more local businesses, to draw more volunteers.

The Watershed Council was unable to receive the cleanup robots (PixieDrone and BeBot) for the 2023 summer season, so we were unable to use them as a part of the cleanup. We were still able to educate volunteers through other materials including printed brochures. We were also able to share information and provide guidance on how participants could organize their own cleanup. Following the Cheboygan event, two participants planned and hosted their own cleanup on the Sturgeon River!

PROGRAM FAST FACTS

MiCorps Grant \$ Amount: \$4,999.27
Local Match \$ Amount: \$5,100

Volunteers participating: 37
Volunteer hours: 111

Stream Miles Cleaned: 1.44 miles

Amount of Trash removed: We were unable to fill a dumpster, but we cleaned up 1,623 pieces of trash equaling 181 lbs.

Types of Garbage Removed: Tires, signs, sign posts, microplastics, food wrappers, cigarettes

Most Interesting Item Found: sign post

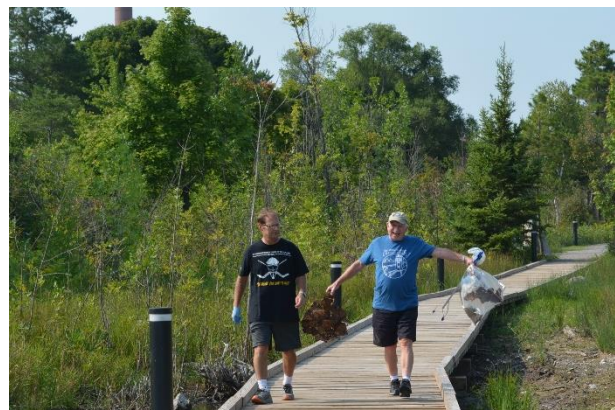


Figure 1. Volunteer holds up what he has collected, including large rusted metal pieces.

Cleanup highlights



Figure 2. Watershed Council staff and their families volunteered their time to cleanup the watershed as well.



Figure 4. All trash that was collected was weighed before being thrown into the dumpster.



Figure 3. Watershed Council staff holds up some of the interesting finds for the day, including an old sign post and an old road sign.



Figure 5. Some of our younger volunteers were able to get into small nooks and crannies along the streambank of the Cheboygan River.

MiCorps Volunteer Stream Cleanup Program Project Fact Sheet



Organization Name: Michigan Waterways Stewards
Program Name: Lansing Rivers and River Trail Cleanup
Stream(s) Cleaned: Lansing area's Grand River and Red Cedar River

Watershed(s): Grand River
County(ies): Ingham
Program Manager: Mike Stout
Date(s) of Cleanup event: June 8, 9 & 10 & September 20, 21, & 22

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION:

Through the support of over 40 organizations and 400 hundred volunteers we cleared Lansing area's Red Cedar River and Grand River, and adjoining river trails, of litter, trash, and other evidence of urban living. What just a year ago was described as many as a garbage dump, is now what is arguably the most varied, scenic, and pleasant urban waterways experience in Michigan. We're thrilled to have played a part in this remarkable transformation.

The City of Lansing reports this was the area's largest volunteer initiative in years, certainly since the onset of COVID. Also, many are reporting that our area rivers have't looked so good, easy to access and navigate, in years. For as long as many can remember.

We were most pleased with the city-wide support and event enthusiasm. Many participants have vowed to return with some already making claim to their preferred area of work (stewardship). We hope through our providing all the materials needed, along with food, drink, and hospitality, coupled with recognition and reward programming, that we made this a pleasant and rewarding experience for all.

There is always room for improvement and we seek to become Michigan's best waterways stewardship organization. We look to make this event amore of a community-wide celebration to encourage year round stewardship.

- We want to partner with more organizations to provide a greater interactive and entertainment experience for children and adults.
- We are now creating partnerships where organizations take year-round responsibility for dedicated stretches of river.

PROGRAM FAST FACTS

MiCorps Grant \$ Amount:
Local Match \$ Amount:

Volunteers participating: 400
Volunteer hours: 1,000
Stream Miles Cleaned: 8.6
Amount of Trash removed: 8 tons
Types of Garbage Removed: bicycles, scooters, grocery carts, tires, fencing, posting, rebar, highway barrels, dividers and cones, barbecue grills, tires, metal, plastics, paper, Styrofoam, clothing, paraphernalia, softballs, MSU police barricades, chairs, kayaks ...
Most Interesting Item Found: Either the unopened safe or antique 5-gallon (?) carboy encased in a steel basket.



A TEAM EFFORT WITH REPRESENTATIVES FROM
MOUNT HOPE HURCH AND GREAT LAKES WATERCRAFT
RED CEDAR RIVER AT POTTER PARK ZOO

Cleanup highlights

Use this page to insert pictures, with captions, of your volunteers and noteworthy activities!



400 RIVER ANGELS IN ACTION.

It is amazing the joy and ease in which we can accomplish great things when working together.

MiCorps Volunteer Stream Cleanup Program Project Fact Sheet



Organization Name: Grand Traverse Conservation District
Program Name: 18th Annual Boardman River CleanSweep-2023
Stream Cleaned: Boardman River from Forks State Canoe Launch to Grand Traverse Bay
Watershed: Boardman River Watershed
County: Grand Traverse
Program Manager: Steve Largent, Conservation Team Coordinator



PROGRAM DESCRIPTION:

Boardman River Clean Sweep cleaned the Boardman River over the course of 8 planned and one unplanned cleanup events. During those first sectional cleanups, volunteers picked up what they could handle and documented pieces of debris that were too large to handle.

Success: The Lansing Whitewater Club joined this year and helped clean the Keystone Rapids section and other areas of fast water. These folks have vast experience in fast water situations, saving those who may not be as comfortable from having to risk it. GTCD staff & BRCS volunteers were poised and ready to act after the flash flood washed several docks into the river (See Challenge). Lastly, once again this year we were given permission to use the DNR dumpsters at their Mill Road property for the larger items.

Challenge: The Backcountry Hunters and Anglers who were a big help the last couple years were a no show this year. This was only a minor setback since we had a new group show up this year called the Lansing Whitewater Club (see Success). Another challenge this year was the flash flood rain event on September 6th, 2023, that raised havoc in the floodplain, washing out several docks and other debris. We removed 5 obvious sections that washed up in log jams but will need to do a recon trip later this fall and next spring to GPS other sites.

Lessons Learned: We need to make sure we don't assume that we have a property owner's permission to access the river from their property as we did last year. This year the cabin was rented as a VRBO, and the renters didn't take too kindly to us being there. Next year we'll make sure to confirm our access permission before using a property. Also, unfortunately *one of our volunteers discovered a body* in the downtown section of the Boardman during one of the cleanups. Luckily the volunteer was retired from the Coast Guard and had the proper training. Though this is obviously a rare event, volunteers should be prepared for what they may encounter.

PROGRAM FAST FACTS

MiCorps Grant \$ Amount: \$2,866.36
Local Match \$ Amount: \$3,068.00

Volunteers participating: 78
Volunteer hours: 312

Stream Miles Cleaned: 30

Amount of Trash removed: 45 Bags of trash;
Traffic cone; Plastic sidewalk barrier; 8 cubic yards of dock pieces.

Types of Garbage: See above.

Most Interesting Item Found: See Lessons Learned 🧐



Boardman River CleanSweep (BRCS) Founder, Dr. Norm Fred assists staff from the GT Conservation District in removing several large dock sections from the river after a September 6th flash flood.

Cleanup highlights – Page 2



May 25, 2023 - Fork's to Scheck's. Dr. Norm lead a group of 10 volunteers who were very happy to take to the river for the first time on this cool but gorgeous day without complaint to paddle this most beloved section of the Boardman River. They removed about 15 pounds of trash.

http://www.brcleansweep.org/2022_0527_Forks_Report.html

May 27, 2023 – Brown Bridge to Scheck's – The Kingsley Outdoor Adventure Club ranging in age from 15-85 assisted with cleaning this section of the river. The river was running at a normal level and was exceptionally clean. The students learned fast and were proficient with the very barest of instruction. It was dicey for the most unskilled for the first few minutes, but they caught on fast and picked up trash along the way.

http://www.brcleansweep.org/2023_0527_Schecks_Report.html



June 10, 2023, Six experienced pickers lead by John Heiam (kneeling) & Lois Goldstein (in red) and one newbie cleaned up from Shumsky to Beitner. This is one of the most heavily used sections of the River. Lois reported their take for the morning included the usual suspects: very old beer cans, shoe insoles and flip-flops, chip bags (dug out of the mud by another passing kayaker), a hunk of fencing, two broken paddles (one kid's kayak and a very old wooden canoe), several unidentifiable hunks of plastic), a large rubber ball (about 10" in diameter), and nineteen golf balls. Trip report is here:

https://tapc.clubexpress.com/content.aspx?page_id=5&club_id=813410&item_id=89514

June 14, 2023 – Brown Bridge to River Pitch (Private) Dr. Norm said that when only 3 people showed up for the cleanup, his first feeling was one of failure and then he realized that this was the perfect way to do a cleanup without complications. The three had a great time!

http://www.brcleansweep.org/2023_0614_BBL_Report.html



Cleanup highlights – Page 3



June 16, 2023 – River Pitch to Shumsky

Nine individuals in one canoe and seven kayakers combined found only one-half bag of trash, which is a sign that the cumulative efforts of many river stewards & VSCP grant support (over the years) are resulting in a noticeably cleaner river.

http://www.brcleansweep.org/2023_0616_RP_Report.html

June 16 & 17, 2023– Beitner Rapids – aka Keystone Rapids. Steve Darby from a group of downstate whitewater paddlers contacted Dr. Norm and asked if they could help by doing a cleanup on the Beitner Rapids sometime this summer. Dr. Norm was very happy to have their help. They found 2 pairs of sunglasses, a small car floor mat, a plastic bottle, a glass bottle, and a single Croc flip-flop.

http://www.brcleansweep.org/2023_0616_Beitner_Rapid_Report.html



July 7, 2023 – National Cherry Festival River Cleanup

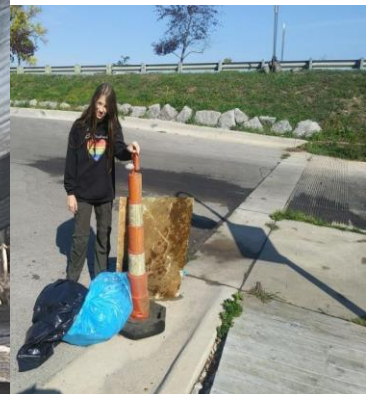
17 people volunteered to help with the annual NCF River Cleanup. There were a lot of people in town but not many along the River. The group found very large and heavy construction debris just downstream of two new bridges under construction at South Union Street and North Cass Street. The large debris was reported to the City Parks and Rec for cleanup. 20 bags of smaller trash were also removed.

http://www.brcleansweep.org/2023_0707_NCF_Report.html

September 23, 2023 – Downtown River Cleanup

It was a small group but an effective one that came out to help do this last but important cleanup downtown. A mink showed itself in support of the cleanup efforts.

http://www.brcleansweep.org/2023_0923_BR_Report.html





Tragically, on August 23, 2023, we lost two of the greatest river guardians in the world. While on their way home from a river cleanup on the Pine River with friends, longtime BRCS volunteers, Lois Goldstein and John Heiam tragically lost their lives due to a head-on auto crash on Hammond Rd in Traverse City. They will be forever missed.

MiCorps Volunteer Stream Cleanup Program Project Fact Sheet



Organization Name: Muskegon Conservation District
Program Name: Ryerson Creek Cleanup 2023
Stream(s) Cleaned: Ryerson Creek – Sumner and Wood st, Yuba St and Eastern Ave, Amity Ave (by the school) , Muskegon, MI 49442
Watershed(s): Muskegon Lake
County(ies): Muskegon
Program Manager: Kara Cronk kara.cronk@macd.org



PROGRAM DESCRIPTION:

On July 8th, 2023, 14 volunteers braved the weather to meet up at the Smith Ryerson Park in Muskegon to clean up one mile of Ryerson Creek. The day was cold and rainy for volunteers, but they pushed through and clean up parts of Ryerson Creek that was not cleaned last year! Volunteers worked hard in the rain to remove tires; they will be recycled at MCD's tire recycling event later in the year. They pulled out bikes, microplastics, and much much more. Any amount of trash removed from the stream is a success, and the volunteers that endured the heavy rains were still grateful that we hosted the event! We had one volunteer that came back again this year to help with the cleanup. The biggest success to me was the volunteers saying that they felt like they had made a difference that day. Republic Services donated the dumpster with delivery and pickup, City of Muskegon let us use their Community Action Trailer, and the Muskegon Municipal Stormwater Committee also sponsored the event, all of which helped us immensely. Because we made a flyer this year, we were able to get a lot of press out about the event! WZZM did a segment on it, as well as NPR. It was shared at the DPW and the City of Muskegon, United Way, and our Facebook and Instagram.

We faced many challenges with the stream cleanup this year, the biggest one being the weather. Weather reports for the day said sunny up until the day of, and then we got an edge of a storm that just downpoured on us. I am very thankful that the volunteers that came were up for the added challenge. Another challenge we faced was not having volunteers signing up by calling the office, so we were unsure of how many people to expect. One lesson I will bring to the next cleanup is contacting specific organizations sooner to schedule groups of people to come and help. I will also plan to get more waders next year, as they were very popular and almost all of them were used, but we just needed a wider variety of sizes. Overall, the cleanup was a success!

PROGRAM FAST FACTS

MiCorps Grant \$ Amount: \$3,112.14
Local Match \$ Amount: \$1,339.60

Volunteers participating: 14
Volunteer hours: 56

Stream Miles Cleaned: 1.0

Amount of Trash removed: 20 trash bags full, plus large items not in bags

Types of Garbage Removed: Bikes, microplastics, waterbottles, cans, fast food cups, fast food bags, car parts, baby toys, shoes, plastic wrap

Most Interesting Item Found: Barbie car or park bench



Figure 1 Volunteer moving trash from picking site to dumpster



Figure 2. A volunteer picking trash from a kayak. He pulled a barbie car out!



Figure 3. Two boy scout volunteers with waders picking trash, they wanted to stay longer!



Figure 4. Two fearless volunteers picking in the rain!



Figure 5. Rake from the City of Muskegon Community trailer being used to pick trash from the stream



Figure 6. Microplastics found in the stream

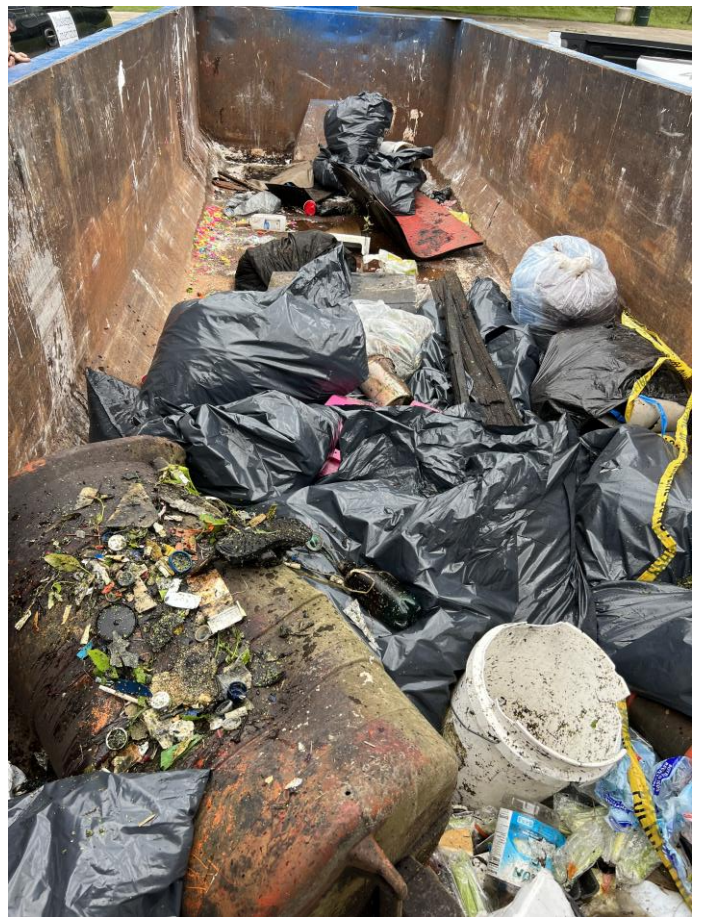


Figure 7. Trash from the stream in the dumpster



Figure 8. Volunteers picking



Figure 9. Kara cleaning up an island in the stream! We also found a park bench!





Figure 10. Andi pulling out a sunken baby toy from the stream

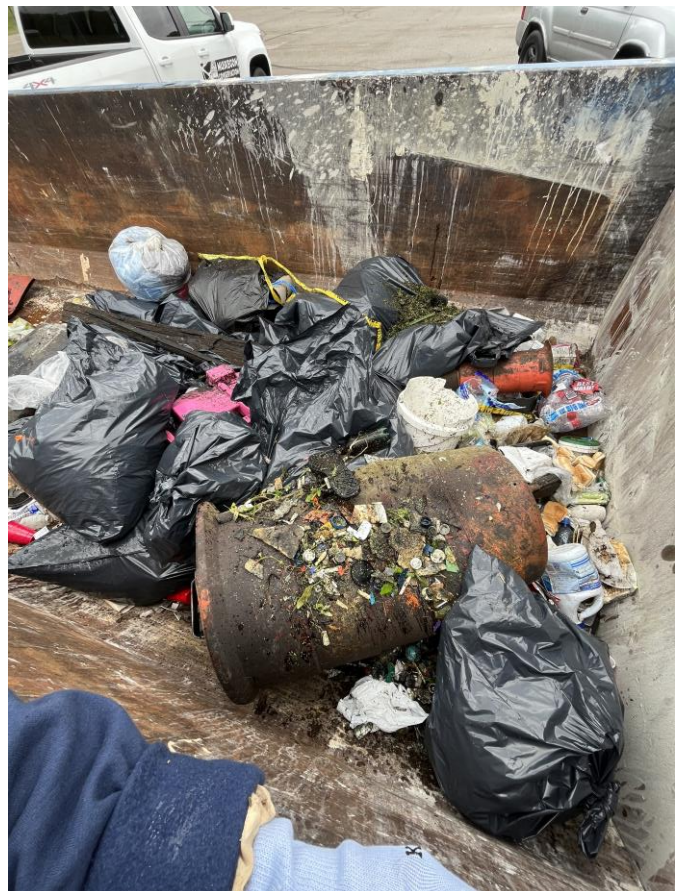


Figure 11. Microplastics, traffic cone, and other trash found in stream



Figure 12. Muskegon Area Municipal Storm Water Committee was a sponsor of the event

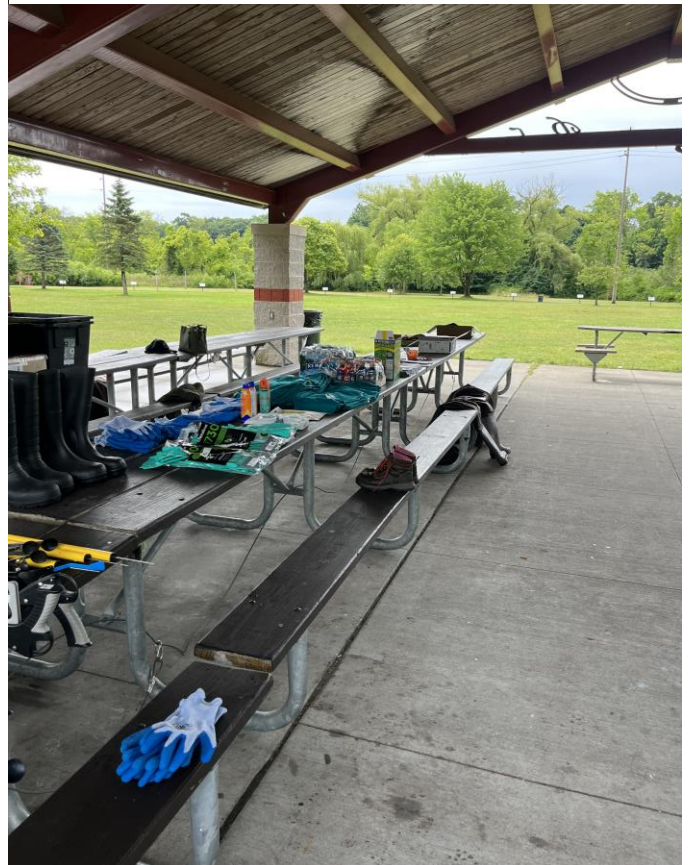


Figure 13. Materials for volunteers to use for the cleanup! Most of the waiters were already being used!

MiCorps Volunteer Stream Cleanup Program Project Fact Sheet



Organization Name: Newaygo Conservation District
Program Name: NCD Trash Bash
Stream(s) Cleaned: the Muskegon River from Bridgeton Boat Launch in Brideton Township to the Maple Island Boat Launch near Cedar Creek Township
Watershed(s): Muskegon River
County(ies): Newaygo
Program Manager: Luke Cotton, lucas.cotton@macd.org

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION:

For over 10 years, this Muskegon River Trash Bash has been a much needed clean-up effort. It was started as a one day pick-up in one section of the river with a small group of volunteers. In 2020, it was updated to a month-long sweep of the entire watershed with hundreds of volunteers. The Trash Bash allows volunteers to pick the time, place, team and the approach - but, the clean-up has to be completed during the month of August, and within the Muskegon River Watershed.

In 2023, the Muskegon River Trash Bash made an even bigger impact with their new partnership with the Newaygo Conservation District (NCD) and the Muskegon River Clean Up Co., LLC. (MRCU). The three came together for a large one day event that took place from the Bridgeton Boat Launch in Brideton Township to the Maple Island Boat Launch near Cedar Creek Township.

329 volunteers showed up with their canoes, kayaks and boats to help out. 1846 beverage containers, 63 flip flops, 30 lbs of lumber, 3 1/2 gallons of broken glass, 13 vapes, 8 lighters, 2 fish poles, 3 float tubes, propane tank, and 2 cell phones were collected from that section of the Muskegon River.

In addition to the one day event, the Trash Bash continued its momentum through out August. 317 volunteers were able to tackle the remaining stretches of the river, bringing in over 250 large bags of trash.

The funding from the grant provided wonderful support for our volunteers. This included food, t-shirts and print materials.

PROGRAM FAST FACTS

MiCorps Grant \$ Amount: \$4,820.55
Local Match \$ Amount: \$3,141.34

Volunteers participating: 646
Volunteer hours: 1938

Stream Miles Cleaned: ~200

Amount of Trash removed: 1-20 yard dumpster and 250 bags of trash.

Types of Garbage Removed: Bicycles, ladders, cans, bottles, flipflops, glass, tubes.

Most Interesting Item Found: Entire tool set and tool chest.



Cleanup highlights



Funding for the Volunteer Stream Cleanup Program is provided by Water Quality license plate fees.